Research Methods in Audiovisual Translation (AVT): Questionnaire Design in Reception Studies

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  - viewer
  - subtitler
  - researcher

Warm-up exercise

Please watch [this audiovisual text](). Then, answer the following set of questions:

- How is meaning created in this short sequence?
- Can you imagine a scenario in which you would be asked to translate this sequence other than providing English subtitles? If so, what could this translation involve?

What is an AV text? 2

- An audiovisual text consists of:
  - two channels of communication: acoustic (or aural) and optic (or visual)
  - two additional aspects: verbal vs. nonverbal

- The four basic components of the audiovisual text (adapted from Zabalbeascoa, 2008: 24):

	Audio	Visual
Verbal	Words heard	Words read
Nonverbal	Music + special effects	Picture

What is an AV text?   3

The prototypical audiovisual text fulfils the following essential criteria:

1. It is a **combination** of audio, visual, verbal and nonverbal elements
2. The different elements are intended to **complement** each other and therefore "may be regarded as *inseparable* for a fully satisfactory communication event"

(Zabalbeascoa, 2008: 24-25; emphasis added)

AVT Typology (oversimplified)

- **Interlingual subtitling, live subtitling and surtitling**

- **Revoicing**
  - Lip-synchronised (lip-sync) dubbing
  - Voice-over
  - (Live) Simultaneous/Consecutive Interpreting
  - Free commentary

- **Media Accessibility**
  - Subtitling for the Deaf and the Hard-of-Hearing (SDH)
  - Audio Description for the Blind and the Partially Sighted (AD)

AVT's Remarkable Expansion   1

Dramatic increase in the quantity and range of AV programmes

- The digital revolution: old and new films are released on DVDs
  - Value Added Material (VAM) also in need of translation
- Media Accessibility: catering for people with sensory impairments:
  - Subtitling for the Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing (SDH) and Audio Description (AD) for the Blind/Partially Sighted
- Online streaming services such as *Netflix, Hulu*

(Díaz-Cintas & Anderman, 2009; Luis Pérez González, 2018)

AVT's Remarkable Expansion   2

- **Academic level** – 'The Cinderella' has been transformed
  - The first decade of the 21st century has seen a boom in academic courses training audiovisual translators and in research devoted to AVT (Díaz-Cintas, 2004; Orero, 2004)
  - Both in AVT research and pedagogy, scholars have called for approaches that would pay more attention to the particularities of audiovisual texts, such as films (e.g. Remael, 2004; Desilla 2012/2014)
  - AVT research has gained momentum

AVT as Cross-Cultural Mediation Project   1

- *Tapping the Power of Foreign Language Films: Audiovisual Translation as Cross-Cultural Mediation* Networking Project (2016-2017) funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC AHN0070261)

- Principal Investigator: Prof. Marie-Noëlle Guillot (University of East Anglia);

- Co-Investigator: Dr Louisa Desilla (University College London)

- Project Website: www.filmsintranslation.org

AVT as Cross-Cultural Mediation Project 2

Project idea based on **three main observations**:

1. the circulation of foreign-language films relying on subtitling or dubbing to reach their public has increased immeasurably with digitisation and global dissemination;

2. our research understanding of how subtitling and dubbing work as an expressive medium and represent other languages is fragmented;

3. we know barely anything from research or the industry of the impact on audiences of subtitling and dubbing as a medium for cross-cultural exchange, despite films' global availability

AVT as Cross-Cultural Mediation Project

Overarching aims:

1. to collate research on linguistic and cultural representation in AVT;

2. **to develop research into AVT-mediated audience responses to foreign language films from an intercultural perspective;**

3. to raise public and industry awareness of subtitling and dubbing as mediators of the intercultural.

AVT as Cross-Cultural Mediation Project   4

- **Norwich, June 2016**
  - Research Workshop @ UEA
  - Roundtable at Cinema City
  - Outreach event at Paston College

- **London, UCL, November 2016**
  - Research Workshop
  - Training Workshop addressed to research students

- **London, British Film Institute (BFI), 26 May 2017**
  - AVT Festival: Poster display, talks, public roundtable

Going Empirical: Audiences

- "We need to revise all the established conventions regarding the audience which are reproduced in the literature on audiovisual translation" (Bartrina, 2004: 161).
  - Exploring audience expectations/needs in different AVT modes.
  - How does the context of reception affects audience expectations and/or translation decisions?
  - How do audiences actually perceive and understand translated AV texts?

- Experiments with audiences as an antidote to the analyst's subjectivity

Implicatures in Subtitled Film

- Addressing the scarcity of reception studies in AVT.

- Research profile (Desilla, 2009/2012/2014):
  - Aim: to propose a methodology for the investigation of implicatures in subtitled films that would:
    1. Cater for film polysemiosis
    2. Elucidate the functions served by implicatures
    3. Examine how implicatures are translated in the TL
    4. **Explore how implicatures are understood by SA and TA**

Investigating implicatures in AVT

- Emerge whenever communicators mean much more than (or something different from) what they actually utter

- Implicature(s) vs. explicature of an utterance (Sperber & Wilson, 1995)

- **implicated premises**: retrieved from the addressee's background knowledge/memory (ibid)

- **implicated conclusions**: deduced from the context and the explicature of the utterance processed together (ibid)

- Prevalent not only in real, interpersonal communication but also in film communication

Methodology

- Combines insights from film studies, multimodality, and cognitive (experimental) pragmatics.

- Comprises 3 stages:
  - Multimodal Transcription (Baldry & Thibault: 2006): enables the analyst to identify the contribution of verbal and non-verbal elements to the construal of implicatures
  - Pragmatic Analysis (Sperber & Wilson, 2004): ST and TT are analysed into their implicatures and explicatures
  - Empirical testing of implicature comprehension by British and Greek viewers

- Applied to the study of 71 instances of implicature in Bridget Jones's Diary (2001) and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason (2004)*.

Challenges to explore (Desilla, 2019)

- *Operationalisation:* Defining the phenomenon under investigation and specifying how it is going to be measured (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013: 24-25).

- Choice of methodological tools
  - e.g., Questionnaires, interviews etc.

- Data Analysis

The Jellyfish example…

- [Excerpt from *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (2004)](#)

- Bridget: *Janey Osbourne: Talking to her is like swimming in the sea and been repeatedly stung by an enormous jellyfish.*

- Bridget: *First jellyfish of the evening.*

Exercise on Questionnaire Design: Draft 1

- Have a go at designing a questionnaire (consisting of 3-4 questions) that would test the comprehension of implicit meaning in the Jellyfish scene by an English speaking audience.

- Be prepared to justify the way you have designed your questionnaire including the type of questions you used.

What makes a good questionnaire

- Encourages participants to volunteer as much spontaneous input as possible, avoiding suggestive/leading questions

- Fulfils the requirement of validity and reliability.
  - When exploring implicature comprehension one should ask more 'why' and 'how' questions in addition to the what/who/when questions.

- More than one questions tests for the same set of assumptions and inferences

- Supply a bit of context as appropriate.

(Desilla, 2014; 2019)

Open-ended questions

Advantages

- deliver fuller, richer information;

- Encourage unprompted, spontaneous input; the respondent is not frustrated by the constraint imposed with a fixed choice answer;

- Can shed light on the rationale underlying a particular response

Disadvantages

- Take longer to complete

- Risk of getting irrelevant responses is higher

- Qualitative data analysis can be time consuming and difficult

(Hill; 2006; Burgess, 2001: 8; Coolican, 2004: 171;)

Closed Questions

Advantages

- More focused

- Easier and faster to answer

- Provide structured data can be easily quantified and analysed

Disadvantages

- Risk of leading the respondents answer is higher

- The range of possible responses is restricted

- "Do not allow for nuanced thoughts to be expressed"

(Saldanha and O'Brien, 2013: 157)

The actual questionnaire (SA)

1. Why does Bridget compare Janey Osbourne to "an enormous jellyfish"?

2. What does Bridget mean by saying "first jellyfish of the evening"? Justify your answer.

3. a) Did you notice anything happening at the lower part of the screen while Bridget was saying the above? If yes, describe it and also answer the following question.

   • b) Can you think of any possible reason why this is happening in this scene?

(Desilla, 2009)

Sample responses: British Viewers (SA)

SA4: Because jellyfish sting, just as Janey Osbourn does – metaphorically – with her back-handed compliments and bitchy comments (Question 1)

- **SA5**: She said 'got a boyfriend – at last' as a dig about how long Bridget   was single which stung her (Question 1)

- **SA6**: First blatant insult of the evening (Question 2)

- **SA7**: Janey just doled out her first punch (Question 2)

- **SA2**: Maybe some viewers have no idea what a jellyfish is! (Question 3b)

- **SA4**: The animated jellyfish resembles an animal/creature from a computer game, in which points or 'hits' might be represented by a similar symbol. It suggests we will see more animated jellyfish appear as Janey continues to insult Bridget (Question 3b)

(Desilla, 2009)

The jellyfish… across cultures

- Assuming now the role of the subtitler, take a few minutes to think how you would translate the jellyfish metaphor into your native or other working language.
  - What are the main challenges in this task and what would be your priorities when choosing among different alternatives?

Key Interlingual Subtiting Standards

- Intersemiotic cohesion

- Physical constraints of time and space necessitate the reduction of the original dialogue

- Aim: to achieve maximum comprehension and coherence for the target audience and maximum enjoyment of the audiovisual text

(Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007)

The jellyfish… across cultures 2

What do you think of the translation of "First Jellyfish of the evening" into Greek?

- TT: Πρώτο τσίμπημα της βραδιάς.
- BT: First sting of the evening

Sample Responses: Greek Viewers (TA)

NB. The Greek viewers responded in Greek. The following are back-translations of their responses into English.

- **TA6**: Bridget compares her to an enormous jellyfish because her character is so malicious that her remarks hurt just like a jellyfish [sic] (Question 1)

- **TA7**: I imagine because she dislikes her and also [Janey] throws "venom", namely nasty comments as soon as she gets the chance (Question 1)

- **TA8**: Because she is a backbiter. Obviously she thinks she's better than the others who are definitely inferior to her. She's full of malevolence and irony (Question 1)

- **TA3**: She means the first caustic remark of the evening [,] this is evident from the look on Osbourne's face & her words (Question 2)

- **TA5**: She means the first malicious comment, a bell also rings, as if counting (Question 2)

- **TA2**: To give more emphasis on the viewer [sic], she says it orally on the one hand but at the same time it is visible – also presented iconically – schematically (Question 3)

- **TA9**: No I don't remember noticing anything (Question 3).

Has a film ever reminded you of another film/a TV series/a novel?

- Films often invite audiences to make links with things they have seen or read in the past
  - ⟶ **intertextuality**

- Successfully catching such allusions is one of the joys of watching a film; filmmakers request our active engagement in the meaning-making process

Example from 'Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason' (2004)

να πέσει στα γόνατα, φορώντας ίσως
βρεγμένο άσπρο πουκάμισο, και να

- Bridget: "Maybe Mark will have chucked Rebecca. And he'll run to my door, fall to his knees, possibly wearing a wet white shirt, and beg me to come back".

The Director's Intentions (Kidron, 2004)

- "maybe international audiences don't know, but British audiences are so aware of Colin Firth as Mr. Darcy" emerging from a pond in a famous scene from BBC's 1995 adaptation of Pride and Prejudice:

Example from 'Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason' (2004)

- In a study that investigated how British viewers understand the film in comparison to Greek viewers (Desilla, 2014), participants were asked the following questions:
    1. Bridget imagines Mark wearing "a wet white shirt". Does this image of Mark remind you of anything similar you may have seen on TV/film in the past? If yes, what?
    2. What does this scene show about Bridget's character and the way she views Mark?

Responses: Overall

- **British viewers**
  - 5 out of 9 referred to 'the pond scene' of the BBC TV adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*
  - More emphasis on the idea of a fairy take romance: Mark as a "her hero", "Prince Charming"; Bridget as "naive", "romantic"

- **Greek viewers**
  - 6 out of 9 said they do not know/remember or gave no answer
  - More emphasis on the sexuality that a wet white shirt connotes

Responses: close-up

- **British viewer**: *[It] probably [reminds me of] a typical hero image, though a specific example doesn't spring to mind. Possibly the 'Milk Tray Man' who delivers chocolates to his lover, but I don't remember if he ever wore wet white shirt.*

- **Greek viewer**: *It reminds me of '9 ½ Weeks'. But a wet white shirt is generally sexy.*

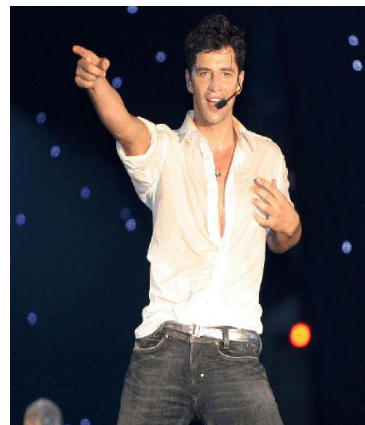- **Greek viewer:** *It reminds me of Sakis Rouvas in a music video. Because something like this is sexy.*

Responses: close-up

- Cadbury's Milk Tray Man

- *9 ½ Weeks*

- Sakis Rouvas

  (Greek singer)

All is not lost in translation...   *1*

- Viewers do not always understand allusions in the way filmmakers would like them to

- Foreign audiences may struggle more with cultural references
<p style="text-align:center">**HOWEVER**</p>

- Missing, or even misunderstanding, a cultural reference may not be detrimental to understanding utterance meaning in its entirety.
    - Utterance comprehension as a continuous, multidimensional variable (Desilla, 2019: 96).

All is not lost in translation... 2

- "Viewers are active meaning-makers who understand films by creatively combining visual and acoustic information, as well as by linking what perceive to previous experience" (Desilla, 2014).

- As individuals, audience members will always personalise their film experience: private meanings will inevitably emerge as each viewer embodies a unique combination of life experiences, values, and beliefs (Phillips, 2000).

Exploring how we read films

- No uniform audience response to film: some viewers may adopt the preferred reading while others may respond to film more idiosyncratically (Stafford, 2007; Desilla, 2014).

- "Cognition is too complex for someone (…) to predict the contextual assumptions that will be evoked by a text with certainty". Researchers should never take for granted that audiences will (or will not) be able to access certain layers of meaning (Hill, 2006).

- Data elicitation methods (e.g. questionnaires) need to be designed accordingly (Desilla, 2019)

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