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Deaf translators in audiovisual media: The case of an inclusive co-creation laboratory in Uruguay

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ABSTRACT

Accessibility is a necessary condition for the exercise of rights (Greco 2016). When it comes to the deaf linguistic community (Peluso 2010), contexts are more accessible if sign language (SL) is present. The participation of members of this community in translation and interpretation processes and their presence on camera in audiovisual productions are also considered necessary. The way of working described in this article is designed to improve accessibility by not only including minorities (such as deaf sign language users) in the traditional place of validation, but also by giving them a much more relevant and innovative role in the whole process and ultimately making them an essential part of the team of media accessibility (MA) professionals. Our case study focuses on a university experience, showing a way for deaf translators to work in audiovisual media. The aim is to give an account of MA co-creation with deaf people.

KEYWORDS

Sign language, sign language interpretation, deaf studies, deaf translators, audiovisual translation, co-creation, accessible filmmaking, media accessibility.

1. Introduction

Sign language (SL) is often seen in audiovisual media today, mainly through simultaneous interpretation. The use of SL for deaf people is understood as a human right. In audiovisual media it is an act and a linguistic right (Reagan 2010), as well as an accessibility practice. There are now precedents that focus not only on access to content, but also on access to creation (Dangerfield 2021), the latter continuing to be marginal even in countries where media accessibility is widespread (Romero-Fresco 2018). The way of working presented in this article comes as an alternative possibility for understanding access to creation, not in audiovisual production per se (although this is equally necessary), but in the generation of accessibility itself. This is done by not only including minorities (such as deaf SL users) in the traditional place of validation, but also by giving them a much more relevant and innovative role in the whole process, and ultimately making them an essential part of the team of audiovisual translation and media accessibility professionals. This paper deals with the processes of translating pre-recorded audiovisual content involving sign language as the target language. We present a case study in the framework of a university experience, showing one way in which deaf translators can work in audiovisual media. The aim is to give an account of how media accessibility can be co-created together with deaf people.

Accessibility is a necessary condition for the exercise of rights (Greco 2016). For the deaf linguistic community (Peluso 2010), i.e., "[…] people with a sense of belonging, who identify with one another based on shared experience and the use of a sign language […]" (Napier 2016: 51), the presence of SL creates more accessible contexts. Sign languages are natural languages, which means that they present cultural and socio-anthropological aspects. It is therefore necessary to have members of the deaf community involved in translation and interpretation processes and featured on camera in audiovisual productions.

Including SL on screen as a target language is also a new task for those working in audiovisual media. In this regard, the introduction of sign language as a new feature may trigger a transformation in this sector. One of the challenges is understanding that the multimodal universe of audiovisual content (sound and image) will mainly be perceived visually, through a translation or interpreting process. The task that this challenge implies will be carried out by professionals from various disciplines who may not have worked together before, such as an audiovisual creative team and a translation team. Regarding deaf people, the work of deaf translators to facilitate access for the deaf community has been professionalised over several decades (Boudreault 2005). However, the emergence of audiovisual media as novel spaces for their employment has been explored less extensively (Pöchhacker 2010). In Uruguay, audiovisual content is mainly interpreted by hearing interpreters, with deaf people acting as advisors to the interpreting process but having limited presence on screen (Boria *et al.* 2021).

2. Deaf Translators in Audiovisual Media

2.1. Sign Language Translation and Interpretation

A text in one language, whether in written, visual or audio form, can be translated into another in various ways. Still, the translating task can be divided into two main forms: translation and interpretation. Both processes differ conceptually in one key aspect: temporality (Garcia Yebra 1983). In translation, meanings and forms are transferred from one language to another in a deferred way, i.e., at moment (1.) a text is produced in one language, and at moment (2.), even years later, this text is translated into a language other than the original. In interpretation, by contrast, the translating process takes place simultaneously as the original text is being produced (Pöchhacker 2010). Interpretation is carried out when translation is not possible, i.e., where the final text is not available in advance, an interpretation is produced simultaneously or consecutively to the discourse as it is being produced. This is the case with live television segments, speeches, classes or meetings.

The translation process (deferred from the moment of production) also makes it possible to review previous materials, ask questions, analyse the

source text and draw up a translation project in accordance with its characteristics, the languages and cultures in consideration and the contexts in which the translation will be used. In short, it is the textual product of a highly planned process (De Meulder and Heyerick 2013). In interpretation, the source material can only be worked on if it is available beforehand. However, in many circumstances the only possibility is to design adequate strategies for the task (e.g., Cole 2020). Therefore, the target text of a translation process could be of higher quality. Translation and interpretation processes may also involve sign languages. When this is the case, interpretation is more common, e.g., at a conference, while translation can take place when texts in written languages are translated into SLs.

Translation and interpretation between sign languages and oral or written languages have a particular added feature: in addition to transferring forms and meanings, modality is also transferred. In other words, translations are interlinguistic as well as intermodal (Quadros and Segala 2015). This point is relevant in audiovisual translation as both the audio and visual information of the communication context and the languages themselves are expressed in particular ways in each modality, and this has to be translated. Translation into a SL is carried out through the fixation of a text audiovisually by filming a signer. In other words, the translated 'text' is an audiovisual product. As with other languages, SL translation can lead to better quality outcomes, as the method is able to crystallise the best possible solutions (both in form and content) for rendering one language into another. Ultimately, the choice between translation and interpretation depends on the context and the people involved in each communicative act. In audiovisual media, both processes are possible. However, in the light of the above, translation is more desirable when the audiovisual content is not live.

2.2. Sign language in audiovisual media

In order to design accessible audiovisual content for a diverse viewership in which sign languages are present (as either a source or target language in accessibility production), the translation team must include professionals whose natural language is SL, i.e., deaf translators. There are at least two interdependent phenomena that affect the quality of SL translation, one linguistic and another political. These phenomena have similarities with De Meulder and Heyerick's (2013) proposal regarding the political, empowerment, cultural, responsibility, linguistic and language ownership dimensions that justify the presence of deaf interpreters on television. From a linguistic point of view, unlike oral languages, sign languages emerged not so many years ago (Aronoff *et al.* 2005) and are mainly used in deaf communities at school and interpersonal contexts (Cuxac and Pizzuto 2020). Currently, they lack standardisation and normalisation (only a few dictionaries, grammars and technical specialised lexicons exist), and limited

linguistic research (Quer *et al.* 2017) and even less traductology has been carried out on them.

For this reason, producing accessibility where sign languages are concerned happens in a particular translation context: because the circulation of sign languages in formal, academic and cultural spheres is relatively recent, there are subject areas that are likely unknown to SL users, and there may be no history of translation or interpretation in these subjects in a particular SL. The incorporation of translation and interpretation in new thematic contexts changes the discursive environment for the language and, consequently, for its users. Therefore, SL translation and interpretation is a performative act, as in many cases the first time a subject enters SL is through translation (e.g., Toury 1995). Translation thus plays a relevant social role in occupying vacant areas and introducing new genres and themes (Wilson 2004). Hence, the traductological challenge is to transfer meanings and forms from the source language (an oral language, OL) that have never been said in the target language (a SL), and to do so with few or non-existent tools to support the translation process (e.g., specialised glossaries, terminological bases, dictionaries and corpora). These phenomena also occur in other minority languages. This was the case of Guarani's urbanisation in Paraguay (Garvin and Mathiot 1974), when it began to enter spheres in which it had not previously circulated, such as the education system, the media and the political system. In the field of oral language translation, it is known that the task performed will be better in the translator's or interpreter's language of greatest proficiency (native users, regular users). Therefore, it is indisputable, and even more so in the context described above, that natural SL users trained in the field should be directly involved in accessibility production (i.e., SL translation and production) between sign languages and oral languages to ensure both the quality of the process and its end result.

From a political point of view, as with any language, the social, cultural and anthropological perception that each community has of the local SL has a direct impact on the valuation of its users. It is well known that the sociocultural status of a language is not associated with its intrinsic features, but with the processes of normalisation and standardisation (Giles and Powesland 1975). It is therefore relevant to take into consideration the historicity of deaf communities and the representation and visibility of sign languages. As relatively new languages, they are not usually of prestige. Instead, they are often minoritised or devalued, even to the extent of being banned, especially in educational institutions (Sacks 2003). The presence of a SL across different spheres gives it a privileged place for visibility, both of the language itself and the linguistic community that uses it, even if a large part of society does not understand it (Calvet 1996). Therefore, spaces such as audiovisual media can be symbolic places of presence, visibility and positive valuation not only of the SL but also of its signing community. The inclusion of SL interpretation on television, for example,

not only boosts visibility but also changes the linguistic environment, increasing the sign language's symbolic weight and sociolinguistic value.

2.3. Deaf translators

The process and act of translating is something that has been performed informally by deaf people in deaf communities for as long as they have existed. However, the professionalisation of this task only began some years ago. Another relatively recent development is research into deaf translators' roles and tasks, mainly those carried out by deaf bilingual people (Stone 2009) who translate between two languages of different modalities: one written and the other visuo-gestural (Lenehan 2007; Stone 2007, 2009; Wurm 2010; Cole 2020). Adam, Carty and Stone (2011) recognise several scenarios in which deaf people become translators in their childhood. Although the role of translator may arise naturally, Stone (2009) underlines the need for professional skill and aptitude development among translators in audiovisual media. Likewise, this role should be filled by deaf people who are natural SL users and are 'balanced bilingual' (i.e., having a high and equal level of proficiency in both languages), as their linguistic strategies are more appropriate. This is a task that deaf translators recognise as their own because they generate greater authenticity in the SL product and consider the deaf audience as the receiver. Research by Stone (2007, 2009) reports on the different ways in which hearing and deaf interpreters work in television, specifically in UK broadcast news. The deaf interpreters perform the interpretation live into British Sign Language from a written text (news script) with the support of an autocue that displays the written text in English (Stone 2007). Meanwhile, Stone's (2009) experiment shows the process of translating pre-recorded materials into SL carried out by deaf translators based on various inputs (i.e., scripts and tapes). The translation is prepared and then filmed, and it can be shot several times in case of disagreement on the part of the translator. Stone (2009) highlights that deaf interpreters embedded in professional practice increase the thematic approach and translation environments, which include websites, public services, governmental departments and television. While current research gives an account of the European context in this regard, the Uruguayan situation is different and therefore local studies are necessary.

2.4. Brief description of the Uruguayan context

In Uruguay there are two technical qualifications for training Uruguayan Sign Language (LSU)-Spanish interpreters. One of them is a university degree taught at Universidad de la República (Udelar) and the other a tertiary programme taught at a private institute connected to the Asociación de Sordos del Uruguay (Uruguayan Deaf Association). In its early days, beginning in 2009, the university degree at Udelar only trained hearing interpreters. Then, from 2014 onwards, deaf students were also admitted. With this change, a new perspective was added to the original curriculum, which until then focused on interpreting between SL and OL. This consisted

of translation training between written modality languages and visuo-gestural modality languages. The idea underpinning this new training perspective was that video-recorded sign language has similar characteristics to written texts, i.e., it can be written/signed at one time and read/seen at another. Peluso (2014: 16) calls both of them "deferred texts".

Although deaf translators have had access to professional training in Uruguay for almost a decade, their participation and development in translation and interpretation contexts are still limited. Lorier *et al.* (2020) and Boria *et al.* (2021) describe and analyse the incorporation of on-screen SL interpreting during news reports, which in Uruguay expanded thanks to the regulation in 2019 of Law N°19.307 (2015), commonly known as the Media Law. These studies focus on new ways of working in already established television production structures, the technical characteristics of the on-screen SL interpreting window (position, embedding, size) and the working methods of the interpretation teams. Their findings show that deaf translators are not part of the interpretation team, their role is only as non-professional external consultants and their task comes down to lexical inquiries. The interpreter and translator training for the deaf at Udelar takes into account teamwork where deaf translators have a leading role and are involved in translation spaces on equal terms, conditions and status. However, this aspect is still missing in interpretation teams' way of working, as is deaf translators' inclusion in the labour market. These professionals are not summoned to validate or revise interpretations.

3. The case of an inclusive co-creation laboratory

'Communication and Accessibility', an interdisciplinary training course, has been carried out at Udelar since 2020. It is an undergraduate education experience that brings together teaching, outreach and research to approach MA from an interdisciplinary and human rights perspective and thus contribute to students' full participation in communication and culture. The proposal is part of the Interdisciplinary Nucleus on Communication and Accessibility' (Udelar). Students and professors come from various disciplinary fields (psychology, language and translation studies, communication and visual design). There are also institutional affiliations within academia (various universities) and civil society organisations (Uruguay Deaf Association, Uruguay National Union of the Blind and Uruguay Down Association).

The project is rooted in the creation of interdisciplinary-in-dialogue teams to approach the different accessibility tools as a whole, so as to work with processes that ensure potential users' participation. This is based on exploration, testing and research as ways of providing feedback on the professional work carried out and the teaching methodology. It includes a training block on MA and rights; a second block on accessibility tool production (translation into LSU, subtitling, audio description and easy-to-

read texts) for short films in which creative versions are explored; and a final exhibition block in which an audience's preferences regarding the different versions are studied, focusing on design, the interaction among tools and their reception.

As mentioned, the inclusive co-creation laboratory engages in MA production, bringing together university students and professors and civil society organisations[1]. Deaf users of LSU are present in both the academic and organisation groups. The teaching team and student group include deaf and hearing people who are bilingual in LSU and Spanish. For this reason, interpreters between these two languages, as well as other strategies, are provided to promote accessibility across all the activities. Working with undergraduates who are training to become deaf translators and members of the deaf association enables dialogue from different fields and areas of knowledge, some of which are more specific to professional experience and others to university training. Despite this, they are faced with an activity that is new to all of them: MA production.

This article focuses on the development of MA tools for adapting national short films as part of an inclusive co-creation laboratory that links academia, potential users and civil society throughout the whole work process (ideation, validation and realisation). Emphasis is placed on user-centred design, which has potential for producing better developments (Orero *et al.* 2018, Romero-Fresco 2019, Pelta 2010). Bridging the gap between designers/experts and end users becomes a central aspect of accessibility promotion (Greco 2018). This view is backed by the accumulated experience of the design field, where it is known that co-creation, understood as the participation of users from end to end (i.e., not only in the ideation process, but also in the decision-making process), has positive long-term impacts (Sanders and Stappers 2008).

The 'Communication and Accessibility' training course in which the laboratory operates, which was designed and run by the professors who authored this article, has been offered twice (in 2020 and 2021) and has enabled the development of ways of working through the creative exploration of different working scenarios that include deaf people and contribute to the professionalisation of deaf translators for the audiovisual field. The evaluation and systematisation that took place between the first and second course have led to more productive work processes. Stages, roles, tasks and technical and material resources that optimise the activities have also been designed. Thus, over the course of two years, we were able to look at media accessibility production, test possible planned scenarios, identify shortcomings and ways to improve, and test again until reaching the process carried out with deaf translators and members of the deaf community who use LSU.

It is also relevant to highlight that the work proposal, as a process in itself, and the professional team presented in this article were implemented within

this teaching framework and also put into practice in outreach, research and professional creation projects, such as the development of audiovisual materials on COVID-19, the adaptation of a short film in the context of a reception study on audiovisual accessibility and the documentary film *Un lugar común* (Miranda 2022), which explored the 'Accessible Filmmaking' approach (Romero-Fresco 2019) during its production.

3.1. Co-creation laboratory and translation process

In the Uruguayan context, there are currently two working methods through which SL translation is incorporated into pre-recorded audiovisuals: (i) simultaneous interpretation of known materials and (ii) translation. Simultaneous interpretation of known materials refers to the process of simultaneously interpreting oral language information from audiovisual content into a sign language. Since the audiovisual content is already completed, the interpretation team can watch it, prepare interpretation strategies and deal with lexical issues beforehand. This task is carried out by hearing people trained as SL interpreters (SL)<>(OL). This method prevents deaf people from signing on camera because the interpretation process involves listening to the audiovisual content and simultaneously interpreting while being filmed (Boria *et al.* 2021). Translation is a process carried out prior to filming by a team of deaf and hearing people. Here, the translated text is produced as an audiovisual. This translation is studied and prepared before filming. In the inclusive co-creation laboratory, translation is the chosen way of working. The translation of oral languages into sign languages (OLT>SL) in audiovisual media bears similarities with some transfer modalities within the audiovisual translation field, as it consists of intersemiotic translation with audiovisual characteristics, involves two sign systems and is subject to audiovisual conditioning factors (e.g., spatio-temporal), among other elements.

However, it is with dubbing that it shares truly interesting similarities. Chaume (2012) presents six major priorities of dubbing that concern quality, at least two of which we find to be very close to those of OLT>SL. First is synchrony, which is one of the main concerns of studies of this modality (Bosseaux 2019). Among the kinds of synchrony described by this author — lip, kinaesthetic and duration synchrony — it is the latter, isochrony, with which OLT>SL shares similarities. Like dubbing, when SL is used on screen as an accessibility tool, the signer's movements must occur with the same (or almost the same) duration as the audiovisual oral speech. Second are performance standards. In this regard, it is important to note that just as there is a professional field for dubbing actors, there could also be a field for SL actors, i.e., SL professionals who sign on camera following a script (the translation). Thus, it is possible to separate the translation process from the signing process, as well as from the professionals who carry it out, in the same way that dubbing script translators can be separated from dubbing actors. This is a fertile field of work for deaf translators. As SL professionals and natural sign language users, they are

the ones who will display the best signing performance. However, not all of them will have what it takes to handle being on a film set and exposing themselves in front of a camera. Nor will they all have the expressive acting skills required. Some basic abilities to perform as an on-camera signer will be covered below, although this issue needs to be explored in more depth. In general, studies on deaf translators (as cited above) tend to focus on the languages and not on the kinds of texts, contexts or semiotic environments in which these translations are embedded. The inclusive co-creation laboratory has designed a special working method to carry out the translation process in teams of deaf and hearing professionals, as described below. One of its main objectives is to promote deaf translators' participation with professionals from the audiovisual field on equal terms.

3.2. Deaf translators in front and behind the screen: an approach to team and work processes

Within the framework of 'Accessible Filmmaking', the Director of Accessibility and Translation (DAT) emerges as the professional bridge between the audiovisual creative team, translators and accessibility professionals, and potential users (Branson 2018, Romero-Fresco 2019). In line with this approach, and in order for the work to be the outcome of co-creation, the media accessibility laboratory used the working roles and audiovisual process described below.

3.2.1. Roles and functions of the audiovisual production team

OL<>SL Director of Translation. A person trained in translation between oral and SL with specific audiovisual expertise who is part of and coordinates the translation team. This is the contact person for the Director of Accessibility and Translation, if there is one, or directly with the audiovisual production and signing teams. This person can be either deaf or hearing and will coordinate a mixed team of people whose first language is a SL or an oral language. Given the sociocultural and historical characteristics of SL, as well as the incipient nature of translation and interpretation in SL in formal education, the knowledge and skills required for translating could be covered by one or more members of the team, depending on their training and abilities.

Deaf translators. They are part of the translation team, which according to the volume of work, must consist of at least one deaf person and one hearing person, both trained in translation between the relevant languages. Some of the necessary skills are assembled into the following fields of knowledge: SL and written language, translation, audiovisual production, as well as audiovisual translation and accessibility in the field of sign languages.

On-camera signers. The team of people who sign in front of the camera must be provided the translation in audiovisual format. They are the ones

who are ultimately featured in the audiovisual product. Depending on the requirements of each audiovisual production and the general decisions guiding the accessibility project, the size of these teams will vary. It is advisable for the deaf translators working as on-camera signers to be natural users of the SL into which the translation has been made (i.e., not of another SL). They must be highly proficient in SL, have knowledge of audiovisual media (filming set-ups, how to receive directions, technologies used), have a high memory capacity in terms of the segments to be signed (this is relevant even if props, memory aids or prompters are used) and have training in the use of their body, as the task resembles acting in some ways. It is also possible, for example, to hold a casting process for SL users in order to choose the best on-camera signers, on the understanding that not all people will have the same experience, posture and/or attitude in front of the camera. This role is close to the task of presenter or dubbing actor, and we believe that this point should be further explored both in practice and in theory.

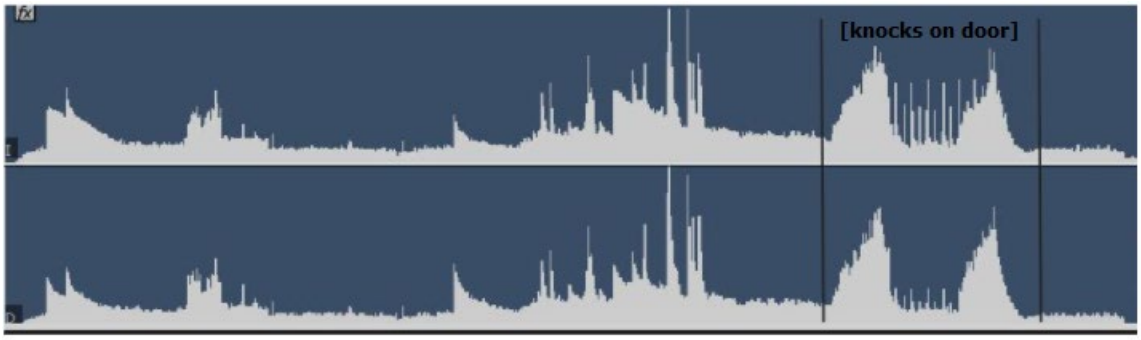
Validators. Validation is carried out with deaf people from the community and SL users. Depending on the accessibility and translation project, it is also convenient to select the validators according to their language proficiency in SL, their audiovisual consumption and their previous experience of watching audiovisuals with SL translation on screen.

Interpreters. As it is not normally the case that all the roles described above are filled by SL users (deaf or hearing), having SL<>OL interpretation available in all instances where both languages are present will guarantee accessibility and communication among everyone involved. Interpreters can be present in various settings, from pre-production meetings to the film set, so having knowledge of the entire audiovisual production process and mastering the linguistic specificity of this technical area and that of translation and accessibility is necessary.

3.2.2. Audiovisual production process with deaf translators

In what follows, we describe the work process at each stage of audiovisual production: pre-production, production-filming and post-production. Each stage requires general tasks that can involve deaf translators in various ways. During pre-production, the main task of deaf translators is interlinguistic, intermodal and intersemiotic translation. For interlinguistic translation, the material to be translated is first analysed as audiovisual language (narrative and formal aspects). This task may involve coordination between the Director of Translation, the Director of Accessibility and Translation and the audiovisual creative team, for the sake of coherence between the translation and the audiovisual content. Secondly, so that all members of the team have equal access to the material to be translated, the texts produced in oral language in the audiovisual content are transcribed into written language with the following information: linguistic (literal transcription of spoken utterances), suprasegmental (prosodic

aspects such as intonation and voice rhythm), and other elements of the soundtrack (effects, music), as well as their temporal location. The transcribed text is embedded on screen and is synchronised with the spoken dialogues. The team can also see the shape of the sound waves, which are labelled with the relevant sounds.



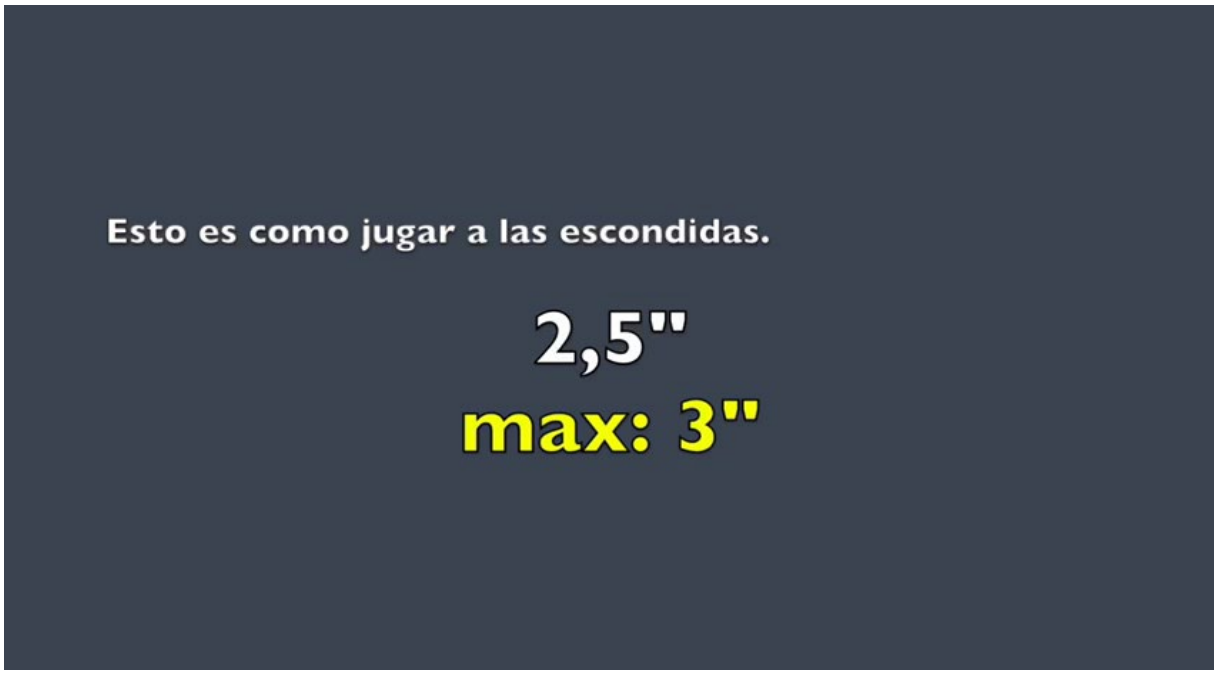
Picture 1. Reference of shape of sound wave with sounds labelling

The first version of the OLT>SL is then produced, and once the purely interlinguistic translation has been completed, a second version is created, incorporating aspects that refer to the intermodal and intersemiotic translation. The aim of this stage is to ensure that the SL is linguistically coherent and cohesive with the audiovisual context in which it is embedded. Put another way, the translation should be consistent with the audiovisual. Translation into SL is by nature audiovisual (sign languages are visuo-gestural languages). Thus, when the original text is an audiovisual, there will be an overlap between the translation and the original. This allows the team to design how the translation and audiovisual are to interact. In this part of the process, it is important to time the translation so that it matches the timing of the oral production.

Picture 2. Example of signed interaction with the audiovisual content

The translation process usually involves the team filming several versions until it comes up with the final version, which must maintain isochrony with the speech just like a translation for dubbing.

For better coordination with the audiovisual creative team and the Director of Accessibility and Translation, the video of the translation into SL can be made accessible to non-SL users, either via transcribed subtitles, the original audio of the audiovisual, intertitles or a reading of the oral utterances produced in the original. This gives non-SL users insight into issues related to spatiality, temporality and the textual connection between the translation and the original audiovisual material.



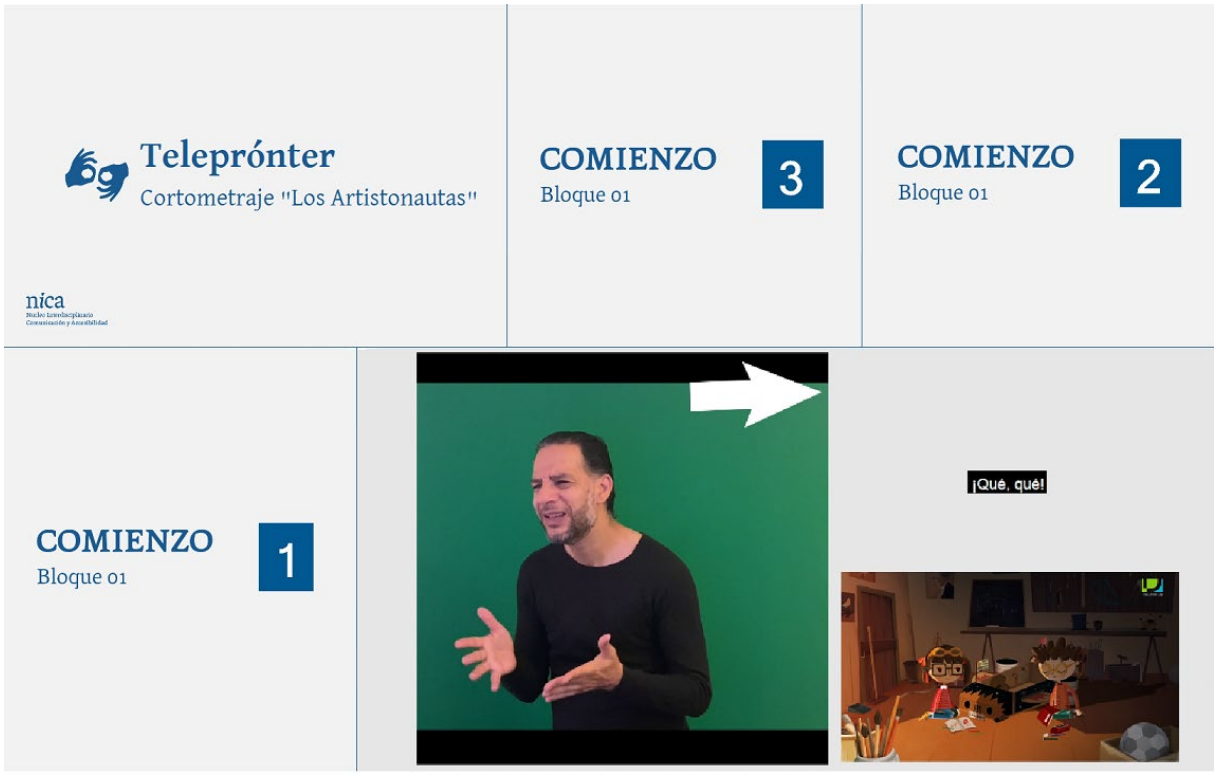
Picture 3. Example of accessible video with intertitles for non-SL users

Once the final version of the translation is achieved, it is filmed and edited with the audiovisual material. This is the product that undergoes initial validation by the end users. The translation process may have two validation stages, one during translation and a second in post-production after editing to make final adjustments regarding the cutting of the signer and synchrony, i.e., aspects related to the on-screen display. Validation can be carried out together with deaf people from the SL community, as well as with hearing people who are SL users. The views expressed during validation are registered and analysed by the translation and creative team in charge of the audiovisual production (or the Director of Accessibility and Translation). This step is valuable insofar as it is another instance of co-creation with non-expert end users, who contribute their knowledge and experience. In doing so, the SL text is reviewed in terms of language variety and register (regional, cultural, educational) while certain audiovisual translation strategies are also checked. After the validation analysis, the translation team makes the necessary adjustments to produce a final version of the translation to be filmed.

After the translation has been completed, work begins with the team of signers, which involves tasks such as adjusting the dramatic aspects of the signing to the audiovisual material's subject matter (work similar to that

carried out by dubbing experts), as agreed upon with the audiovisual creative team, the Director of Accessibility and Translation and the Director of Translation. A document that systematises all the points to be considered (script and shooting plan) is then produced. This includes several layers of information, namely information related to (i) the translation; (ii) aesthetic-dramatic decisions such as gazes at the camera and performance; (iii) dialogues and their timing; (iv) organisation of filming blocks by signer; and (v) technical and artistic aspects such as lighting, shots, make-up and outfits.

An autocue is designed to film the signer in front of the camera. This is a very useful technique, especially for long audiovisuals. It consists of an audiovisual aid containing the SL translation, audiovisual markings (such as gaze direction and change of profile) and aesthetic-dramatic decisions (e.g., emotion during signing, signing rhythm). The whole of these markings are made visually, all within the already synchronised times. The autocue is performed entirely in SL and the markings appear as visual icons. In the example below, an arrow can be seen in the right margin. This indicates the body inclination and the gaze direction.



Picture 4. Example of autocue

The signing team uses the autocue as a script to study and rehearse. It is then played during filming.

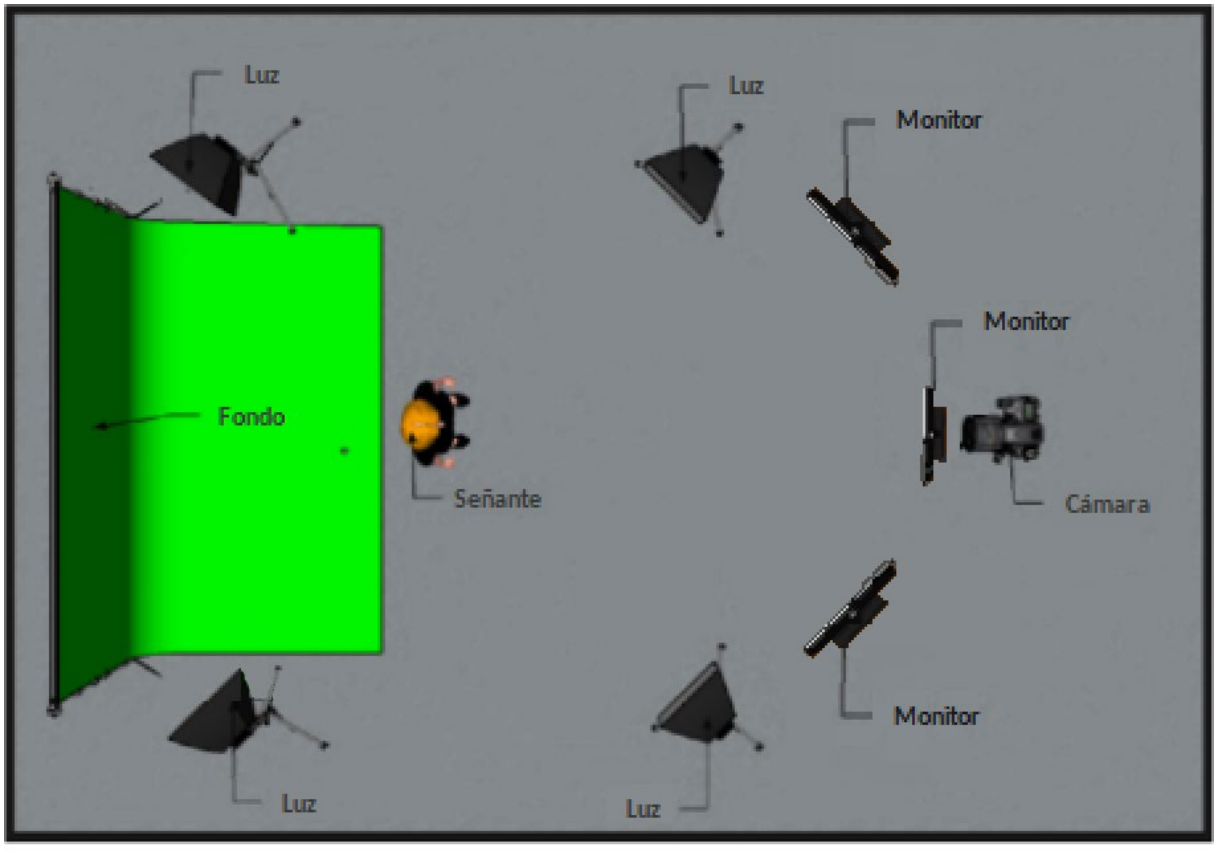
In the production stage, the signers must interact with the Director of Accessibility and Translation, the Director of Translation and the production

team. To guarantee communication (with oral language users who are not familiar with SL), interpreters are needed before and during filming. As in any audiovisual production, aesthetic-dramatic decisions may lead to outfit, make-up or lighting changes on set, thus diverging from what appears in the script and shooting plan.

In addition to the usual technical equipment, the film set must also be fitted with a monitor to display the autocue for the signers. The monitor must be big enough to be seen easily from a distance. It should be placed at the same height and direction as the signer's gaze. This is because gaze has grammatical and discursive value in sign languages (changes in gaze create meaning). If the signers have to change their position often (e.g., change of profiles), there should be a monitor at each corner and another one on the same line as the camera. During filming, the role of the Director of Translation is essential to prevent errors or changes regarding the autocue.

If the editor is not a SL user, it is necessary to film with an audio reference to identify the correlation between the dialogues and the SL translation block. In this case, during pre-production, the signed version is incorporated into the autocue and the video is played back with sound during filming so that everything is shot together.

The following image shows the basic set for filming the signers.



Picture 5. Film Set.
Adaptation of Da Rosa and López (2019) proposal

The post-production stage involves editing the filmed translation with the original audiovisual material. At this stage of the process, the Director of Translation selects the final clips for each block and creates the editing worksheet. The editor works off of this worksheet and is aided by the reference audios for each clip. One of the tasks to be carried out together with the Director of Translation involves making adjustments in order to synchronise the SL and the speaking times. Once the editing is finished, before delivery of the final product, the translation team should ideally be gathered for a final review. A second validation with SL users can also be carried out at this point. This viewing makes it possible to correct the entry and exit times of the signer's image, synchronisation and other potential issues.

4. Discussion

Deaf translators' professional role in audiovisual media is relatively new, as is its academic development. This article systematises an interdisciplinary experience that can be analysed in the light of contributions made by Stone and other authors who have dealt with the subject in depth. In this article, deaf people, as proposed by Stone (2009), are part of the community and also professionals trained in the field. We agree with this author in that on-camera SL production is part of the linguistic and cultural transmission of these languages. Furthermore, we regard this as a matter of social and political valorisation of the language and its users.

Our focus on the role of deaf translators as MA professionals is not driven by political considerations alone, but also by the aim of improving quality. In this regard, we explore possible ways of thinking about "media accessibility quality", a term coined by Greco and Jankowska (2019: 1). We understand the construct of 'quality' from a multidimensional perspective, working on interlinguistic, intersemiotic and intermodal issues in OLT>SL in audiovisual media. We also view accessibility not only as a product, but also as a process in which users themselves take part. Thus, all aspects involved in the production of accessibility should be accessible to the whole team (SL users and non-users). We also emphasise the need to avoid approaches based solely on translation studies. Hence, in this case study, we aim to offer an aesthetic rather than a merely linguistic experience. To that end, we understand MA as a space in dialogue with cinematography and on-screen SL production design, and with signing in its link to audiovisual aspects and those of acting.

The work process for deaf translators in audiovisual media described by Stone (2007, 2009) is admittedly more suitable for live broadcasts because of the emphasis on oral language. Like Stone, we present a way for deaf translators to work in audiovisual media, in our case with pre-recorded audiovisual content. Here, the translation is prepared in advance and the on-camera signing is done with the support of an audiovisual autocue,

which, unlike Stone's proposal, displays the translation in SL with performative markings that link it to the original audiovisual material. Filming a fixed text that has been studied and approved by signers as the best possible translation optimises filming time and ensures that the translation is synchronised with the original, a difficult feat to achieve when filming and translating simultaneously.

As Grosjean (1997, as cited in Stone 2009) notes, a language spoken by a reduced number of people and a small quantity of contexts is likely to have less fluent users. If, in addition, it is not used for a specific purpose, it will not develop the necessary linguistic properties (specialised vocabulary, stylistic variety) and will produce few balanced bilingual users. This is the situation of SLs in audiovisual media. This case study overcomes this difficulty thanks to the way of working employed, which involves translation teams made up of deaf professionals and bilingual listeners, although not necessarily balanced bilingual and on-camera signers or deaf translators with performative skills. Finally, the presented case is unique in that its conception of accessibility takes into account the specificities of audiovisual media, such as language and production means. It also employs an interdisciplinary working team and affords full participation to the deaf community.

5. Conclusions

This experience is part of an interdisciplinary educational initiative that brings together outreach and research for university student training and representatives of civil society organisations at the intersection of communication and accessibility. Regarding SL media accessibility production, a way of working has been developed whose core is the inclusion of deaf SL users (end users) not only for validation, but also as part of the whole process, including their training work in professional roles. The decision to advocate for deaf people's role as translation professionals in audiovisual media is driven by at least two important reasons: there are trained professionals in Uruguay, but they have been left out of the media circuit even though there are legal frameworks in place to ensure the incorporation of SL as a means of accessibility. In order to disarm the 'colonialist' (Oviedo 2006, Peluso 2021) logic of denial of the deaf community in hegemonic and socially prestigious spaces, it is useful to consider critical theories and to enable other *lugares de enunciación* (Mignolo 1995) or *lugares de fala* (Ribeiro 2017) ('places of enunciation'); that is, to craft stories from the social and cultural vantage point of the groups themselves. This could be a step towards SL in audiovisual media ceasing to be a language conceived only as a means of accessing OL content, thus opening the way to SL production by deaf communities and putting accessibility on the opposite path, i.e., for non-SL users.

In this article we present a case study that was carried out as part of a larger university research project. This experience, which showed a way for

deaf translators to work in audiovisual media, aimed to provide an account of MA co-creation with deaf people. The experience also sought to contribute to the production of quality media accessibility and the incorporation of on-screen SL with a deaf identity, in order to promote an aesthetic experience in film consumption and, therefore, help to broaden this community's rights.

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Notes

[1]The co-creation training proposal presented in this article is part of a larger research project that seeks to analyse the production and reception of audiovisual content involving sign language, both as a source and target language. This research also especially considers the role and contribution of deaf translators in this process. The authors of this article are hearing researchers: two are trained as sign language interpreters (Uruguayan Sign Language and Argentine Sign Language) and two are non-LSU speakers. Since its inception in 2020, the research project on sign language in audiovisual media in Uruguay has involved more than 80 deaf people in various roles: as representatives of civil society organisations with which the researchers work, as students of LSU<>Spanish translation and interpretation, as teachers and researchers who have graduated as deaf translators, and as members of the linguistic community. This exchange allows us to continue learning

and deepening our knowledge about the deaf community and its relationship with audiovisual media, while at the same time obliging us to maintain an attentive and questioning attitude towards the perspectives we adopt in our research.