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10 fallacies about Subtitling for the d/Deaf and the hard of hearing[1]

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ABSTRACT

Even though subtitling for the d/Deaf and the hard of hearing is now an established audiovisual translation type, it is not yet fully understood, even by its stakeholders. Some of the misconceptions have led to unnecessary misunderstandings which could hinder progress. A better understanding of the social and technical constraints of this kind of subtitling may prove to be important at a time when technology is offering new opportunities. In this paper, a few of the above mentioned misconceptions will be addressed in a critical eye and a provocative tone. Ten fallacies are listed in the hope that other researchers and professionals might take up the problematic issues as a starting point for further research and thus shed further light on them.

KEYWORDS

Accessibility, subtitling, SDH, Deaf, hard of hearing, misconceptions

It is now widely accepted that Subtitling for the d/Deaf and the hard of hearing (SDH) has established itself as a privileged form of access for d/Deaf[2] viewers throughout Europe. Formal reports, as the ones presented by Stallard (2003) and by the Media Consulting Group (2007), as well as by academic reviews, as that by Remael (2007), prove that SDH is now a common service in a great number of countries, which have come to increase their offer particularly in the context of television broadcasting. Despite the considerable progress made in recent years, those working in this area will have to overcome a few hurdles on the way to implementing, increasing or improving their work, if they want to make the most of digital technology. Technological changes will enable innovative solutions and open up to creativity but will also challenge common practices and beliefs. A close analysis of the way SDH is seen by the main stakeholders involved – the addressees/audiences (the deaf, the Deaf, the hard of hearing and the hearing viewers), the providers (producers, broadcasters and subtitling professionals), the political and social forces (legislators, the Deaf associations and other lobbying forces) and the researchers – shows that people hold different and often conflicting views, which have led or may still lead to misunderstandings that may hinder progress.

The 10 fallacies to be addressed below are little more than just that - misunderstandings. Nonetheless, they are important enough to be listed and to be addressed through a number of angles, hopefully clarifying what might still not be clear enough. The fallacies are addressed in no particular order and are in many ways interrelated. They reflect present concerns and speak of a time when countries are pushing for benchmarks, when the digital switchover is underway and when the media are changing into

new and challenging formats. It is hoped that they will soon belong to the past, but as we write, they are certainly a matter of the present.

Before we can continue, we need to clarify that when we speak of SDH we are addressing a subtitling solution that is directed towards a rather diverse group of receivers: the 'deaf', who use an oral language as their mother tongue; the 'Deaf', who belong to linguistic minority groups that use a sign language as their first language; and the 'hard of hearing', who have residual hearing and can therefore share the experience of sound and of the world of hearers to different degrees. Depending on the onset, the type and the degree of deafness, people with hearing impairment will relate to sound in different ways and will therefore relate to subtitling in accordance with those very same characteristics. Furthermore, SDH must also be seen as an umbrella term which encompasses quite distinct outputs which will be determined by criteria such as the linguistic transfer (intralingual or interlingual subtitling) or the time of preparation (pre-prepared, live or real-time subtitling), only to name two of the most significant distinguishing traits[3]. These basic concepts will be further clarified in the course of this paper.

The fallacies:

1.   SDH (Subtitling for the Deaf and the hard of hearing) and CC (Closed Captions) are completely different realities

A first major misunderstanding derives from the use of the actual term 'subtitling' as opposed to 'captioning'. In the UK and in Europe, subtitles provided for people with hearing impairment have taken the designation of 'subtitling' perhaps due to the teletext subtitling system that was launched in the 70s to provide 'hidden' subtitles on television or due to the subtitling tradition of many European countries, which use subtitling to translate foreign films/programmes. On the other side of the Atlantic, in the US and surrounding countries, another system, with a different technical profile, gave way to what would come to be known as "closed captioning". Many Americans cannot relate to the term subtitling and see captioning and subtitling as two completely different concepts. Captioning is taken to address hearing impaired viewers; captions transcribe speech and provide information about sound effects and music, whilst subtitling is considered to be for hearers. Despite the fact that this debate has been ongoing for quite a long time (see recent discussions in the yahoo Captioning   discussion   group   [available   at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Captioning/message/5847]),   there appears to be very little to keep this fire burning.

If we were to take the following definition of 'captioning', set forward by the Captioned Media Programme (2006: 2), and to substitute the words 'captioning' for 'subtitling' and 'captions' for 'subtitles', would we not be speaking of exactly the same thing?

> **Captioning [subtitling]** is the process of converting the audio content of a television broadcast, webcast, film, video, CD-ROM, DVD, live event, and other productions into text which is displayed on a screen monitor. **Captions [Subtitles]** not only display words as the text equivalent of spoken dialogue or narration but also include speaker identification and sound effects. It is important that the **captions [subtitles]** be: (1) synchronized or appear at approximately the same time as the audio is available; (2) equivalent and equal in content to that of the audio, including speaker identification and sound effects; and (3) accessible and readily available to those who need them. (CMP 2006: 2) [My emphasis and changes in bold]

The debate over the terminology here is, to my view, rather sterile, and quite worthless. On either side of the ocean we are speaking of quite the same thing and, just as it happens with 'flat/apartment', 'truck/lorry' or 'taxi/cab', 'subtitling/captioning' are simple British English / American English varieties. However, we may have a case if we look at the issue through another angle. The case is there when we find that even among those who accept the term 'subtitling', there is uncertainty as to the words that come after it: subtitling for the deaf / subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing / subtitling for the hearing impaired that appears in short as 'SDH' or as 'SDHH'… and this is all within the English language. If we look at how expressions are dealt with in other languages, it is clear that terminology is a problem when it comes to this particular kind of subtitling 'genre'. A brief overview may allow us to arrive at a few conclusions:

i.   English: (a) Subtitling for the hearing impaired / (b) for the deaf and hard of hearing
ii.   Spanish: *Subtitulado para sordos*
iii. Catalán: *Subtitulació per a sords*
iv.   European Portuguese: *Legendagem para surdos*
v.   Brazilian Portuguese: (a) *Lengendagem para surdos* /
      (b) *Legendagem para surdo-mudos*
vi.   French: *Sous-titrage pour sourds et malentendants*
vii. Dutch: *Ondertiteling voor doven en slechthorenden*
viii. Italian: (a) *Sottotitoli per sordi* / (b) *sottotitoli per non-udenti*
ix.   German: *Untertitelung für (gehörlose und) Hörgeschädigte*
x.   Czech: *TitulkovÁnt pro nesluscici*
xi.   Greek: *Υποτιτλισμός για άτομα με προβλήματα ακοής*
xii. Polish: *Napisy dla niesłyszących i niedosłyszących*
xiii. Croatian: *Podslovljavanje za gluhe i osobe oštećena sluha*

Even though there is no doubt that these subtitles are directed toward special addressees, there is obviously some uncertainty as to who the addressees might in fact be. To the Spanish, the Italians, the Portuguese and the Czech, for instance, they are the 'deaf'; to the British, the French, the Dutch, the Croatians and the Germans, they are the 'deaf' and 'the hard of hearing'; less politically correct, the Brazilians use the term *surdo-*

mudos, i.e. 'deaf-mute', and the British and the Italians emphasise the 'loss' or the impairment in the expression 'for the hearing impaired'. This notion of lack is also reinforced in the Polish which use the term *niesłyszących*, literally 'non-hearers' and the Greek which use *άτομα με προβλήματα ακοής,* meaning 'persons with hearing problems'.

This debate would be sterile if this terminology did not reflect a further issue – a quite diffuse understanding of the profile of the intended addressees, a matter which is given special attention in point 2 below. Much of the confusion also comes with other misconceptions, such as that SDH is to be found exclusively on television, that it is only intralingual or that it is closed. That was indeed the case when SDH/captioning gained status on television in the 70/80s. Nowadays it is no longer the case. We now have interlingual SDH, particularly on DVDs, or open SDH on TV, the cinema and in many other contexts (in conferences, live performances, church services, among others). Be they pre-prepared, live, semi-live, off-line, pop-up, scroll-up, or any other, terminology will be used to highlight different aspects of what is the same thing. As mentioned above, SDH will always be SDH regardless of the specific traits that may be highlighted in the terminology used to address it.

2.   SDH addressees make up one cohesive group

This second fallacy is reflected in the previous one and is, I believe, one of the main problems in present day SDH. Regardless of the terminology used, SDH aims to cater for a wide range of viewers that are inadequately grouped together, since they have distinct profiles and needs. We assume that the subtitling that is provided is equally adequate for:
   - deaf and for hard of hearing viewers;
   - pre-lingually and post-lingually deaf;
   - oralising and signing deaf;
   - deaf who feel they belong to hearing majority social group and
      (capital D) Deaf who assume themselves as a linguistic minority;
   - Deaf for whom the written text is a second language;
   - deafened viewers who have residual hearing and/or hearing memory.

The provision of a unique set of subtitles for all will inevitably be inadequate for some if not most viewers. Hard of hearing, deaf and Deaf viewers are, in reality, different audiences who may require different subtitling solutions. They read at different speeds, enjoy different types of subtitles (e.g. edited, verbatim) and relate to sound (speech, sound effects and music) in different ways. Kyle's Report (1996: passim) shows how viewers with different types and degrees of hearing loss interact with the audiovisual text and read subtitles. It is clear from the outcome of Kyle's research (ibid.) and from those by D'Ydewalle's team (D'Ydewalle et al. 1987) and by Neves (2005) that this issue is complex, due to the number of variables to be taken into account if we are to arrive at a comprehensive account. But this is definitely an area that deserves further

research, for a better understanding of people's needs would certainly equip providers with important knowledge on which to base their choices and practices. It may be true that it is not (economically and technically) viable to produce various subtitle versions for any one film or programme, as proposed by Gottlieb (1997: 129); however, special effort must be put into getting to know our audiences as well as possible and to adjusting our work to the genre and style of the audiovisual text we are subtitling (which in itself will be an audience selector), so that the subtitles provided truly offer d/Deaf or hard-of-hearing viewers a rewarding viewing experience.

It needs also be reminded that it is now widely acknowledged that SDH is not exclusively directed towards hearing impaired audiences. The *Television access services review* by Ofcom (2006: 2) reveals that "[o]n the basis of the quantitative research, the researchers concluded that most people were aware of subtitles, and about 7.5 million people had used them to watch television, of whom about 6 million did not have a hearing impairment." Hearers will use subtitles with sound, but above all, they will be watching them while working out at the gym or while enjoying a drink in a noisy pub. Subtitles are equally usable and useful to immigrants, foreigners and people of all ages learning a language or working on their reading skills (cf. Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 14). Subtitles have often been regarded an excellent pedagogical tool. The examples available are more than convincing. Koolstra et al. (1997), for instance, refer to how subtitles can help young children learn to read, while studies in India carried out by Kothari and his team (Kothari, 1999, 2000; Kothari et al. 2004) show how subtitling has been used to improve national literacy levels. Gambier (2007) offers up a comprehensive summary of the role subtitling plays in guaranteeing multilingualism and highlights the pedagogical role it can play in a vast array of circumstances. He gives examples from all over the world while addressing quite distinct audiences who belong to different age groups and social backgrounds, and have distinct linguistic, sensory and cognitive profiles.

3. It is easy to access SDH

The third fallacy is more technical in nature, but it is equally complex. 'Equal opportunities' is openly advocated by all – legislators, providers and society at large. Most European countries are working towards providing and increasing accessibility services for viewers with hearing impairment both on television and in other contexts. Special services are now, indeed, widely provided, but the question remains: are accessibility services actually being used by the people who need them most?

After accepting the premise that not all SDH is useful to its target users, other issues still need to be addressed. In the context of television:

• Quite often, and particularly in countries where accessibility services are limited or have only recently been introduced, people do not watch programmes with SDH, even though it might be provided, because they do not know such a service is available. Not all broadcasters advertise their service conveniently. Programme listings in newspapers, magazines, and Webpages seldom identify the programmes containing SDH; viewers are not often reminded, through onscreen written messages, that the programme to be shown contains SDH; and programmes do not always carry a subtitling logo to remind people that they are provided with 'hidden/closed' subtitles. While teasers are often used to 'advertise' forthcoming features, they are seldom used to call viewers' attention to subtitled programmes.

• Using new services often requires a 'learning period'. Viewers need to be taught and to be (repeatedly) reminded not only that the subtitles are there for them, but also how to turn them on. Activating the teletext is sometimes a burden, either because people might not know which buttons to press, or because the remote control is not user-friendly. Big bulky hand pieces, with clearly marked colourful buttons would certainly help the elderly and all those who might have mobility or sight impairment - a condition that comes with age and is associated with a number of other conditions. This has now been addressed by legislators and television makers as may be witnessed by the emergence of the twice updated TWF Directive[4] and of some modern digital equipment that offers alternatives (trendy or accessible solutions) easy-to-use remote controls. These are still spare and scarce and many people using analogue television and older equipment find themselves pressing all accessible buttons in the hope that they can finally call up the teletext page carrying the subtitles.

• If we are to think of analogue television, which will still be around for a while in most European countries, another problem comes to the fore: 'zapping'. Turning Teletext on and off every time you zap can be very stressful, especially if you have to check anew whether the programme has Teletext, and change pages as different broadcasters use different pages (888 / 777 / 887 /…) for their service. This is a matter worth harmonising, and Teletext users will certainly look forward to being able to go to and fro without having to go through the burdensome task of setting subtitles on and off every time they go into a different programme.

4.   Standardisation and norms are good

Standardisation is a form of normalisation. It is used in all walks of life, mainly for the sake of organisation, compatibility and exchange/transfer protocol. In the media, standardisation is now being taken very seriously, particularly due to the introduction of digital technology, which allows for a

greater conversion of different media. Technical standardisation is highly regulated by international agreements and ISO standards which determine parameters that are to be rigorously met. Directives such as the TWFD (now known as Audiovisual Media Without Frontiers) are an explicit effort to normalise the world of the media at a European, if not even at a worldwide level. It is hoped that exchange protocols will be agreed upon and that different media may become compatible, so that technical and geographical boundaries may be less felt in the global digital world.

In our specific domain, standards are seen as "norms" – in the guise of guidelines and style sheets – mainly used to guarantee the repetition of patterns which are accepted as "good practice". In so doing, guidelines are in themselves "quality assurance" tools. Chesterman (1993:4) sees norms as "behavioural regularities [that] are accepted (in a given community) as being models or standards of desired behaviour". This means that they are seen as "regularities" that become "regulations"… in other words, rules to be followed. Prescriptivism is often unwelcome, particularly among researchers who see it outside their scope and practitioners who would like to do things their own way.

However, as far as functional translation and SDH is concerned, norms ARE welcome, particularly when they account for 'best practice' and they are based on serious empirical research involving all the stakeholders in their making: suppliers, professionals and receivers (the d/Deaf and the hard of hearing, in this case). So, if norms and guidelines are welcome, where is the fallacy to be found? Standardisation has its limits! How relevant or useful are such norms? Are they known and used by the people doing the job? Who has written them? What are they based on?

At times, norms even serve to perpetuate less adequate solutions. The UK and Spain are among the countries fortunate enough to have national standards. The UK follows a long tradition, with BBC leading and making use of over 25 years of experience. Spain, on the other hand, is only just starting, and it too has established standards – the UNE 153010. As an outsider, I look at one and the other, and I still query if those are, in fact, the best solutions. Now that these countries are coming close to the 100% quantitative goal, perhaps it would be interesting to question norms and practices anew. Do those norms really compile best practices? Do subtitlers actually apply them? And are people happy with what they get? An analysis of practices throughout Europe (Neves 2005) proves that there is some inconsistency in subtitles offered within any one country and even within any one broadcaster. Messages on the Captioning (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Captioning/) and the TV Acessível (http://br.groups.yahoo.com/group/tvacessivel/) yahoo groups also show how viewers are critical of the standards of the subtitles they are being given. It is clear that people aren't happy with what they are given, and very often make suggestions that could be tested and used to improve present offers. We will all agree that some sort of norm is better than no norm at all, but if we are to implement them, let us be sure that they they

are as inclusive as possible, given all the constraints SDH has to comply with.

5.   You don't need special training to work on SDH

This fallacy comes hand in hand with a few of the fallacies we have addressed before and in particular with the old belief that SDH is intralingual subtitling. I have often heard that all it really takes to produce SDH is to transcribe what you hear and to write it down in the form of subtitles. "Anybody who knows the language can do it!" The problem resides there, as SDH is not just about transcribing. SDH, in whichever form – intralingual, interlingual, prepared, live, etc. – will require highly developed technical, linguistic and translational skills. Language needs to be manipulated to accommodate (1) technical constraints (such as screen space or font size and shape); (2) textual features (genre, rhythm and style), (3) intersemiotic transfer (speaker identification, the conveyance of sound effects and music), and (4) the actual manipulation of written speech (linguistic and paralinguistic information). If to all this we add issues such as readability techniques – making text easy to read –, then subtitling for d/Deaf and hard of hearing audiences is no easy task.

The best of subtitlers will be those who have come to know and to respect their addressees as people with an identity of their own, with skills and needs that require special solutions. They will also be the ones who have acquired cultural and linguistic maturity to be able to carry messages and ideas across a number of barriers which derive from ideological, linguistic, social or even individual constraints. Further to intellectual maturity, sense and sensibility, subtitlers working on SDH need to learn to read film, to manipulate language (rephrase, summarise and expand), to use specific equipment and to cope with stress.

Ideally, subtitlers would attend specialised courses after completing a university degree in Languages or Translation Studies. If that is not available or possible, SDH professionals will at least need to have solid university degrees in Languages and/or Translation and a training period with qualified and experienced professionals who can pass on their knowledge and expertise for newcomers to build on. Initial training alone does not make an expert subtitler either. That only comes with time, work and perseverance!

6.   Only verbatim subtitles guarantee equal opportunities

In this particular case, the fallacy comes from within the actual audiences using SDH. Deaf, and particularly hard of hearing viewers, demand verbatim, word for word subtitles, in the belief that only so will they be on

an equal stand with hearers. Here too, a huge mistake. Not very many (d/Deaf, hard of hearing or hearing) viewers have the ability to read subtitles with high reading rates. It is commonly accepted that average subtitling reading speeds are of 150 to 180 words per minute. This number will necessarily vary according to the manner in which the text is presented, to the quantity and complexity of the information, and to the action on the screen at any given moment (De Linde 1995: 10). The 6-second rule has been widely accepted as rule of thumb for 'readable'subtitles. D'Ydewalle *et al.* (1987), who studied the variables that determined subtitle reading speed, support the 6-second rule on the basis of three findings which seem particularly interesting:

> the subjects don't spend more time in the subtitle when the spoken language is not available […] reading a written message is faster and more efficient than listening to the same message, as the text still stays on the screen while a spoken voice immediately vanishes [and] subjects reported more problems in reading a subtitle with one line than with two lines (*ibid*.:320-321).

Even though this might suggest that not much difference should be found in terms of Deaf viewers' subtitle reading rates, d'Ydewalle considers that the 6-second rule should be replaced by a 9-second rule as deaf viewers are typically slow readers (personal communication). If we are to confront this belief with other findings set forth by Koolstra et al. (1999) in terms of the longer time taken by children to read subtitles, and the often mentioned fact that deaf adults tend to have the reading ability of a nine-year-old hearing child (cf. (Rodda & Grove, 1987: 165), then subtitling for these two publics will necessarily call for similar solutions, a belief that is tentatively suggested by de Linde and Kay (1999: 6-7).

Unless speech is reasonably slow or scarce, verbatim subtitles may have such high reading rates that they will be difficult to follow. Why demand for verbatim when it is more important to have sufficient reading time and carefully adapted subtitles that are enjoyable to read, easily interpreted and unobtrusive? Subtitles should never be in the way of enjoyment. Watching television, going to the movies or attending a live performance is not about reading subtitles, it is all about forgetting they are there and taking in the whole audiovisual experience as one.

Equal opportunities only come with the respect for difference, and that is what must be aimed at. Hard of hearing viewers and (capital) Deaf viewers will certainly have different expectations and needs, so, if people with different degrees of hearing loss, linguistic profiles and reading skills are only given one set of subtitles, equal opportunities will never be attained.

7.   Adaptation/editing means reduction

Our seventh fallacy is shared by many of those who advocate verbatim subtitles. They believe that adaptation and editing means cutting short and not giving it all. They see it as a form of censorship. They couldn't be more mistaken! As far as SDH is concerned, adaptation means making reading possible, easier and faster. It also means getting meaning across fully and clearly. Editing may, indeed, include omissions. If the information is redundant, why burden the reading load with unnecessary or superfluous information? But editing may also mean adding. At times, speech is incoherent. Editing can mean adding missing elements to make utterances meaningful. Subtitles may require expansion, for the sake of clarification. And in the case of offering information such as speaker identification, sound effects, music or paralinguistic information, it means giving more, rather than less. I particularly favour the term 'transadaptation' to name all that goes into making SDH. Not in the sense used by Gambier (2003), in which he refers to all screen translation as transadaptation, but rather when used to refer to the task of 'translating' + 'transferring' + 'adapting' for the benefit of receivers with special needs. Transadaptation, within our context, means to translate and transfer all the information contained in all the layers of the sound track into a visual format and to adapt it to allow people who cannot hear sound to perceive the audiovisual text as fully as possible. In so doing all (editing) techniques are acceptable as long as that effect of easy and enjoyable reading is achieved.

8.   True accessibility comes with sign language interpreting (SLI) – Subtitles are second choice

As may be seen in Neves (2007) the tension behind what seems to be a battle between two irreconcilable forces has no real motive. There is more than space for sign language interpreting and for subtitling in the world of accessibility to audiovisual media. In fact, these two translational solutions play quite different roles and they cannot be measured against each other. SLI plays a political and social role. It shares its prerogatives with all other minority languages. It stands for a right and an identity. It needs to be disseminated and kept alive. It serves the purposes of a particular community but it lives with the limits of its own boundaries. When it comes to accessibility services, SLI comes to the fore as a rapid, easy, if not cheap solution. It is particularly useful in the event of an unexpected situation, such as breaking news, a crisis intervention or a live/direct statement. SLI is indeed easier to provide than live subtitling, hence its preference in the case of news bulletins and live programmes. However, it has its limits and, despite its enormous value, it is not adequate for all audiovisual genres nor does it cater for the needs of the majority. SLI will be excellent for a news bulletin or a sports report, but it will look rather awkward when used on a soap opera or action movie. The

presence of a sign language interpreter on a screen that is already (over)populated by a number of characters may prove awkward, while fast exchanges between numerous characters will prove difficult to master by a signer under the time and space constraints imposed by the audiovisual text. Then again, SLI will be really useful for Deaf signing viewers, but it is common knowledge that the majority of the deaf and the hard of hearing audiences do not know sign language. This gains special relevance if we take the fact that hearing impairment often comes with age, and most elderly people, who have always belonged to the hearing community, might not know sign language.

Even though a hearty advocate of subtitling solutions, I do not deny SLI its importance. However, I consider subtitling to be a more versatile solution. It is adaptable to most circumstances, it is relatively unobtrusive, it has wider applications and it has a greater number of users. As happens with many hearers, subtitling may help d/Deaf people to improve their linguistic and their reading skills. It will be the best solution for the deaf and the hard of hearing who do not master sign language; and it is a service for all those hearers who (for a number of reasons) also need subtitles to gain access to audiovisual messages.

9.   100% subtitling is the ultimate goal

It is impressive that some countries, such as the UK, France and Spain, should aim at 100% accessibility services on television in the near future. These are courageous benchmarks revealing progressive minds and determined fighters. All countries should establish similar goals, and work gradually towards true inclusion. But quantity should by no means be the ultimate goal.

100% subtitled programmes may, in practice, not mean 100% accessibility. If quality standards are not met, then figures alone say very little. It may be true that 'quality' is in itself difficult to define. It may be measured in terms of availability, accuracy, adequacy or even style. However, there are definitely minimal standards to be had if any type of subtitling is to be useful to its users. Utility and commodity may well be the basic parameters most people will be looking for. It is natural that quantity should be a goal when nothing or very little is available. Quantity loses its validity when *quality is not guaranteed* and when compliance is only measured in terms of the number of programme hours to be covered by accessibility services.

Even though d/Deaf and hard of hearing viewers demand more subtitling and more SLI, they are also critical of the quality of what they are offered, as previously mentioned in point 5. Few broadcasters truly hear their viewers' opinions. Few offer open channels for complaints and suggestions as happens with the BBC, which ends subtitled programs with an invitation

to comments (subtitling@bbc.co.uk) and even fewer revisit their practices in the light of the feedback users give them.

In face of present practices, one might set forth a number of questions. Who overlooks the compliance with rules and regulations? How many countries run quality observatories? How many invest in the training of their subtitlers by offering them lifelong training opportunities? How well are subtitlers paid? What incentives are they given to improve their productivity and quality standards? The answers to these questions are not as yet perfectly known, despite the existence of reports such as that by the Media Consulting Group (2007); but, should they be found, they may prove that, as far as SDH is concerned, quantity and quality are still quite far apart. I think the 100% goal is only worthwhile if it is accompanied by yet another goal: the '100% quality' goal.

10.   SDH is now here to stay

Is it? It might be the case that SDH is a thing of the past! It may be true that SDH has suddenly become a trendy topic for research. It is definitely true that it has finally gained the visibility and respect that it much longed for. It is equally true that providers (television, the DVD industry and others) are now willing to invest in SDH solutions. However, SDH as we know it today might be coming to an end, and we are all the more fortunate for it. This may be the case thanks to the introduction of (interactive) digital media, convergence and the changing landscapes in media and computer technology.

IPTV – Internet protocol television is just round the corner. Our traditional media are giving way to a completely different generation of multimedial gadgets. Mobile phones are becoming televisions, fridges and stoves are becoming computers, computers are becoming everything else, information is taking on new shapes and some time soon, all may come to be little more than a hologram, a step away from what we still think is science fiction. It may still take some time for this new situation to settle in completely, but with the current speed of changes, we can only start preparing ourselves, if we want to keep up with development. In this context, accessibility services are bound to take new shapes. Conditions will finally be there for slogans such as 'Television for All', 'Media for All' or 'Audiovisual Services Without Frontiers' to become quite meaningful. New technology will allow us all to interact and to adjust media services to our specific needs. When that happens we can all afford to have 'special needs'. And this is in itself a paradox. Mass media may be better seen as 'individual media' and each viewer will be able to adjust the text s/he receives exactly to what s/he wishes. When that happens, standardisation will be at its best, so that everything falls into place. Audiovisual services will be put together like puzzles. The viewer will be in full command to choose and pick as s/he desires. Subtitles will be offered in different parts

to be assembled as pleased. Then, hearing, deaf, Deaf and hard of hearing viewers, all alike, will be given the opportunity to chose the parts they want to include in their subtitling solutions. When that happens, SDH will not be the correct term, neither will 'Subtitling for All' be in order. Perhaps the best terminology will be 'personal subtitling' as proposed by Gottlieb (1997: 129) or simply 'Subtitling'.

Having gone through these fallacies, what is there in SDH to keep us going?

These are only 10 fallacies among the hundreds of reasons there are to continue working on SDH. Subtitling for the d/Deaf and the hard of hearing deserves all the attention it can get. It deserves to be studied, it deserves to be taught, and all the agents involved deserve to be respected. In short, SDH has allowed subtitling in general to take a step forward. If subtitles are well devised for the d/Deaf they will be equally useful for hearers. They may not be ideal for each person, but they will be 'good enough' for most viewers. So rather than having subtitles for the hearing impaired, at a stage when we cannot have individually tailored subtitles, one should be pursuing subtitles that are reasonably adequate 'for All". Inclusive subtitles should not be labelled; they should not reinforce loss or lack. In stressing 'deafness' they are reinforcing discrimination even if positively meant. They could be simply called intralingual subtitles, interlingual subtitles, (stressing the language issue); or prepared and live subtitles (to emphasise production time). Perhaps they could be called 'full subtitles' (to include all the extras that now go with SDH), or they could simply continue to be called 'subtitles'.

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Biography

Josélia Neves has a PhD in Translation Studies, with a dissertation on Subtitling for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing by the University of Roehampton, London. She teaches at the Instituto Politécnico de Leiria and at the Universidade de Coimbra, in Portugal. She has carried out a number of projects within the field of sensory accessibility, involving Portuguese broadcasters, distributors and Deaf and blind viewers.

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[1] This paper was originally presented at the II Congreso de Accesibilidad a los medios audiovisuales para personas con discapacidad, AMADIS´07. Congreso Internacional. Universidad de Granada, 21-22 June 2007, and takes up, in a new light, some of the issues addressed in the article "Of Pride and Prejudice; The divide between subtitling and sign language interpreting on Television" (Neves 2007).

[2] The term "d/Deaf" is used to highlight the fact that two distinct groups are to be considered: people who are deaf but who belong to the social context of the hearing majority and relate to the oral language as their mother tongue, and the Deaf, a social and linguistic minority, who use a sign language as their mother tongue and read the national language as a second language.

[3] See www.slideshare.net/nilfisq/respeaking-based-realtime-subtitling/3 for a comprehensive list of subtitling types as presented by Lambourne at the Marie Curie EU High Level Scientific Conference Series. Multidimensional Translation: LSP Translation Scenarios, which took place in Vienna, Austria, 30 April - 4 May 2007.

[4] Slow on the up taking, and 20 years and two amendments after the Television Without Frontiers (TWF) Directive was first drawn up, the Commission of the European Community has recently set forward an "Amended Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 89/522/EEC on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the pursuit of television broadcasting activities". This proposal (Brussels 29.03.2007 COM(2007) 170 final 2005/0260 (COD)), which has changed TWF to "Audiovisual media services without frontiers" to accommodate for the technical changes that are expected to derive from interactive digital television (iDTV) and internet protocol television (IPTV), has now found space for the following amendments:

> (Amendment 65 (Recital 47b)) The right of persons with a disability and the elderly to participate and integrate in the social and cultural life of the community is inextricably linked to the provision of accessible audiovisual media services. The accessibility of audiovisual media services includes, but is not restricted to, sign language, subtitling, audio-description and easily understandable menu navigation.(p.9)