Audiovisual and accessible translation from a transdisciplinary insight: curriculum design and professional practice for intercultural communication

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Abstract

Audiovisual translation and Media Accessibility are fields of Translation Studies where academic research and professional practice directly influence the translator's training.

In this paper, we address the curriculum design of two modules on Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility in an undergraduate level in terms of concepts, modalities, text types, methodology, learning outcomes and software. The main goal is to analyze to what extent professional practice conditions training for intercultural communication.

We find out that there are labor multidisciplinary activities that demand new functions from the audiovisual translator and we conclude with a reflection on the transdisciplinary insight that training necessarily acquires in these fields.

Keywords: Audiovisual translation; media accessibility; translator's training; employability; intercultural communication.

1. Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility in Translation Studies

Audiovisual Translation (AVT) is the denomination of a translation modality that can be also named in many different ways: dubbing and subtitling, film or cinematographic translation, multimedia translation, subordinate translation, translation for television, translation for the screen... Principally due to its wide scope, the most internationally agreed term is AVT, used as an umbrella term (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2021).

This terminological acknowledgement determines the definition of the concept, that needs to be broad enough to cover a wide spectrum of texts and broadcast channels but limited enough to not overlap other misleading modalities of translation that could be integrated under the same umbrella, like webpages localization. In this sense, AVT can be defined as a translation modality whose texts are characterized for offering information through the simultaneous combination of two different channels, the auditory canal and the visual channel, and for being multimodal texts in which at least two codes converge, the linguistic and the visual, sometimes also integrating the musical code (Chaume, 2012).

Media Accessibility (MA), on the other hand, refers to those practices that allow users with sensory impairments (visual and hearing) to enjoy "full access, without obstacles or barriers, to information, entertainment and training offered not only by audiovisual media (film, video and DVD, television, and the internet), but also by other communicative situations such as theatre, opera, conferences, museum exhibitions, etc." (Díaz-Cintas, 2010, p. 158; our translation). From a more universalist account, MA embraces a "broader conception of accessibility as an instrument for the human rights of all", and it is not confined to "any specific group of people or barriers" (Greco & Jankowska, 2020, p. 62).

AVT and MA, therefore, have a plural nature prone to approaches from different perspectives that converge in the three valuable poles of all translatological and translation activities: academic research, professional practice and training.

The academic grounds are settled within Translation Studies, a discipline that is characterized by its interdisciplinarity, understood as the tendency to establish links with other academic disciplines with which it cooperates in approaches and methods in order to progress in scientific knowledge.

In the specific fields of AVT and MA, this disciplinary convergence reveals itself (i) in the current research trends highlighted in international academic conferences, highly permeable to the inclusion of research perspectives from other academic fields (e.g. Linguistics, Semiotics, Sociology, Film Studies or Reception Studies); (ii) by integrating research methodologies derived from disciplines such as Statistics or Sociology; (iii) through the most cutting-edge research instruments like the ones used for eye-tracking experiments (generally targeted towards marketing studies, professional training, sociological studies or neurological

studies); (iv) in order to implement their results in everyday realities, such as in the form of subtitling for the D/deaf and the hard-of-hearing (SDH), audio description for the B/blind (AD), surtitling for the opera or theatre plays or respeaking for live broadcasting; (v) making its first attempts in immersive SDH and AD environments, mainly intended for the theatre and implying virtual reality technology; (vi) or comprising diversified recipients (e.g. children, languages learners, the elderly, audience with mental impairments, etc.).

2. Translator's training in Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility

2.1. Transdisciplinarity

When it comes to the training in AVT and MA, they become a transdiscipline in their own right as they traverse disciplinary boundaries to combine those pedagogical approaches that best suit them according to real professional demands, being the most significant ones:

i. The approach by learning objectives and tasks (Delisle, 1993), which brings together the intention pursued in the translation process and finally achieved in the translation product by means of various pedagogical activities. That is the case of the following learning outcomes intended for undergraduate translation trainees in the modules subject to revision: "Trainees will be able to translate various types of audiovisual texts to different extents, identify different types of documents and the translation challenges that may be posed by a certain project, analyze their ability to translate each translation assignment and produce a translation of an acceptable quality in a reasonable period of time".

ii. The functionalist approach (Nord, 2005), which understands translation as an act of intercultural communication, and in doing so the translation trainee should develop a general competence of "Acquisition of knowledge of other cultures and development of linguistic and cultural interaction and mediation skills", as it is stated in the modules.

iii. The constructivist and social approach (Kiraly, 1995 and 2000), whose axis is the collaboration between trainers and trainees alike, that is, the collaborative learning; in this case, trainees are fostered to engage themselves in developing a transversal competence, namely, the "Ability to work in a team and to relate to other people from the same or from a different professional field".

Nowadays many public institutions, private agents and professional associations, both at national or international levels, offer specialized training in AVT and MA that favors the very much needed emergence of the transdisciplinary audiovisual translator. In an undergraduate level, Spanish universities currently offer modules in AVT, with or without MA in their study programs, as part of the curricula of the degrees in Translation and Interpreting.

2.2. Curriculum Design

Precisely, we contextualize this study within two modules of AVT that are offered in year 3 and year 4 of the Degree in Translation and Interpreting at the University of Malaga (Spain). Being the first module compulsory and the second module optional, the total trainees' workload is 150 hours per module, out of which 45 hours are devoted to classroom training.

The main objective of these modules is to awaken and deepen the inter and intralingual translation competence in AVT and MA from English into Spanish, in the case of AVT and MA, or from Spanish into Spanish, solely for MA. To do so, three specific objectives are followed:

i.   To apply theoretical, terminological and instrumental bases (documentation and computer tools) in the translation of audiovisual texts.
ii.   To understand the translation of audiovisual texts as a professional activity.
iii.   To reflect on the translation process from a linguistic and a pragmatic perspective.

Together with the learning outcomes and competences formulated above, these objectives lead to the design of a very specific curriculum, where transdisciplinarity inevitably rules.

The coordination between the two modules is mandatory so that there is a direct relationship between the time and resources that are invested in the training process and the intended learning outcomes.

For this reason, the following table sums up this effort in terms of concepts, modalities, text types, methodology, learning outcomes and software that are actually used in both year 3 of the Degree (first year of AVT) and year 4 of the Degree (second year of AVT and first year of MA).

Table 1. Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility Curriculum Design.

Year 1	Year 2
Concepts	
AVT theory AVT modalities Analysis of the audiovisual text AVT professional environment: o Self-employment o Estimates o Invoices	AVT professional environment: o Global panorama and job prospects • Profession - Project management • Associations • Training • Challenges
Modalities	
Subtitling: o Machine translation subtitling and postediting Dubbing: o Voice over/narration	Subtitling for VOD platforms Dubbing for VOD platforms Multimedia translation: o Localization and translation of video games Media accessibility: o Subtitling for the D/deaf and the hard-of-hearing o Audio description for the B/blind
Text types	
Subtitling: o Movies o Trailers Dubbing: o TV series o Advertising spots o Corporate videos o Voice over/narration o Interviews o Reality shows o Instruction manuals	Subtitiling and dubbing for VOD platforms: o Movies o TV series Multimedia translation: o Localization and translation of video games • Video games Media accessibility: o Subtitling for the D/deaf and the hard-of-hearing • Documentaries • Tutorials o Audio description for the B/blind • Animation (short or feature films) • Informercials
Methodology	
o Direct translation EN>ES with/without transcripts o British EN + American EN + other varieties o Clips 1:30-3:00 minutes long o Difficulties: repetitions, hesitations, overlapping voices, speed, humour, puns, foul language, terminology, calques, songs o Assignments: same text types with added difficulties o Estimates and invoices	o Direct translation EN>ES with/without transcripts o Intralingual Translation ES>ES (SPS and AD) with/without transcripts o British EN + American EN + other varieties o Clips 3:00-4:00 minutes long o Difficulties: style, register, dialects, sociolects, idiolects, multilingual texts, neutral Spanish, cultural references, sound effects (SPS) o Assignments: same text types with added difficulties o Estimates and invoices

Learning outcomes

Subtitling:
o   Subtitling according to an academic style guide (e. g. Díaz-Cintas and Remael, 2021):
•   Spotting (with/without transcripts)
•   Formal and textual features
•   Translation techniques
•   Spatial and temporal features
o   Proficiency in subtitling software (with subtitles embedding)

Subtitiling for VOD platforms:
o   Subtitling according to professional style guides (e. g. Netflix or BBC)
•   Review of previous competences and introduction to new ones
•   Subtitling without spotting lists (with/without transcripts)
o   Proficiency in subtitling sofware (with subtitles embedding)
o   Proficiency in project management

Subtitling for the D/deaf and the hard-of-hearing
o   Subtitling according to UNE 153010 and comparison with professional style guides
o   Subtitling without spotting lists (with/without transcripts
o   Proficiency in subtitling sofware (with subtitles embedding)

Dubbling (voice over/narration):
•   Dubbing according to an academic style guide (e. g. Chaume, 2012):
•   Dubbing (with/without transcripts)
•   Translation techniques
•   Synchronization and adaptation
•   Text segmenting
•   Dubbing symbols
•   Proficiency in dubbing and video editing software (with recording)

Dubbing for VOD platforms:
o   Dubbing according to professional style guides (e. g. Netflix or Deluxe)
•   Review of previous competences and introduction to new ones
o   Proficiency in dubbing and video editing software (with recording)

Audio description for the B/blind:
o   Audio description according to UNE 153020 and comparison with professional style guides
o   Audio description with/without dubbing (with/without transcripts)
o   Proficiency in dubbing and video editing software (with recording)
o   Proficiency in project management

Localization and video game translation:
o   Multimedia translation: subtitling, dubbing, voice over/narration, localization…
o   Proficiency in Excel and subtitling, dubbing and video editing software (with subtitles embedding)

Software

Subtitling: Subtitle Wokshop
Machine translation subtitling and postediting: DeepL, Google Traductor, YouTube
Subtitles embedding: Handbrake
Dubbing: Audacity + Avidemux /Openshot

Subtitling for VOD platforms: Aegisub
Subtitling for the D/deaf and the hard-of-hearing: Aegisub

Subtitles embedding: Handbrake
Dubbing for VOD platforms: Audacity + Shotcut

Voice over/narration: Audacity + Avidemux/Openshot	**Audio description for the B/blind:** Audacity + Shotcut	
	Project management: Airtable, Google	
General softaware: Any Video Converter/Freemake Video Converter/Handbrake, VLC		

2.3. Professional Practice

The curriculum design table is reviewed and updated every year based on the needs of AVT and MA as a professional practice, on the actual university budget and the trainees' information technology (IT) possibilities. The latter explain the choice of free and open source software compatible with Mac and Windows from the myriad of tools available. The former delves into the current demands of the labor market, that require from the audiovisual translator to have professional skills in order to carry out multidisciplinary activities linked, above all, to the handling of new technologies. It is the case of computer-assisted translation tools, machine translation tools, the translation and localization of video games and subtitle post-editing.

In addition, specifically designed AVT tools are a must in the professional skills that any audiovisual translator should master regarding IT. That is the case of specific subtitling software or video editing software useful for dubbing.

Regarding the concepts, modalities, text types and methodology implemented in both years, apart from channeling them towards the professional environment, all are sequenced from the general to the particular, they are graded in progressive levels of accomplishment and they do not overlap, trying to cover the widest spectrum of learning outcomes.

These multidisciplinary activities demand new functions from the audiovisual translator, whose professional practice may appear camouflaged in different terminology. As a matter of fact, if we search under "translation" in the Netflix Jobs webpage, we will find different positions with no trace of "translation" in their denominations, but they would certainly benefit from the translators' professional skills; not to mention that the very same positions are also found under other searching terms, more AVT-related, like "subtitling" or "dubbing": Content Localization Project Manager, Localization Director, Localization Producer – Games, Localization Project Manager, Localization Project Manager – Studio and Marketing, Manager, Film & Series Marketing, Product Manager, Localization, or Senior Animator & Rigger – Games Studio. Being most of these positions related to projects, diverse work teams are highlighted in the lateral menu, some of them belonging to adjacent fields, not specifically to AVT itself, like marketing and advertising, economic sciences, data engineering or even research. This is the case of Consumer Insights, Creative Content, Creative Marketing Production, Creative Production, Data Science and Engineering, Netflix Games Studio, Partner Marketing, Partnership, Product Management, or Strategy and Analysis.

3. Final remarks: An Intercultural Communication Crossroads

AVT and MA can be understood as an intercultural communication crossroads where the academic interdisciplinarity is understood as a flow of parallel knowledge that is integrated into AVT and MA; the professional multidisciplinarity refers to the versatility of the audiovisual translator's professional skills, and the training transdisciplinarity relates to the figure of the audiovisual translator as a whole different from the sum of the parts that compose them.

This configuration poses further challenges to the AVT and MA trainer, who must always make an effort to update their curriculum design in relation to the work demands of the prospective audiovisual translator while not neglecting the academic reflection on the translation processes.

As for the latter, envisaging the turn towards Accessibility Studies as a different field from Translation Studies (Greco & Jankowska, 2020) would allow more academic deepening in both fields separately and in cooperation; as for the former, encouraging the collaboration of educational institutions with AVT and MA companies in the form of, for instance, employability and entrepreneurship actions (Enríquez-Aranda & García Luque, 2023) or professional training for trainers (Bolaños-García-Escribano, Díaz-Cintas & Massidda, 2021) would bring training closer to the professional context. The route ahead offers large possibilities starting as it does from an intercultural communication crossroads.

Acknowledgements

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