

## **Intersections between language, linguistics, subtitling and translation: A conversation between Dan McIntyre and Zoe Moores**

Zoe Moores met Dan McIntyre at the University of Huddersfield in March 2017. Dan is a Professor of English Language and Linguistics at Huddersfield, with a particular interest in stylistics. Zoe is a PhD research student at the University of Roehampton who is investigating the access that live subtitles provide for the d/Deaf and hard of hearing and other audience groups.

The conversation that follows touches upon the application of stylistics to subtitling, the effect of time and space constraints on characterisation and the impact of creative and accessible approaches within the industry.

**Zoe Moores:** Hi, Dan. It's great to see you again. We're here today to talk about the way in which language, linguistics, subtitling and translation intersect. To get us started, can you give me a bit of background to your work?

**Dan McIntyre:** It probably helps to contextualise it a bit. I'm not a translator. I think of myself primarily as a stylistician. I did my PhD in stylistics, which is basically the study of style in language and how this is affected by non-linguistic variables such as author, genre, text, historical period and so on. Stylistics emerged at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century out of the Russian formalist school of literary criticism, and the early work of the Russian formalists was concerned with trying to isolate the properties of literary language — that is, what makes the language of literature different from the language of non-literary text. Very quickly the Russian formalists realised that that was kind of a fruitless endeavour, that there is nothing in the form of the language that sets literature apart from non-literary language. So, stylistics then developed as a discipline and became more about explaining how particular effects arise from the form of a text; so, when you read a text, how do you get from the form of the language to the impact that it has on you as a reader? What's the linguistic source of, say, particular emotional responses? That, generally, is what modern stylistics is concerned with. So, to get back to the translation issue, I think my interest arose really because I did my PhD on the stylistics of drama. I was interested in how point of view effects arise in Drama and so, from there, I got interested in the stylistics of film, and from there it's a short step to thinking about how dialogue translates in films — and that's where my interest in subtitling came from.

**ZM:** In literature, the focus is very much on the printed word. Is that the case with drama? Would you still focus on the original written word? Or

would you take account of the dramatisation of a play, where the spoken word may vary?

**DM:** In stylistics the general consensus is that the thing that you analyse — the object of the study — is the text, because the text is the stable entity. Performances, if you're talking about plays, can change nightly — even if it's only small variations. So, the general consensus has been that you study the text. But of course, that argument doesn't really hold for film because, barring things like remakes, director's cuts, that sort of thing, there is a stable performance that you can analyse, that is accessible to anybody who wants to talk about that text. So that has an interesting ramification for stylistics which is that if there is a stable performance, then, really, we ought to be analysing it too. The other interesting issue here is that not all performances derive from a text. Improvised drama is a case in point. So, I did some work on how you analyse film stylistically and how you integrate a linguistic analysis of the dialogue and the text with a semiotic analysis of what's going on in the image (see, for example, McIntyre 2008). What little work has been done on the stylistics of film (another example is Simpson 1995) has really tried to bring these two areas together — the linguistic analysis on the one hand and then the analysis you might get from a Film Studies perspective on the other.

**ZM:** And speaking as a subtitler, it's really important to be aware of the audio and visual elements of a film. The subtitles capture the sound, but the viewer will be watching the film as a whole, they'll see the subtitled audio in combination with visual images.

**DM:** That's right. I suppose if you are going to subtitle successfully you've got to have a good awareness of what's going on in other communicative modes, haven't you? I teach an undergraduate course on audiovisual translation and we do spend a little bit of time just looking at how you analyse film stylistically and from a Film Studies perspective, because I think it's important to have that awareness of what's going on within the image and within those other modes of communication in order to make sure that your subtitles make sense.

**ZM:** Yes, absolutely. So how did you actually move from stylistics to subtitling? From text to film?

**DM:** Well, I was interested in characterisation, how dialogue gives you a sense of character and what the linguistic basis is for conception of a character you build as you are watching a film or reading a script. Then, because occasionally I watch TV with subtitles on I started to notice that the subtitles obviously don't match the dialogue exactly — because they can't, of course — and that then set me wondering what impact that has on characterisation. If I watch something and I'm reliant purely on the subtitles, if I can't hear the actual original dialogue, am I going to build the

same concept of a character as if I have access to the audio track? So, the grant that I got a few years ago (British Academy grant no. SG113185), that I worked on with a colleague, was really to look at what the effects of that were (McIntyre and Lugea 2015). What we did was to take three scenes from the HBO series *The Wire* and transcribe the dialogue. Then we took the subtitles from the DVD and did a comparative analysis using a model of characterisation that comes from stylistics (Culpeper 2001) to try and see what characterising devices were present in the audio dialogue and then whether they were also present in the subtitles — and if they weren't, we tried to ascertain the likely impact of that on people who were reliant on the subtitles.

**ZM:** What did you find from that? How far was characterisation captured within the subtitles?

**DM:** It varied. The information that tended to be missing from the subtitles were in Hallidean terms the interpersonal elements. For example, a lot of discourse markers were removed — things like *well* and *I hope* and *errs* and *ums* — that kind of thing. So, in a way what you were getting in the subtitles was almost like a cleaned-up version of the natural speech. Obviously, when you subtitle you're translating from speech to writing, so you are going to see some differences. But because a lot of those interpersonal markers were being removed, what you lost was a sense not just of what a character was like but of what that character's relationship was with other characters. And in some cases, that was important information for an audience to have; it would have been useful to have retained some of that information in the subtitles. In some cases, you could have done that; even within the constraints of subtitling there was space in terms of the number of characters, number of lines on the screen — there was space to have retained some of that interpersonal information. For example, if you have a character who is quite unconfident and nervous, if you clean up their dialogue and remove a lot of those *errs* and *umms* you lose that sense of the character completely. If that element of their character is important for the drama, I think it's important to at least retain some of that so the viewer relying on the subtitling gets a sense of that element of the character.

**ZM:** It's all about finding a balance. When I translate, there are some jokes or effects that just cannot be translated into the target language in a way that creates the exact effect seen in the source language. Something gets lost in the process. So, I might try and compensate elsewhere, so the general feel of the text and impression it creates is the same, even if the source and target texts are not identical. In the case of a subtitler, they need to translate the audio into compact subtitles, all the while trying to retain the flavour of the original. And it can be difficult as the source and target language are one and the same, so changes become very visible.

**DM:** Yes, absolutely. One of the other things we found was that occasionally you would get repairs to the grammar. So, you get a grammatically correct subtitle where you actually had a grammatically incomplete utterance in the corresponding dialogue. In some cases, you could see why the subtitler had done that, because if you had transcribed exactly what the utterance was, that would have looked very odd in the written form and might well have been quite difficult to understand. But there was another interesting thing that was going on in *The Wire* which has a bearing on this issue and that's the fact that the speech in the audio track is often quite difficult to follow. David Simon, the creator of *The Wire*, has said that the show is not meant to be watched with intralingual subtitles. You're meant to find it difficult. And when we did our analysis what we found was a lot of repetition in the original dialogue which was obviously there so that you got the idea of what was being said even if you couldn't follow everything. Even if you missed every other utterance you could still follow the dialogue. But of course you don't need that degree of repetition in the subtitle, so some of the 'cleaning up' in the subtitles was a direct result of that. I think that was something that was interesting to that particular programme — you wouldn't necessarily get that in any other dramas.

**ZM:** Have you studied other series as well? Did you see similar patterns in alteration to the text or in how the characterisation was achieved?

**DM:** It was very similar actually. We looked at the 1979 BBC version of *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*. We looked at a little bit more data actually than with *The Wire* project, so we looked at scenes across the whole series. One particular scene that was interesting was set in a restaurant where two characters are arguing but in a very polite, British way. It's a very understated conversation but what got missed in the subtitles were tag questions and names. Names are interesting because if you think about normal interaction, if you're talking one-on-one to someone you know reasonably well, you tend not to use their name very much at all. So, the fact that the characters were using each other's names a lot becomes marked and I think indicates a level of annoyance or tension in the conversation. The fact that tag questions were missed out also created a particular effect. In many cases the questions were rhetorical, so you look at the script and think, well actually, yes, you don't need the tag question there. But tag questions can also indicate a degree of hesitancy with regard to what the character is saying — and that has an impact on how you perceive the character as well. So, again, these are examples of interpersonal devices that are getting lost in the process of translating the dialogue into subtitles.

**ZM:** And that could really change the viewer's perception of the character... Have you had the chance to do any audience research yet? I know you were hoping to do some.

**DM:** Not yet. There is some empirical evidence that people do actually do the kind of thing that the characterisation model suggests but we haven't yet had chance to do any experimental work with viewers, and I think that's an important next step in order to know whether what we've done is actually likely to be useful to subtitlers.

**ZM:** I'm sure it would be very interesting if you have the opportunity to do it. You mentioned a characterisation model just now. Can you explain it in more detail?

**DM:** There are various models of characterisation that exist. The one I think that's had the most impact within stylistics was developed by Jonathan Culpeper (Culpeper 2001), and that's the one we used. Interestingly, Ralph Schneider at Bielefeld University in Germany developed a very similar model without being aware of the Culpeper model, and came to very much the same conclusion about how characterisation works, which I think says a lot about the logical consistency of those models. Basically, what the Culpeper model says is that characterisation is a two-way process which involves top down processing and bottom up processing. Top down processing refers to the process of bringing your schematic knowledge to bear when you interpret a text. So, in the case of *The Wire*, even before you've started watching it you know it's a show about detectives so you already have a set of schemas and stereotypes of what you expect detectives to be like. And they're forming part of your characterisation process even before any of the characters have appeared on the screen or opened their mouths. Then you've got the bottom-up process which basically involves taking linguistic cues from either the script or from the dialogue if it's something that you are watching. What Culpeper found was that there are various devices in language that have a characterising effect and they include things like accent, dialect, lexical choice, choice of grammatical structures, whether a character is speaking in verse or prose, as you get in Shakespeare, for example — basically a long list of potential linguistic triggers for characterisation. And what the model suggests is that you build a concept of a character through a two-way process. You start by applying your schematic knowledge about character types and then when it becomes obvious that that character type doesn't fit the character you're watching, you adapt that schema accordingly. So, your detective schema changes as you continue watching *The Wire* and it changes in response to the linguistic cues that you encounter. If that character starts saying things and behaving in a way that doesn't match your schema for a detective, you end up modifying your schema as a result and that's how you ultimately build a picture of a character.

**ZM:** Accent seems such a natural part of speech, but it can be so difficult to capture accurately in writing. The question of how it can be portrayed within intralingual subtitles, where a d/Deaf or hard of hearing viewer may not hear the change in accent, came up in a recent focus group session. We

discussed whether a tag, SCOTTISH ACCENT, followed by an anglicised version of what the character was saying was preferable, or whether the subtitler should use words such as 'och' or 'cannae' instead. The general response was that the participants wanted the same access as a hearing viewer would have. So, I think that there are potential issues and debates to be had about any word that appears on screen.

**DM:** I suppose in that case you can partially do it. If you're trying to represent an accent maybe it's enough just to give a flavour of that accent.

**ZM:** Yes, having a flavour of the accent throughout the film was definitely preferable to simply having a single tag at the start of the film.

**DM:** I suppose if you do that, there is the danger that the viewer after a while forgets that that's the accent they're supposed to be reading.

**ZM:** Yes, I think it is important to maintain the individuality of an accent – but in a way that allows the film to be accessed. A producer or director has chosen to include that accent or manner of speaking for a reason and all viewers should have access to it.

I know we've been talking mostly about programmes and films shown in English. Have you done any research into programmes initially broadcast with a foreign soundtrack that is subtitled into English? Is that something you'd consider doing?

**DM:** It's something I'd like to do but we started by looking at intra-lingual subtitling just because it reduces the number of variables you've got to look at. We were interested in the characterisation process and isolating linguistic triggers for characterisation in the audio dialogue and the subtitles. If you then introduce another language into the mix, that's another variable you have to take account of. So, we decided to start as simply as we could with a view to, in future, looking at how that sort of thing works in foreign language subtitles, as well as English subtitles of foreign language films.

**ZM:** Yes. And many programmes have multilingual elements to them. The subtitler is then faced with a choice about leaving the words in the language they were spoken in or translating them into the main language of the programme. You mentioned that in *The Wire*, David Simon intended some sections to be difficult to follow; another producer might use a foreign language to create that same effect, wanting the audience to have difficulty following what is said. The subtitler has to decide how to deal with that. *Breaking Bad*, for example, is an example of a programme where some instances of foreign language are purposefully not subtitled. So, it seems that the subtitler actually plays a really important role in maintaining the characterisation created by the producer.

**DM:** I think there is a case to be made, isn't there, for subtitlers and audiovisual translators being involved in the film making process much earlier on, which I think you said you'd done — was it *Notes on Blindness*?

**ZM:** Yes, it was. I agree that if the subtitles are to truly be an integral part of a film or programme – which is certainly what I would like them to be — then there does need to be a conversation between the subtitler and writer or producer to make sure that the subtitles reflect the writer's intentions. When I worked on *Notes on Blindness*, we were able to share our subtitles with the writers and production crew and get feedback on what we had written. It did become a dialogue and that was particularly helpful when we were trying to capture different elements of the audio. We were able to make sure the music labels, which can be really subjective, captured the emotions and effect that the writers intended. Also, in the film, there are some subtle changes across speakers — John and his family speak as characters in their own right, but their voices also speak through a series of tape recordings made over many years. Deciding how and when to mark this in a way which fitted in with convention, but was not too laborious to read, was also something we discussed.

I really enjoyed the opportunity to work collaboratively like that. It fits in well with the accessible filmmaking that Pablo Romero-Fresco at the University of Roehampton is working with (Romero-Fresco 2013). It draws on the principles of universal design (see Udo and Fels 2009), which states that taking account of the needs of potential audience members as early as possible in the process will lead to better provision.

In his film and commentary on *Joining the Dots*, Pablo Romero-Fresco discusses how he used this approach to try and accommodate access as he made the film. Sometimes the timing of a shot might be adjusted, so there would be sufficient time for audio description. At other times, it meant framing the image in a way that left enough space for subtitles without a person's mouth being obscured or checking that the background didn't interfere with the subtitles. There were also instances where no modifications were made. Accessible filmmaking can be defined as a collaborative process, where access experts and translators are involved from the beginning, rather than only at the point of distribution. That beginning could be during pre-production, production or post-production stages of the film, but the early collaboration means potential access issues can be raised, giving film makers the opportunity to decide if and how they wish to respond to them. Creating a film is a complex process and it's really great if the subtitler — and other access providers — can be part of that process.

I'd be really interested in finding out, from your point of view, what you think a film maker or producer could do to allow for characterisation?

**DM:** I suppose in practical terms, ideally what you'd want is to be able to give the subtitler more time to do the subtitling, which I guess is probably easier in the film making process than if you're subtitling TV, because that would then allow them to spend a little bit of time thinking about how characterisation works in the particular film. Rather than being solely concerned with getting the dialogue converted into a subtitle, you need time to analyse how characterising effects are coming about. I think it would make a huge difference if you could approach the subtitling process from that analytical perspective.

**ZM:** So, you wouldn't really want to change the speed of the dialogue, for example, your focus would be on how the subtitler approaches the dialogue?

**DM:** I think so, yes, and I think, going back to what we said earlier, having the subtitler involved earlier on in the process is very important. You need that opportunity to talk to the script writer and the director, and possibly the actors as well, about what they are trying to achieve with a particular character. And then maybe presenting them with some options: here's how we could subtitle this character to make them different from that one — what do you think about that? Here's another option — which works best? Really involving the subtitler in the film-making process. I think that would be interesting and I know it's done to some degree in some films but I think it would be a good move for that to become standard practice.

**ZM:** I think it would be really interesting for subtitlers to have that opportunity to reflect back and see the overall effect of the characterisation in the subtitles they have written.

In *Notes on Blindness*, we did use a reading speed on the lower end of the standard range to make it fully accessible and there were moments where we had to substitute a few words. We tried to keep the integrity of what was being said and it did come up in discussions with the writers on a few occasions. But I think it was only when we watched that section of the film ourselves that we could see whether we had struck the right chord.

**DM:** I think the whole issue of accuracy is interesting, isn't it, because I think you can't get away from the fact that you have to adapt — the subtitles have to be different from the audio dialogue. So, in that respect, they are not going to be accurate in terms of the exact words spoken but they can be accurate in terms of propositional content and the functional effects of what's spoken. Having the opportunity to talk with other people involved in the film making process about how you translate those functional effects — I think that's really important, as is accepting that there are going to be constraints on what you do and that in some cases you are going to have to make some changes to the structure of the dialogue. It may be possible to do that and still retain at least some of the functional effects of the original dialogue.

**ZM:** When you say propositional content and functional effect, are you thinking also about how different words are stressed as well as the actual tone or manner perhaps that goes with words?

**DM:** Yes, and that's another important aspect to consider. Just to take a really simple example — if you have a character shouting maybe you don't need to subtitle everything that they've said, if the real significance of what they are doing is the shouting itself. If you can represent that functionally then maybe the actual content is less important.

**ZM:** That's really interesting. In foreign language films, a standard exclamation mark would be used to indicate shouting and there is a reliance on the audience hearing the tone, even if it is in an unknown tongue. When you are subtitling for the d/Deaf and hard of hearing, that added aural element would be picked up in different ways. There might be a sound label to indicate a noise, for example, ALARM CLOCK RINGS, but there is also a more complex punctuation system that can be used to indicate a range of tone, such as surprise, sarcasm, whispers, which could also contribute to or recreate some of the characterisation.

**DM:** Yes, I think it's probably true that some of the techniques used in SDH subtitling would actually be really useful in intra-lingual subtitling in general; that is, in same language subtitling that is not specifically aimed at deaf and hard-of hearing people.

**ZM:** Could you explain the different ways your students have been achieving characterisation in their subtitling assignments?

**DM:** On the module that I teach, the assessment is for students to subtitle a clip from a film. What they are trying to show is how they've managed to retain some of the important characterising information from the dialogue in the subtitle. Most of them end up trying to do that in quite a creative way — moving subtitles around the screen, having subtitles positioned quite close to a character's mouth, increasing and decreasing font sizes, using colour, that sort of thing. What they also have to produce is a reflective commentary justifying the creative decisions they've made by drawing on relevant research in stylistics and translation studies. Partly, it's an exercise in them showing how they've done a stylistic analysis of the original text and then tried to translate those effects. Partly, it's also an exercise in showing that they are adept at using the software. I don't think you could necessarily do that kind of subtitling throughout a whole film — it might become quite distracting. But you'd have to test that with viewers to see whether that's true or not. I think creative subtitling is an interesting exercise for students to try and do and it's an interesting assessment to mark because I then get to mark it as a viewer and to think about how I'm responding to those choices. I was thinking about this in relation to comic

books and novels. We're quite used to reading graphic novels and seeing speech being positioned in different places on the page, and that got me thinking, well is there anything vastly different about doing the same sort of thing with subtitles? Is it just the case that we are used to subtitles being at the bottom, that's what we expect and therefore we are a bit surprised if we see them in other places? But I do wonder if it really is as distracting to have subtitles moving about the screen as people have suggested.

**ZM:** I think that's a great question and one that researchers are beginning to explore in detail (see Fox, 2016). I can see that, if people are used to watching programmes or films with a set position for subtitles, it can be distracting if they have to start hunting for each subtitle — and they could potentially miss them and the content of the scene. That said, if the audience are prepared for the subtitles to be created and displayed in a different way, with a consistency or logic to it, I think viewers would be open to that, especially if it resulted in increased or more coherent access to the film or programme.

**DM:** I think stylistics potentially has an interesting insight to offer there, because at the heart of stylistics is the idea of foregrounding — you pay attention to something that stands out from the norm, from whatever you expect. And I guess it's still the case that when you watch subtitled films or TV the norm is to have the subtitle at the bottom, so anything that deviates from that is going to be foregrounded as a consequence. Foregrounding theory also says you can create foregrounding effects if you break a pattern that initially might seem deviant but which you then start sticking to. So, for example, if you subtitle a film in such a way that the subtitles are very rarely at the bottom of the screen but instead are sort of attached to the characters' mouths, after a while that becomes the norm and you start to know to where to look. If you know roughly where to be looking for each character's subtitle then that becomes the new norm, if you like. Putting the subtitle at the bottom of the screen would then become the deviant thing to do and a foregrounded effect would arise as a result.

**ZM:** Yes. And for viewers who use lip reading as a form of communication, it could well be that subtitles in different positions, attached to characters' mouths for example, could actually allow them to shift their gaze from mouth to word more smoothly and facilitate comprehension for viewers who are accessing programmes with a combination of communication methods.

**DM:** I think it would also be really interesting to know more about how people watch films who don't use subtitles — so, what is the eye movement around the frame, is there any pattern to that? I'm guessing that there probably is some pattern to be discerned, so, if you know that, then maybe that could inform where you place the subtitles.

**ZM:** I'd imagine that facial expression, with all the cues it can offer, would draw attention and eye gaze, and I am sure that in a busy scene, there would be many details that a viewer would want to take in. Very interesting. We often talk about the 'invisible' role of the translator. In the case of subtitlers, their work is always going to be prominent and visible to a certain extent – especially if the subtitles are used in new and different ways.

**DM:** I think you can't get away from the fact that, if you are watching TV or film with subtitles, that is going to stand out to some degree, and in many cases embracing that might be a better technique than trying to background it. I don't necessarily mean that you want subtitles flying about all over the place, but accepting subtitling as a mode of communication that is useful and needed in some cases would in my view be better than starting from a position that implicitly sees subtitles as a necessary inconvenience. Let's instead take advantage of what that mode of communication offers. And going back to what we were saying earlier, having the subtitler more involved in the creative process would be a useful way of trying to do that.

**ZM:** So, you're saying that if the subtitler had a better idea of indicators of characterisation, of the particular effect of words and structures which might often be omitted to help lower reading speeds, such as tag questions or hesitations, if they had a better idea of the impact of those words on characterisation, the subtitler could almost become a second writer? From a stylistics point of view, the ideal would be that the subtitler becomes a second writer, with a responsibility for continuity of characterisation?

**DM:** I think it makes sense, yes. Because if you think about how films are made – they are not made by one person. The writer is a cog in that whole process. That's probably slightly different from theatre performances where the writer does have a greater degree of control, but even then, the finished product is a result of the writer and the director and the actors and so on. In film, the finished product is a result of an even greater number of people working together: special effects teams, costume designers, that sort of thing and I think seeing the subtitler as being a key member of that general team would be a useful step forward, because it then means they do have a creative input to make. They are not just a bolt on at the end of the process where they are doing something that is seen as a pretty mechanistic piece of work. Subtitling is really creative work and should be recognised as such. And there are opportunities to be gained if you do start working in that way.

**ZM:** Given that at the moment that's not where we are in subtitling – it may be a different scenario when working on films, but certainly when working in-house and subtitling TV programmes, the sheer quantity of broadcasting necessitates a certain speed. Do you have any top tips or guidelines that can be easily picked up or embedded in a way that some of

this characterisation can be achieved even when working at speed to meet deadlines, if a subtitler isn't free to get as involved as they might want to?

**DM:** Thinking about how language works in particular contexts is really important. In the work we did on *The Wire*, for example, we found that the subtitling of a courtroom scene missed out a lot of the coordinating conjunctions in the questions of one of the attorneys. This had zero effect on the grammatical coherence of that character's speech, but it did mean you lost the sense of her building an argument cumulatively. This affected the portrayal of courtroom discourse which actually played an important role in characterisation. In another context losing those *ands* wouldn't have mattered but in a courtroom scene it did. Some of the subtitling guidelines I've seen seem not to recognise the importance of context. You see this in guidelines that, while not incorrect, are not informative enough. For example, the BBC's guidelines say something like 'be wary of removing *ands* and *buts* because sometimes they might have an important effect'<sup>1</sup> but what the guidelines don't tell you is *when* they might have an important effect or in what circumstances. So, I think there's probably something we could do in terms of improving guidelines for subtitlers. It's not just a matter of being aware of what characters are saying, and whether they are using discourse markers, hesitation markers and those sorts of things, but also being aware of the context in which they are speaking and who they are talking to. Having that kind of information specified in guidelines, along with examples, would help subtitlers to be able to make more principled decisions, I think.

**ZM:** I think that would be really helpful. When I first began in the industry we did have guidelines and I know I frequently referred to them to check I was formatting and editing consistently. I think having some coherent examples about characterisation, and the effect of certain words - or the effect of omitting them - in certain circumstances would be very beneficial. Some way of saying, in this type of scene, it is beneficial to include X and Y, and, actually, I can do that and keep to the correct reading speed; or, in this situation, I don't need A and actually, it might be better to exclude B because a passage of fast speech follows it. It would be an extra tool in finding the balance between omission and compensation we talked about earlier.

And coming back to the course you teach, what benefits have you seen in including the subtitling, audiovisual translation module, within a primarily linguistics degree?

**DM:** One of the things we've tried to do in most of our modules, and in the English Language and Linguistics degree generally, is to have a strong practical component. Our Department generally has an applied linguistics focus, not just in that narrow sense of using linguistics for teaching but in using linguistics in the solution of practical problems. Students seem to find that appealing. Certainly, the students that have done the audiovisual translation module like that focus. They can see a relevance to practical

modules. But what's also important is that practical modules also allow them to see the relevance of all the theoretical knowledge that they've gained earlier on in the degree, in modules like syntax and phonetics. So, offering practical modules also has advantages in terms of getting students to see the value of doing purely theoretical work too.

One of the other advantages of having a subtitling course on a linguistics degree is that it gives you an opportunity to think about how language is used in real world situations – how language affects people when they listen to it and when they read it – and I think that's a very important part of a linguistics degree, that usage perspective. So, I think that's where there is an additional value to having a practical module like this on a linguistics degree. In practical terms for the students, I think what's good is you can show them that studying linguistics is a really valuable thing to do – that language is at the heart of so many different aspects of life and that it isn't just some arcane subject that you study in isolation from everyday life. There is a practical value to the degree that they are doing.

**ZM:** And have you seen any other areas where there is a crossover between language, linguistics and translation? Or audiovisual translation in particular?

**DM:** I have a PhD student at the moment who is working on audio description and particularly how you translate style in audio description. I think that's an interesting area to explore because if you watch a film that is being audio described, it doesn't work in quite the same way as listening to a radio drama – there is something different going on. She is particularly interested in how visual markers of style get translated into an audio description. One of the things she is interested in is foreshadowing effects. So, if you are watching a film and you get a close-up shot of, say, a murder weapon, you don't know it's a murder weapon at that point but when you find out a bit later on, you can then think 'Ah, I understand why we got that close-up earlier on'. There's that sort of interesting effect – how do you translate that linguistically? So, I think there's a lot of interesting work to be done there, looking at how you translate important visual aspects of a film into an audio description or narration and the choices that you make in doing that. Stylistics is all about choice because you can't have style unless you have a range of options to choose from. So, I think helping audio describers, subtitlers, audiovisual translators generally – helping them to make principled decisions about the choices that they make is probably a role that stylistics can play.

**ZM:** Opening the programme up to a wider audience, and finding ways to do so from the start of production.

**DM:** Yes. Trying to make sure anyone who is accessing that film either through subtitles or audio description is getting an equivalent experience to people who are not reliant on those modes of communication.

**ZM:** My own area of research is respeaking, where live subtitles are created through speech recognition software in real-time, and a certain degree of editing is implicit in that. Given that the subtitlers are working live, either on television or at live events, it would be fascinating to see what effect that has on characterisation and what opportunities there are at speed to maintain a strong characterisation. There may be an opportunity for some collaboration in the future.

**DM:** Definitely. I can imagine that the challenges involved in translating aspects of character into subtitles are even trickier when you're respeaking. And exploring this would certainly fit in with recent calls with stylistics for more research into the stylistics of spoken language.

**ZM:** Well, thank you so much. I've really enjoyed talking to you.

**DM:** That was really interesting, thanks – great to think through some of those issues and talk about them with somebody who really knows about this stuff from a practical perspective!

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## Biographies

Dan McIntyre is Professor of English Language and Linguistics at the University of Huddersfield, where he teaches corpus linguistics, stylistics and audiovisual translation. His major publications include *Stylistics* (Cambridge University Press, 2010; with Lesley Jeffries), *Language and Style* (Palgrave, 2010; co-edited with Beatrix Busse) and *Point of View in Plays* (John Benjamins, 2006). He has a particular research interest in the stylistics of drama, and his work in the area of audiovisual translation has explored how intralingual subtitles impact on characterisation. His latest book, *Applying Linguistics: Language and the Impact Agenda* (co-edited with Hazel Price), will be published by Routledge in 2018.

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Zoe Moores studied Classics and Modern Languages at Oxford, followed by MAs in Linguistics at Manchester and, later, in Audiovisual Translation at Roehampton. She is currently researching how respeaking can be used to provide accurate subtitles at live events for the d/Deaf and hard of hearing audience and speakers of English as an additional language. Her PhD is funded by AHRC TECHNE and Zoe works closely with the charity Stagertext to co-ordinate the project. Her interest in media accessibility stems from her years as a teacher and her passion for effective communication and equality for all. Zoe worked professionally as a respeaker and subtitler at Ericsson and now translates and subtitles on a freelance basis.

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<sup>1</sup> The actual guideline says 'Don't automatically edit out words like "but," "so" or "too." They may be short but they are often essential for expressing meaning.' (Ford Williams 2009: 4)