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**The impact of linguistics on AVT research and practice[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**1. Introduction**

Traditionally understood as verbal artefacts, translations have been a major locus of linguistic investigation and for a long time linguistics has been “the main source of theorization about translation” (Baker and Pérez-González 2011: 40). As Munday (2008: 182) points out, “dramatic developments in translation studies have occurred in the field of audiovisual translation”. Given the centrality of dialogue in film and television programmes, linguistic approaches have been at the core of translation studies from its very inception.

Similarly, Gambier (2013), taking stock of the research in Audiovisual Translation (from now on AVT) as far as the first decade of the 21st century, draws attention to the fact that it is “paradoxical that the dominant research perspective is linguistic, though AVT is actually a multisemiotic blend of many different elements such as images, sounds, language (oral and written), colours, proxemics and gestures” (2013: 11). In his view, two main reasons account for this paradox: the predominantly literary and linguistic background of the majority of researchers and the difficulty of adapting research concerning the more technical aspects to the limits of the printed page. However, he expects this tendency to be temporary (Gambier 2013: 11), as the spread of different and flexible translation modes and the rapid technological advance both seem to favour a change in trend.

Reflecting on the current status of AVT as a field of study, Díaz Cintas, embracing a wide, multi-disciplinary perspective, recognises a certain priority given to the visual-non-verbal, that is the image, which, especially in certain box-office successes, “seems to carry more weight than the word” (2013: 3). This partly depends on the search for special effects that win the audience’s favour, but also to the enormous number of works, not necessarily from AVT but from media and semiotic studies, on the technical dimensions of telecinematic products: “It could be argued that this state of affairs is normal as we are dealing with an art form which started with the movement of images and is by and large based primarily on the power of the image […]; words […] tend to take more often than not a secondary, marginal position”. In line with Díaz Cintas, Pérez-González also observes a shift in focus from the verbal to the multimodal component in audiovisual texts (Pérez-González 2014a and 2014b), which is enlarging the scope of linguistics-informed analyses to include concepts drawn from visual semiotics.

**2. Audiovisual translation: linguistic approaches**

One of the applied domains in which the possible intersections and advantages of cross-fertilisation between linguistics and audiovisual translation have been investigated is the interface between corpus linguistics and audiovisual translation. A special issue of *Perspectives* (Baños, Bruti and Zanotti 2013) explored the potential of corpus-based translation approaches to audiovisual translation, in particular, the opportunity this methodology offers for capturing “the distinctive features and patterns of translated texts, because a massive amount of text is made available” (2013: 483). In what follows we provide an overview of linguistic studies conducted in the field of AVT, focusing first on subtitling and dubbing as the main methods of language transfer on screen, and then moving on to consider the area of media accessibility, which has attracted great scholarly attention over the past decade.

*2.1. Subtitling*

Much of the literature on subtitling starts from some biased premises, i.e. the fact that subtitling is a ‘constrained’ (Titford 1982) form of translation because of its spatial and temporal requirements; or even “a necessary evil”, in that it somehow ‘corrupts’ the image and absorbs part of the audience’s cognitive effort (Marleau 1982). As Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007) and Zabalbeascoa (2008) rightly point out, subtitling is as constrained as many other translation modes, such as poetry, which must comply with metre and rhythm, or theatre, with its problems of performance and the ‘tellability’ of the lines (Zabalbeascoa 2001). Similar to specific phenomena that appear in texts irrespective of genres, e.g. humour (Zabalbeascoa 2008), subtitlers have to deal with several challenges, not only the above-mentioned technical constraints but also the diasemiotic transformation from oral to written (Gottlieb 2004), as well as the fit between the verbal (aural in the original and written in the subs) and the other communicative channels.

As indicated in Díaz Cintas and Remael’s chapter “The linguistics of subtitling” (2007: 144-183), an analysis of the intricacy and often hybrid nature (i.e. featuring many languages and cultures) of a source text is a preliminary step before attempting the transfer into a target text. A linguistic approach to subtitling necessarily pays attention to text reduction by means of the various strategies of condensation and reformulations, complete omissions, and to segmentation and line breaks (Gottlieb 1992, 1994, 1998; Kovačič 1994), in order to strike a positive balance between the necessary cuts (those that are required because of the space-time constraints) and a plausible rendition of the message in the original, keeping an eye on legibility and coherence (Guillot 2016). Much of the literature has highlighted that the interpersonal dimension, which is in most cases jeopardised for brevity’s sake, should be prioritised because it is crucial in narratives to engage viewers and draw them into the story (Hatim and Mason 1997; Blini and Matte Bon 1996, McIntyre and Lugea 2015). However, instead of adopting the ‘loss’ approach, i.e. the frequent accusation that audiovisual translation always entails a loss when compared to the original (disregarding the fact that it involves multiple processes of deconstruction and reconstruction) (Ramière 2010, Guillot 2010, 2012, see above), subtitling should be considered as a “system of signification in its own right” (Guillot 2016b: paragraph 2 META) with its own distinctive and stylistic features, which are chosen on purpose to represent at best pragmatic and sociolinguistic meaning. As shown in Guillot, for instance, many features, including punctuation, work in “integrated combinations” (2016a: 297) “generat[ing] internal systems of pragmatic representation” to delineate an overall setting (2016a: 298). Research in this area is still in its infancy, and observations and results need to be systematised through more extensive analysis and corpus-based linguistic investigation. More importantly, researchers also need to become more aware of the potential impact of their work on the everyday practice of subtitlers, so that their findings can be cross-fertilised in professional practice, translator training, and product appraisal. This will certainly result in increased awareness of representational issues in audiences and in a better evaluation of “the impact of foreign texts in shaping their publics’ sense of otherness” (Guillot 2016a: 299).

In recent times, due to the rise of audiovisual media, the increasingly pressing need for rapid translation of new releases and the broader flexibility of dubbing countries towards subtitling (e.g. in Italy subtitling seems to be the preferred mode of fruition of the younger generations although dubbing is still favoured and dominates in movie theatres, cf. Bruti and Zanotti 2013), the amount of subtitles has increased enormously. Subtitles have also changed in nature, as they are no longer conceived as mere translation tools, in that their uses have been extended to include didactic and socially relevant applications. They can make accessible a different range of products, from films to documentaries and conferences, not necessarily for the hearing impaired but for students, immigrants or minority language speakers (see Perego and Bruti 2015: 1-3), or enhance the engaging and entertaining function of certain programmes, like telop (text-on-screen that is used in Japanese TV programmes to underline comic moments and direct recipients’ interpretation; cf. Maree 2015) or fansubs (see below). The evolution of subtitles is reflected in both their form and function, which always go hand in hand; as will be shown for fansubs, the need to meet the stringent expectations of an audience of connoisseurs forces their format, to the point that they have stylistic features of their own, such as the use of pop-up glosses, i.e. explanatory notes in the target language that appear onscreen (usually enclosed in white balloons) to provide the audience with further information on culturally-marked elements (Perego and Taylor 2012: 183). As Perego and Bruti remark, the vast array of forms and functions necessarily entails “more modern and interdisciplinary ways of approaching the subject” (2015: 3) in which a linguistic analysis is complemented by technical observations and reception studies that shed light on the viewer’s perspective.

*2.2. Dubbing*

As Díaz Cintas (2015: xiii) observes, research on dubbing “has been modest” compared to subtitling and interest in this translation mode “still remains stubbornly low”. And yet dubbing remains one of the areas where linguistic research has been most widely applied and, more importantly, where studies using a genuine linguistic approach have flourished over the past years (see the contributions included in Freddi and Pavesi 2009; Baños, Bruti and Zanotti 2013; Pavesi, Ghia and Formentelli 2014, which offer a comprehensive view on the language of dubbing).

Most attention in dubbing research has been centred on *dubbese* (Myers 1973), a linguistic register that is specific to dubbed films and television programmes which distinguishes them from domestic productions. The characteristic features of *dubbese* include neutralization of style, register and dialect variation, reduction of interpersonal features such as discourse markers and interjections, source-language interference, whereby source-text features are transferred in the translated dialogues, and the “repetitive use of formulae” (Pavesi 2008: 81), that is, prefabricated and fixed linguistic structures.

Dubbed language aims at creating an “illusion of authenticity” (Whitman-Linsen 1992: 54) while at the same time complying with the requirements of synchronization, which is “the process of matching a target language translation to the screen actor’s body and articulatory movements” (Chaume 2012: 67). Linguistic research has demonstrated that this impression of realism is achieved through a selective process whereby some linguistic features are favoured and systematically used as “privileged carriers of orality” (Pavesi 2008). Much attention in recent times has been devoted to the “prefabricated orality” of dubbed speech (Chaume and Baños 2009; Chaume 2012), with research focusing on its predictable and formulaic nature (Taylor 2008), the lack of idiomaticity resulting from the repetition of fixed, unnatural expressions independently of synchronization constraints or source language transfer (Romero Fresco 2009, Mittmann 2006), and audiences’ perception of dubbese (Antonini 2008 and Bucaria 2008).

Linguistic research has been instrumental in developing our understanding of the language of dubbing as a “third norm” (Pavesi 1996), that is, a language variety in its own right that results from the interaction of target-language norms, which remain prevalent, and source-language ones, which are reflected in dubbed film dialogue through interference. Dubbing’s “alignment with the target language norms” (Pavesi 2009: 141) is confirmed by recent studies, which show that “audiovisual translators and dialogue writers are quite vigilant about the influence of English-derived lexico-grammar and phraseology, filtered through audiovisual products” (Minutella and Pulcini 2014: 345).

The most important contribution from linguistics to research on dubbing has come from the application of corpus methodologies (Freddi 2013, Pavesi forthcoming). Large projects such as the Forlì corpus (Heiss and Soffritti 2008) and the Pavia Corpus of Film Dialogue (Freddi and Pavesi 2009) have made it possible to shed light on the degree of resemblance between original audiovisual dialogue, dubbed telecinematic dialogue and natural conversation, with a focus on subordinators and discourse markers (Pavesi 2008), interjections (Bruti and Pavesi 2008), personal pronouns (Pavesi 2012), phraseology (Freddi 2014), lexical variation (Formentelli 2014), interrogatives (Ghia 2014), deictics (Pavesi 2012) and formulaicity (Pavesi 2016). These studies have revealed that film dialogue is similar in many ways to real-life spoken dialogue. Nonetheless, as a register in its own right, it does “display specific linguistic features performing specific functions” (Pavesi, Formentelli and Ghia 2014: 13) which do not necessarily overlap with those of spontaneous conversation. For example, first and second person pronouns have been found to be more frequent in audiovisual dialogue than in natural conversation (Pavesi 2009), as a result of the prominence of duologues in filmic speech. Corpus-assisted studies have been beneficial to our understanding of translational behaviour in dealing with dysfluencies (Valdéon 2011), conversational routines (Bonsignori, Bruti e Masi 2012, Bruti and Bonsignori 2015, 2016), discourse markers (Romero Fresco 2012), familiarisers (Forchini 2013), adverbial intensifiers (Baños 2013), vague language markers (Zanotti 2014), and intonation (Sánchez Mompeán 2016). These studies have highlighted the selective process that lies at the heart of dubbed telecinematic discourse, whereby spokenness is represented through a selection of linguistic features that are conventionally recognised as indexes of orality (Guillot 2007, Pavesi 2009). As Freddi (2013: 500) observes, “insights gained from systematic comparisons of corpora can call into question impressionistic ideas about the language of dubbing and lead to a deeper understanding of dubbed dialogue as a language variety that is not at all fixed”, but which exhibits strong orientation towards target language norms as well as translators’ ability to find creative solutions in writing credible and realistic dialogues.

That corpus tools could prove beneficial for developing translators’ awareness and for improving quality standard is a generally accepted idea among scholars. The dissemination of the results obtained by linguistic research among AVT professionals would be a further step in this direction. Dissemination activities such as workshops, seminars and meetings with professionals from the AVT industry would provide opportunities for cross-fertilization, mutual advancement and collaboration among people within and outside the academia. Research projects aiming at enhancing the quality of dubbed audiovisual products and involving film translators’ associations, film distributors and television broadcasters could be another means for the academia to demonstrate it is engaging actively with the industry while safeguarding the interests of the public. Communicating findings in an accessible way to wider audiences, for example through public events such as talks and roundtables, or the creation of blogs, websites and online resources, would be equally important, as it would contribute to generate interest in AVT and to raise awareness on the impact that its pervasive, yet almost invisible presence has on the everyday lives of people.

**3. Linguistics and Media Accessibility**

In the field of Media Accessibility, which includes all the modes of translations that are meant to open audiovisual texts to an audience of variously disabled people (but not exclusively, as some of these modalities may be advantageous for a viewing and hearing public too), research has been growing rapidly over the past years. In this area, linguistic studies – particularly from the field of cognitive linguistics – do seem to have had an impact on professional practices. The influence appears to be reciprocal, i.e. linguistics contributing to audiovisual translation and vice versa. Several linguistic studies on the readability of subtitles (e.g. the segmentation of syntactic units; see Ivarsson 1992, Karamitroglou 1998, Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007, Kalantzi 2009) have been carried out with a view to increasing comprehension both for hearing and deaf or hard of hearing audiences. Experiments with parallel subtitle corpora for machine translation are reported in Bywood et al. (2013), which are said to be “useful as input data for SMT systems for subtitles” and also to “open up new possibilities for corpus linguistics”. In the other direction, just to give an example, Salway and Graham (2003) described how they implemented a method for extracting information about characters’ emotions in films from audiodescriptions in order to better analyse semantic video content and the expression of cognitive and emotional states. Of course, the results of the investigation might also provide useful feedback for audiodescribers (see Salway 2007 for a corpus-based approach to the language of audio description). Given the tremendous impact that accessibility has on society and on people’s media experience and enjoyment, many more empirical studies are being developed, in order to tailor-make translations to recipients’ needs and tastes (see, *inter alia*, Romero Fresco’s 2015 reception studies in a European project on Subtitling for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing, henceforth SDH).

*3.1 Subtitling for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing*

Over the past decades, thanks to successful campaigns by pressure groups, European public service channels have tried to multiply the offer of access services, including subtitled programmes for the deaf or hard of hearing (Remael 2007), even though there are still striking differences across countries (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007: 14-15). The UK is one of the most advanced in the area of accessibility to audiovisual media, with the BBC channels being required to subtitle 100% of their programme content.[[2]](#footnote-2) EU-funded projects such as SAVAS (Sharing Audio Visual language resources for Automatic Subtitling), SUMAT (An Online Service for Subtitling by Machine Translation) and, more recently, DTV4ALL (Digital Television for All) (see Romero Fresco 2015) have all focused on the quality of subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing (including live subtitling), albeit from different perspectives. The quality of subtitles can be measured in terms of either the product, focusing on average speed, number of errors, and latency (the delay between speech and live subtitling), or assessed from the point of view of reception (in terms of viewers’s preferences, comprehension and perception of the subtitles). All of the aforementioned projects have highlighted the need for increased collaboration between academia and the industry (Romero Fresco 2015: 9). As for the DVD market, only recently have distributors begun to make commercial movies available for the hearing impaired (Neves 2005: 298). DVDs very often provide interlingual subtitles that allow deaf and hard of hearing viewers to access the audiovisual text, but which have not been designed for them (Neves 2005). Therefore, as De Linde and Kay (1999: 1) recognise, they are inadequate in many respects: in an attempt to cater for both hearing and non-hearing audiences, DVD subtitles very often run at an excessively high reading speed, display complex wordings, and adopt diverse strategies in encoding speaker identification and in representing the complex soundscape of audiovisual products. The advent of digital television is further expanding the market for imported accessible audiovisuals around the globe, which explains AVT scholars’ increasing attention to interlingual SDH (Neves 2010, Szarkowska 2013, Szarkowska, Żbikowska and Krejtz 2013, Bruti and Zanotti forthcoming) and the need to cater for special hearing impaired audiences such as children (Zarate 2010).

According to Neves (2008: 137), the term that best illustrates the operations involved in subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing is “transadaptation”, which “means to translate and transfer all the information contained in all the layers of the sound track into a visual format and to adapt it to allow people who cannot hear sound to perceive the audiovisual text as fully as possible”. Linguistic phenomena that are unanimously recognised as difficult include figurative language and metaphors (Neves 2008: 101). Since their interpretation is rooted in a rather complex inferential process, which can only be successful if the receivers possess the notions that characterise the related objects (Walleij 1987: 26), SDH should pay particular attention to these items (see Neves 2005: 210). The question of linguistic simplification has long been at the core of the verbatim versus edited subtitles debate, which revolves around whether the subtitles should provide a complete transcription of speech, in order to give deaf or hard of hearing viewers the same information as that provided to hearing viewers, or a more condensed version thereof to ensure greater readability (Neves 2008: 141ff).[[3]](#footnote-3) Recent eye-tracking research has demonstrated the benefit of edited subtitles, which “are not entirely in line with comprehension results and the preferences of deaf and hard of hearing viewers themselves, who tend to be against caption editing and in favour of verbatim captions” (Szarkowska, Krejtz, Klyszejko and Wieczorek 2011: 375).

In this perspective, a profitable line of research could be the application of characterisation models such as the one used by McIntyre and Lugea (2015), whose analysis of the English SDH version of episode 1 of *The Wire* shows how the deletion of crucial features of drama dialogue (e.g. discourse markers) affects characterisation, and the implications this may have for viewers’ comprehension of character. This seems to be an area where more research is needed, for hearing impaired audiences are particularly alert to the loss of information that results from edited subtitles, as confirmed by the findings of the DTV4ALL project team. As Romero Fresco (2015b: 348) points out, both deaf and hard of hearing audiences seem to prefer verbatim subtitles, but for different reasons. For the deaf respondents, “having equal rights to their hearing peers and therefore full access to the original information” is a priority, whereas for the hard of hearing participants what really matters “is to have all the nuances and subtleties of the dialogue (which they could once enjoy) displayed in the subtitles”.

3.2 *Audio description*

Audio description is a branch of AVT concerned with the process of making an audiovisual text accessible primarily (but not only) for the blind and partially sighted by adding audio fragments that complement the parts of an audiovisual product where there is no dialogue or soundtrack. Accessibility (including subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, live subtitling, audio description, sign language interpretation) is a rather recent but increasingly widespread research area where theoretical disciplines like linguistics and cognitive sciences, semiotics and media studies converge to an applied aim of making products more available, and society more inclusive of traditionally disadvantaged groups.

An established interest for inclusive translation practices is by now very clearly observable in the number of publications devoted to the subject, as well as in the conferences and projects centred on this translation form. In particular, the biannual conference Media for All (the first one was held in Barcelona in 2005) needs to be mentioned as an initiative that is geared towards the constant update of accessible translation from a plurality of perspectives, i.e. the production, the distribution and the consumption phases (Perego 2014). Several projects have been funded by different institutions, e.g. the Pear Tree Projects[[4]](#footnote-4), a EU-funded project involving twelve languages devoted to the reception of audiovisual products with a view to pinpointing some requirements to achieve more effective audio descriptions (see the results in Mazur and Kruger 2012), and the ADLAB (Audio Description Laboratory, 2011-2014, funded by the European Union through the Lifelong Learning Programme and directed by Christopher Taylor) and ADLAB PRO (Audio Description: a Laboratory for the Development of a new Professional Profile, funded by Erasmus Plus and directed by Elisa Perego). ADLAB PRO starts from previous results and aims at creating flexible and open access teaching materials in order to contribute to the training of the professional figure of the audio-describer, i.e. an audiovisual translator in charge of the verbal description of essential visual information in audiovisual texts or works of art (cf. https://www.units.it/news/adlab-pro-audio-description).

The literature on audio description tackles different aspects of this translating mode, from general and descriptive studies, to those that are concerned with the availability of guidelines in different countries, or to the possibilities of transferring audio described texts from one language to another. The most recent developments take into account eye-tracking techniques to investigate what is pivotal when watching an audiovisual text; reception studies, which are meant to ascertain what the audience expects or would like to experience; and the feasibility of employing speech synthesis programmes that reproduce the human voice to widen the offer of audio described products with relatively lower costs and shorter times of production (Szarkowska 2011, Szarowska and Jankowska 2012). A more openly linguistic thread is also present, with studies that investigate the nature of audio described texts (e.g. the lexical and phraseological features of AD) in different languages through corpus linguistic tools. A study by Jimenez Hurtado and Soler Gallego (2013) shows how corpus linguistic analyses of audio described texts can unveil the cognitive processes at work in intersemiotic translation from visual to verbal, by identifying recurrent lexical and grammatical patterns that constitute the local grammar of audio described products. Analysis of tags frequency, for example, suggests that elements related to the shot or camera movements are often translated in AD because they provide information that enables the visually impaired audience to form a mental image of the scene in relation to the narrative action. Results from corpus investigations of this kind thus have fruitful applications for professionals, as they indicate how a visually impaired audience conceptualises visual events through AD and evidence priorities and preferences.

The most researched aspects of AD, as shown in Vercatueren 2007 and Perego and Taylor 2012, are linked to four pivotal questions: what, when, how much and how to audio describe. Among these aspects the one that is most inherently linked with linguistic issues is the ‘how’. Here the American and European directions seem to diverge, with the American guidelines asking for an objective stance, while European professionals are usually more lenient and favour instead a deeper understanding of the audiovisual product (Mälzer-Semlinger 2012, Orero 2012). Linguistic-informed research and cooperation between linguists and audio-describers could result in guidelines that are more finely-attuned to the needs of their addressees. The language and style of audio descriptions are also mentioned in the various guidelines: the common denominator seems to be a tendency towards an objective and faithful rendition, therefore choosing a few, meaningful expressions to communicate the message expressed visually, often attempting to convey the intensity of the image through words. Another aspect that emerges is the opposition between novelty and repetition, i.e. whether it is preferable to repeat a term that has already been used or to use a synonym (for a complete review of all these aspects see Perego 2014). Empirical research, although difficult to carry out and time-consuming, has obtained very promising results and has highlighted on the one hand what viewers concentrate on when looking at images, on the other what an audience with viewing problems would prefer to have.

**4. Linguistic research, active audiences and the profession**

Although the role of linguistics is not always explicitly recognised as crucial in translation practices, there are multiple ways in which linguists ‘serve’ present-day society: first of all, linguistic research is a powerful hermeneutic instrument that allows scholars, professionals and viewers to fully fathom the intricacies of audiovisual dialogues and AVT. Irrespective of the translating strategy that is adopted (e.g. dubbing vs. subtitling), AVT presupposes a form of cultural mediation that tackles delicate issues such as cross-cultural variation in communicative strategies. It is therefore undeniable that AVT plays a crucial role in enhancing cultural literacy among audiences (Guillot 2012), an aspect that is very often overlooked but that has considerable impact on society. Audiovisual texts display a scenario that is made up of images and words: when relocating it in a target lingua-culture (or even through a different medium in the case of intralingual translation, e.g. SDH), the audience might perceive a message that is in various degrees different from the original one, because of the changes source texts inevitably undergo when adapted for different audiences or because the fit between visual and verbal is altered. Another source of difficulty is represented by the different degrees of cultural literacy presupposed in the source and target audience, which points to the decisive role translators play as cultural mediators and to the “culturally instrumental function” of AVT (Guillot 2012).

As Guillot (2016b) points out, linguistic studies offer scholars, professionals and audiences the instrument to experience audiovisual texts with greater awareness. On the academic end of the continuum, the need is felt “to raise awareness regarding what needs to be considered when translating an audio-visual product” (Bosseaux 2013: 92). Until not long ago, however, a certain sense of distrust from professionals towards academics and linguistic approaches could at least partly be ascribed to a well-spread tendency to evaluate audiovisual translations as examples of ‘loss’ in comparison to their originals (Guillot 2010, 2012). Given the key role played by AVT scholars in stimulating and shaping discourse around AVT practice, it is important to promote “alternative modes of analysis” (Guillot 2012) leading to a radical shift in perspective from what is lost to what is gained in translation. Furthermore, new forms of collaboration should be sought between AVT researchers and practitioners to facilitate dialogue and mutual recognition. Only by collaborating with others outside the university and by communicating their findings in an accessible way will it be possible for researchers to demonstrate the value of their work.

The overall picture is quite complex, as apart from specialised domains, there seems to be little concern on the part of the industry for the quality of translation in the media. The proliferation of platforms for digital television has brought about a new wave of retranslations, be it for dubbing and subtitling. The poor quality of redubs (Zanotti 2015), that is retranslated dubbed films, or re-subtitled DVD versions (Cornu 2011) has become endemic in recent years, and in the era of Internet television an unselective recruitment of translators has been reported (see Ernesto 2012 on Netflix). Weidmann (2014), for example, laments that the general public knows very little about the various professional figures behind the subtitled or dubbed products they consume and the process of translation. Yet, on the other hand, it is also true that the wider accessibility of products in their original language (e.g. through streaming, peer-to-peer sharing, cable TV, etc.) have made audiences critically aware of the quality of their translation. Non-professional subtlitles, also known as fansubs, are for example the result of the very stringent requirements dictated by fan communities, who prioritise adherence to the original as opposed to the highly domesticating norms that have prevailed in the dubbing industry since its very inception (Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006, Pérez-González 2012, Bruti and Zanotti 2012, 2016).

**5. Conclusions**

Linguistic research, especially in the last decade, has attained considerable achievements in the field of audiovisual translation, as is testified by the volume of studies and the interest raised in recent years in the academic community. Yet, as O’Sullivan remarks, the development needs to come full circle, as scholars have not significantly contributed to shaping language and translation policy, “an area in which Translation Studies has the potential to demonstrate real and immediate relevance to practice in the wider world” (O’Sullivan 2016: 272), with the notable exception of media accessibility. The immediate relevance to the practice of linguistic research would be seen if communication and contact between academics and practitioners were constant and integrated as has been the case with accessibility, an area where academic research has indeed had an impact on the actual practice. In more established translation methods such as dubbing and subtitling, translators and professionals seem to have a more intuitive approach towards the text. This is due to the way in which translators are trained in the profession, which relies more on practice and apprenticeship with experienced colleagues than on education in any institutional setting. As a consequence, translation behaviour is handed down and consolidated within a rather closed community (Pavesi and Perego 2006). On the contrary, linguistics-informed AVT research should become more visible outside the academic community, for example encouraging meetings and symposia that might favour cross-fertilisation between results from academic research and experience-based findings from professionals, and, as suggested by O’Sullivan, it “should be relevant enough to current practice that translation scholars would be in a position to contribute to policy”. By putting linguistic research in the service of society, the status and visibility of AVT would be enhanced and viewers would have quality products that would allow them to successfully experience cultural otherness.

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1. The research leading to this contribution was carried out by both authors. Silvia Bruti wrote sections 1, 2.1, 3.2 and 5; Serenella Zanotti wrote sections 2, 2.2, 3, 3.1 and 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See the Ofcom’s *Code on Television Access Services* (https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\_\_data/assets/pdf\_file/0020/97040/Access-service-code-Jan-2017.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See Neves 2005, Cambra et al. 2009 and 2015, Pereira 2010 and Pazó 2011 on the adaptation of language structures, Krejtz, Szarkowska and Łogińska 2015 on function and content words, Martínez and Jiménez 2016 on easy language. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The project drew its name and structure from an earlier project carried out by Chafe and his co-workers (1980) in the late 1970s to ascertain the way various cultures and languages perceive and describe moving images. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)