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OTHERNESS – CHALLENGE OR OBSTACLE IN MULTIMEDIA TRANSLATION

As the world becomes increasingly unified, there is a growing tendency for language transfer in audiovisual media. Media are one of many different channels through which globalization is rapidly occurring. Although audiovisual (or multimedia) translation may not have been discussed much until recently, in the last twenty years, awareness of the importance of this kind of communication has grown considerably because the development of new technologies. This paper will examine whether translation training is keeping up with theory on the translation process and its product. It will address such issues as how to acquire multimedia translation competence, how to design a lesson to achieve long-term goals, and how to determine the teacher's and the student's roles in translation activities. I will discuss possible ways of introducing the predominant and/or prevailing types of multimedia translation to students of translation, giving some practical examples for classroom dynamics.

Keywords: *audiovisual and multimedia translation, translation training, classroom dynamics, translation activities*

1.   Introduction

"Translation is more about people than about words."

Studying and teaching translation for multimedia (MM) purposes is a very complex matter for several reasons. The first one is the "nature" of the translation process itself, where multicultural aspects dominate and should be taken into consideration. By that I mean that there are no right or wrong

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answers as to which translation is one hundred per cent correct, there are hardly ever equations as in mathematics, and there is no universal concept of translation. Maria Tymoczko (1998, as quoted in Maeve Olohan 2004: 194) recognizes "the search for similarity and difference," but she warns against focusing too much on similarity and suggests highlighting the differences, "more in terms of diversity, variety, cultural and linguistic specificity than in the sense of divergence." Usually, translators are invisible, yet they are almost as important as authors, since they have to convey a meaning across cultural, social, political and linguistic barriers. This could, therefore, be marked as one aspect of the above mentioned "otherness."

The second reason is the diversity of media and requirements of the public in today's societies, which require additional specific knowledge and experience in each field of translation with audio, visual and/or written channels. The term "language transfer" is preferred to the term "translation." The same diversity of requirements can be found in the classroom if we consider students' learning styles, multiple intelligences, and backgrounds on the one hand, and staff, financial and technological support, and curricula on the other, which can, once again, be considered as the second aspect of "otherness."

A third important reason which adds to the complexity of translation studies for multimedia purposes and the third aspect of "otherness" is the manner of introducing this skill to students, whereby they are not only being lectured to, but are an important and active part of classroom dynamics. Having said that, one has to keep in mind that language acquisition can take on different forms and there is not only one ideal approach to language teaching. Instead, teachers use approaches to language teaching which best suit their particular needs, and, even more important, their approaches are dictated by their students' needs, as well as with what their working environment offers in terms of resources, technical progress, and staff.

Much has been carried out in the last two decades and a lot more is necessary for translation studies and training to be able to keep track of accelerating progress in scientific and technological knowledge on the one

hand, and to provide students with as much training as possible at the fastest possible rate without reducing the quality and the quantity of effective studying and training on the other.

2.   The dominant types of multimedia translation

"Translation is more about the jobs people do and the way they see their world than it is about registers or sign systems."

Multimedia is an accumulation of written, audio and visual channels. Multimedia translation thus implies not only film (and before that cinema) translation, but also radio and video media, theater, comics, and today more modern on-line and off-line products and services (such as web pages, CD-roms, DVDs, computer games). What all these have in common are not only verbal components, but also other elements such as pictures and sounds which in some cases replace verbal components. Gambier (2003: 171-174) emphasizes "language transfer," bringing to the forefront the multisemiotic dimension of all broadcast programs. In other words, what is important and most challenging in multimedia translation is "the relationship between verbal output and pictures and soundtrack, between a foreign language/culture and the target language/culture, and finally between the spoken code and the written one" (Gambier 2003: 172).

In addition, Gambier (2003: 172-176) classifies two different types of audiovisual (AV) translation into *dominant* and *challenging*. Among the first group we can find interlingual subtitling (offered mostly to the deaf and hard of hearing), dubbing, intralingual dubbing, consecutive, simultaneous and sign language interpreting, voice over or half-dubbing, free commentary, simultaneous or sight-translation and multilingual production or double versions or remakes. If one further considers the *challenging types* of AV translation, it becomes obvious how much scenario/script translation, intralingual subtitling, live or real-time subtitling, surtitling and Audio Description or double dubbing have in common with *dominant types* of AV translation, as well.

Gambier (2009: 47) goes on to say that "all the modes of translation have blurred the traditional borders between translation and interpreting, and between written and oral codes." This means that in most activities of multimedia translation one moves from oral dialogue to written text (as multimedia are generally a combination of sound and visual information) within space and time limitations, from one language to another, dealing with such challenges as text adaptation and time synchronization. Although there are many common characteristics, each has its own individual challenging features and because of this diversity, multimedia translation becomes a mixture of features.

3.   Translation training vs. translation theory

"Translation is more about the creative imagination than it is about rule-governed text analysis."

Even though we can trace documents of translations as far back as two millennia, still "translation theorists, almost without exception,[1] have made little systematic use of the techniques and insights of contemporary linguistics (the linguistics of the last twenty years or so) and linguists, for their part, have been at best neutral and at worst actually hostile to the notion of a theory of translation" (Newmark 1969: 85, as quoted in Roger T. Bell 1991: xv, Introduction). One of the reasons for this is the question whether translation is a science or an art, which makes it difficult to determine how to address the most important questions: "What is translation?" and "Who or what is a translator?"

Written, audio and visual channels are the source texts in multimedia translation and translation of these is even more demanding because the target audience is even more demanding and versatile. Thus the term *transadaptation* is introduced by Gambier, as he claims that "this term allows us to go beyond the usual dichotomy (literal/free translation, translation/adaptation) and take target audiences into consideration more directly" (Gambier 2003: 178). Kay and de Linde (1999) explain that "the dynamic multimedia environment of television and film means neither of

these practices is solely linguistic as the transfer of dialogue into written form is strongly influenced by the structure and semiotics of a film or television programme." Their book *The Semiotics of Subtitling* focuses mostly on the processes and influences involved in subtitling for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers (including the condensing and transformation of dialogue between spoken and written language modes; the conversion of other significant features of a soundtrack into graphic form; the reading capacities and viewing strategies of deaf viewers, and the way in which subtitle features influence viewing behavior), but their theoretical focus should also be considered in the translation of different types of multimedia.

Is translation training keeping up with the theory of the translation process and its "product"? Given the situation in academic circles and given the fact that translation theory has only been discussed in detail in the past two decades or so, I would say that the question should be reversed. Modern technology is advancing at such a rate that one has the feeling it is the theory and the academics who find it difficult to keep up with its progress and demands. Another factor is also worth mentioning here: it is not only the target audience that is very versatile and demanding when it comes to presenting them with the translation (or transadaptation) "product," but it is also the students in our classrooms who are becoming more demanding in terms of *methodology* and *didactics* (such as how a subject matter is introduced to them, is it dynamic enough, is it interesting and applicable, is it scientific enough compared to other similar subjects at other universities, will they acquire a lot in a short period of time, and will they be active participants in the process or not), and *technology* (is the teacher himself or herself advanced enough to be able to use IT in the classroom, is the faculty they are attending modern and advanced enough to be able to provide them with multimedia classrooms and equipment, will students take part in these activities or will they just passively listen to classical lectures). In my experience, our students expect a "hands-on approach," which means they want to start translating from the day they first set foot in the faculty, but the problems we are facing are in fact such that these same students come

from different high-schools with different knowledge and pre-requisites and are often, therefore, to some degree, quite weak in the basic knowledge of English, not to mention intercultural awareness, which is one of the main "assets" a good translator must have.

As I teach first and second year students, I have come to realize that they have acquired (like the majority of general public) a misconception that translating is actually a very profitable business, where translators, and especially interpreters, charge enormous amounts of money for work which just about anybody with some basic elementary-school knowledge of English could manage in a very short period of time. That is why, in one of the first lessons we spend together, I organize students in groups and give them a short clip from the British comedy *Alo, Alo*, which they have to translate. A task which seems like a lot of fun and a piece of cake at first, becomes a tough nut to crack when they need to consider (a) language and register variation, dialects and styles, (b) strategies for translating humor, and also (c) conventions of subtitling.

Furthermore, they are given a short clip from the series *Gilmore Girls*, where they have to reduce enormous amounts of text (as the main characters speak very quickly) to a very limited amount of space of subtitles, where students have to consider strategies such as reduction, omission, neutralization and expansion, irony, allusions, metaphors, punctuation, and speed.

We continue by translating some culturally specific jokes, where students realize why we will need to introduce cultural studies, critical discourse analysis, and functional approaches to translation.

It is true that these are just the initial and very basic approaches to different kinds of translating (other than literary translation) and the more demanding approaches are introduced to the students only in their final years of studying, but it gives them the idea of how complex and demanding translation studying, training, and practice actually are, and how complex the profile of translator really is.

Also, Gambier (2003: 184) emphasizes that

very few educational institutions have taken up a challenge of teaching different modules, covering subtitling, dubbing, voice over and all other modes of multimedia translation previously mentioned. One cannot say that lack of interest is the reason why multimedia translation had to be learnt hands-on, with hardly any academic background for quite some time, for different interests in these disciplines are nowadays sky rocketing. There are different courses offered around Europe, with different emphasis on either dubbing (in Spain) or subtitling, but the demand is much higher than the offer.

At the Faculty of Arts in Maribor we are only beginning to introduce the basics, and at the moment, the financial and thus technological aspects are not in favour of introducing practical training, or a hands-on approach to the students.

As Cintas and Orero (2003: 372) state, in Spain, most courses are offered to final years of undergraduate studies, where course contents favour practice over theory (25% to 75%).

4.   How to acquire multimedia translation competence?

"The translator is more like an actor or a musician (or a performer) than like a tape recorder."

Today, researching and teaching of translation is a popular and complex discipline. "It has progressed from an initial and biased emphasis on literary texts to a wide range of different fields of translation," claims Gambier.

Furthermore, there are not only different fields of translation, but teaching techniques have expanded in variety, as opposed to "good old-fashioned" lecturing.

Thus, "teaching techniques vary from hands-on practice to lectures, workshops, seminars, and oral presentations given by students. Practice is gained through classroom activities spanning areas such as written exercises on reduction, internet search, dialogue transcription from screen, exercises with professional dialogue lists, spotting and the simulation of subtitles on screen" (Cintas and Orero 2003: 373).

The high costs involved in acquiring subtitling and dubbing software equipment make it a worthwhile exercise to develop partnerships with local businesses, and we are fortunate that the local TV and radio station, RTV Maribor, needed translators for a couple of their regular programs, the *European Magazine* and *World Business*. As a coordinator of translation practice, I was able to include our students in the weekly work of this organization. They have been translating from written texts or audio tapes for subtitling, voice-over or dubbing of the two above mentioned TV programs. The students translate from English to Slovene and from written and spoken source language into written target language (in Word documents). We felt we could show them how the process of transforming written texts into subtitles takes place. Therefore, each year, we organize regular visits to RTV Maribor, where the producers, journalists, technicians, and other staff show them the whole process (from interviews, recordings, translations, to the final outcome – the program which airs weekly) and explain the tools and techniques of the trade. We then discuss theoretical and practical aspects in class and give students both basic experience and knowledge in multimedia translation.

Another form of cooperation has been established with our local `*Društvo za razvoj filmske kulture*´, an association which encourages the development of movie and cinema culture. They offer our students an enormous number of old and rare movies, which need to be translated and either subtitled or synchronized. This form of practice is very popular with our students, because it gives them an opportunity to try out basic and advanced subtitling programs; they have to learn to use up-to-date computer technology, and be able to make quick decisions, translate well and be able to deal with intense time pressure. They develop special competence in writing for the media, gain a sense of timing and rhythm, and learn to consider their target audience (age, education, reading abilities), among other things. Furthermore, they have to consider the genre of the program, the relationship between images and dialogue, and have to be able to shorten or condense written text (subtitles) as compared to audio and visual

input. Most of all, they learn to take responsibility for the quality of their input and output, because their work is later published, when they get to watch the movies and programs and are given feedback from the audience.

"Some universities have even developed their own software, pioneering programs, which give students the opportunity to simulate real working conditions and become familiar with the various procedures involved" (Cintas and Orero 2003: 373). The University of Maribor has developed several such programs, and developing links between different faculties and different organizations must be established and encouraged. In addition to the programs developed in academic labs, our students are able to participate in a professional work environment as part of their obligatory **Translation Practice** subject in the final two years of their studies. Students are offered practical work placements, work a certain number of hours each, and may therefore gain valuable experience in all sorts of tasks related to translation. Many have gone on to full-time translation jobs following their **Translation Practice** with different translation agencies.

At our faculty, we offer students basic practice in the subjects **Translation 1, 2, 3**, **English Language Development 1, 2, 3**, which they take from year 1 on; in year 2 they are introduced to **Introduction to Professional Translation and Interpretation** and **Electronic Translation Tools and Information Systems**, and progress to **Translation Theory and Practice**, as well as to **Introduction to Simultaneous and Consecutive Interpreting in year 3**.

I encourage exchange programs for lecturers and students, where universities and different organizations and associations exchange new ideas and support further cooperation. In this way, lecturers are informed and updated, bring in fresh new ideas to their faculties and their technological development, and they can also encourage students to take part in exchange programs which bring the whole idea of European Union even closer together.

5.   How to design a lesson to achieve long-term goals?

"The translator, even of highly technical texts, is more like a poet or a novelist than like a machine translation system."

Choosing and developing interesting material for teaching is a vital and challenging task, in order to help lecturers to design their lessons according to their needs, as well as the needs of the students and in accordance with final goals. Students can work in IT equipped classrooms and are encouraged to practice at home as well. At our faculty, we have come up with a very simple, yet efficient *Translation Portfolio*, which students create at home, individually, during one semester. At our faculty there are specially trained audiovisual and computing technicians who are available to provide seminars for teaching staff, to help keep our courses up-to-date and challenging. We believe that hands-on learning is essential to give students the ability to self-motivate, and that is why the students do a lot of work at home and the teachers have the role of guide and counsellor.

Thus in **English Language Development 1**, for example, students are given exact instructions and guidelines at the beginning of the semester. The Translation Portfolio consists of 15 tasks, one for each week of the semester. Basically, the students read a variety of materials, listen to radio and TV programs, and watch movies, shows, television series, and other programs. They translate texts of their choice from English to Slovene, and vice versa, and compare their translations to already existing ones. In addition, they keep a diary of their weekly activities, which encourages them to assess their input and thus practice editing and revision.

Each student is given a choice as to how they want to present their Portfolio (in written form or recorded). They also choose one task from their Portfolio, which they believe is the best or unique, and present it in class. Since they are given free choice (with some guidance from the instructors), they engage in the activities they like most, and the results are much better in the end. Furthermore, because of the wide range of topics and tasks, their presentations in class are usually thought-provoking, and they are very proud to be able to present something different and challenging, something

they like best. Therefore, other students cooperate more and the lessons are seldom boring. I also encourage them to use didactic games (which I use on a daily basis, so they are mostly familiar with them) in their class presentations to contribute to relaxation, group binding and avoid passiveness and boredom. Not only that, they are specifically told in the beginning of the semester that the cooperation of the whole group contributes highly to the final grade of the student who is presenting their task. This way I "strive for active students and acknowledge their different backgrounds and learning styles on the one hand, and make use of updated pedagogical tools and techniques to improve their translation competence and performance on the other" (Gonzales Davies 2004: 38).

In class, our daily activities are structured two-fold: some of them are "fixed," which means we do them every time we meet (such as a word of the day, an idiom of the day, a joke or anecdote, a selection of phrasal verbs or proverbs and sayings as a warmer, an interesting clip from the internet or an anecdote as a conclusion). The rest of the activities are planned on a weekly basis, depending on the topic we are covering, and are "flexible" (discussions, reading, listening, speaking, writing activities, working individually, in pairs, in groups, watching movies, programs, or listening to music). This way, the students know exactly what to expect, which encourages them to do some of the research on their own, yet they still experience something new and different each time we meet. Based on the questionnaires they fill in at the end of the semester, these are the activities they like best – they know what we do, so they can contribute a lot themselves and contribute to the dynamics of the classroom themselves, yet they do something different each time and are thus seldom bored or passive.

With the above mentioned activities we manage to "focus on the **seven multiple intelligences** ((i) verbal/linguistic, (ii) musical, (iii) logical/mathematical, (iv) spatial/visual, (v) bodily/kinaesthetic, (vi) interpersonal, (vii) intrapersonal), as well as **perceptual learning styles** ((i) visual, (ii) auditory, (iii) tactile, (iv) kinaesthetic, (v) group, (vi) individual" (Gonzales Davies 2004: 38). Furthermore, by recording them, we

encourage them to do a lot of feedback on weekly classroom activities (their presentations or other oral activities, such as discussions). Students admit that by listening to themselves after class, at home, they get to know themselves (as well as their knowledge, and, specially, pronunciation) from an entirely new perspective and try to improve their performance to the best of their abilities.

I was a bit sceptical before we started recording students in class, especially because this might impose additional anxiety upon weaker students, yet it was they who, in our final questionnaires, admitted they had gained extra confidence in oral presentations.

6. How to determine the teacher's and the student's roles in translation activities?

One of the main aims of activities in translation studies is to equip students with the necessary skills to enable them to function successfully in the professional world. This means that they need to have very solid basic and general knowledge, they need to have theoretical background and, most of all, a lot of practice. Once they have finished their studies, they are in a better position to get a job because they have experience. Therefore, translation practice is the best link between students, future employees, and their possible future employers.

Translation learning activities are also foreign language learning activities at the same time, because the most basic way in which we acquire a foreign language is through translating unknown words. "A typical statement on the difficulties involved in translation training usually declares that teachers need to have a background in a variety of areas, such as communication theory, linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics and cognitivism, or translation studies" (Gonzáles Davies 2004:1). In addition, these concepts need to be explored in an educational context as well. As Gonzáles Davies points out,

> a teacher should reflect on three aspects: (1) the *approach*, or theories
> and beliefs about the nature of the subject – in our case, translation –

and about how competence can be acquired, (2) the *design*, or actual classroom dynamics, which include the selection and sequencing of aims and contents (syllabus), ideas about the classroom setting, and decisions about the teacher's and the student's roles, and (3) the *procedures*, or activities, which will draw from the previous two and may range from teacher-centred lectures to student-centred authentic projects. (Gonzáles Davies 2004: 2)

The teacher as a pedagogue covers the above mentioned, and with the aid of psychology he or she should be able to observe mental processes that can improve students' translation competence. A competent educator also pays special attention to emotional intelligence, such as students' personalities, backgrounds, and learning and translating styles. With all these aspects combined, students' motivation and participation are encouraged and improvement and achievement of final goals can be accelerated.

In addition, students become active participants rather than passive listeners if they are offered interactive approaches (by means of activities, tasks or project work that mirror the professional world) but especially if they are able to take part in authentic translation assignments.

Thus, "…the Communicative Approach substituted the Grammar-Translation Method in foreign language learning with the result that… concepts such as learner autonomy, self-confidence, peer work, decision-making, learning to learn, meaningful learning and student–centred classes have taken over. All of these are certainly relevant to translation training" (Gonzáles Davies 2004: 3).

7. Possible ways of introducing activities to the students of translation, giving some practical examples for classroom dynamics

There are many practical activities to use in the classroom in order to enhance students' memory activity. This can be achieved through "*multiple encoding*: each word, fact, idea, or other item is encoded through more than one sensory channel – visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, gustatory, olfactory – which provides a complex support network for memory that is exponentially more effective than a single channel" (Robinson 2005: 55).

Thus the importance of "multimodal" exercises in this essay, which are adapted from Douglas Robinson's *Becoming a Translator.* I have used these techniques with my students, and have, through several years of experience adapted them to best suit the characteristics, features, needs and demands of our students.

Table 1

ACTIVITY	AIMS
Little Red Riding Hood: One story, different approaches <u>**GROUPING:**</u> Pairs, groups, whole class	To practice intralinguistic and interlinguistic translation, to reflect on text typology, to relay set phrases and cultural references, to make decisions, to create a similar effect, to justify choices, to apply creativity skills, reader-oriented writing and translating
Hamlet: Updating a text through translation <u>**GROUPING:**</u> Individual, pairs	To practice intralinguistic and interlinguistic translation, to peer edit, to update a text, to use resourcing skills, to discuss around the updating of the classics through translation
A job interview: Adapting your curriculum vitae <u>**GROUPING:**</u> Individual, pairs	To practice intralinguistic and interlinguistic, to write one's own CV, to become aware of conventions of presentations, to become familiar with the layout of CV in different cultures, re-expressing a CV as a formal letter and as an interview
Changing channels: Traffic signs and cell phones <u>**GROUPING:**</u> Individual, pairs, groups of three	To practice intersemiotic translation, to relate different previous knowledge
Bilingual dialogues: Code-switching <u>**GROUPING:**</u> Pairs, groups of 5 or 6	To develop transference skills such as code-switching and mental agility, pre-interpreting skills, to practice sight translation, to encourage creativity and imagination, to become aware of register, coherence and cohesion
Minisagas: Fairy tales with a difference (The Frog Prince – telegram style) <u>**GROUPING:**</u> Individual, pairs	To practice summarizing skills, to learn to take decisions and justify choices, to experience and discuss subjectivity in translation, to become aware of different translation options, to practice reader-oriented translation, to become aware of adaptation methods for subtitling

Films, TV series (subtitling) **GROUPING:** Pairs, groups, whole class	To practice intralinguistic and interlinguistic translation, to practice subtitling, to become aware of adaptation methods for subtitling
Mistranslations **GROUPING:** Pairs	To reflect on the danger of literal translation, to become aware that translation is not only about words, but about texts and contexts, to explore different translation options, to follow the potential processes that cause mistranslations and edit authentic sentences, to discuss translation issues such as sign or sense translation and justify one's choices, to develop resourcing skills, to spot and solve potential problems, to practice indirect translation and retranslation
Backtranslation: How faithful can you be? **GROUPING:** Individual, pairs	To become aware of interferences, to reflect on fidelity in translation and on different translation options, to become aware of subjectivity and constraints in translation, to learn to justify choices and make decisions
False Friends: Noughts and Crosses **GROUPING:** Pairs	To become aware of "false friends", to become aware of degrees of interference

8. Conclusion

When we discuss otherness in multimedia translation, we address several dimensions of it: one of them is multimedia translation being different from literary or strictly technical translation; another dimension of otherness is the profile of translators who perform the work, and consequently, the profile of translation studies, and students who want to become multimedia translators. This, as a result, calls for a special kind of educators who are able to design their lessons in order to enhance learning and teaching, as well as motivation among students. Also, the use of modern technology provides "wider and easier access to "authentic information", enhanced individualization of learning, more active involvement in learning, increased collaboration with other learners, expanded use of communicating learning and increased productivity (Case and Clark 1999, as quoted in Roland Peddle 2000). In conclusion, the words of Maria Gonzáles Davies best sum up the dimensional multitude of otherness:

> Multiple voices should be heard in the classroom: those of the teachers
> and the students, as well as those of different theorists and researchers,
> and those of the practitioners and initiators. New paths should be
> explored instead of keeping to one approach to translation or to its
> teaching. At this point, it is not only a question of encouraging the
> translators' visibility, but also of giving support to these other voices.
> (2004: 4-5)

The global village is a colourful, rather than monotonous society, which calls for greater acceptance and celebration of differences, be it within the nations, families, classrooms or individuals themselves. It is the job of teachers of translators to bring these multicultural dimensions to the awareness of our students, to embrace them, and to make them work for us.

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The list of axioms taken from *Becoming a Translator: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Translation* (by Douglas Robinson), p. 35.