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## Introduction: Exploring the Many Ways of Audiovisual Translation. Retranslated, Simultaneous, Indirect, Mediated or What?

Over the last decade, a growing number of Translation Studies scholars has focused on the many aspects of AVT, as demonstrated by the proliferation of research papers in journals, essay collections and monographs devoted to this topic (e.g. Chiaro 2007; Díaz Cintas 2012; Chaume, 2012; Pérez González 2014, 2018; Maszerowska, Matamala and Orero 2014; Di Giovanni and Gambier 2018; Baños 2018 just to name a few). This has certainly enabled AVT to develop “its very own theoretical and methodological approaches, allowing it to claim the status of a scholarly area of research in its own right” (Díaz-Cintas 2009: 7). One of the interesting consequences of the rapid advances in the production of audiovisual content and the availability of its many translated versions (e.g. dubbed, (fan)subtitled, in respeaking or audio-described) is that the traditional separation between ‘dubbing’ and ‘subtitling’ countries by now appears obsolete (Gambier 2003; Chaume 2013; Sandrelli, this volume). It is probably time we overcame “the frequently futile debate over the pros and cons of dubbing and subtitling, generally simplified to subjective and pseudo-intellectual arguments” (Chaume 2012: 13). Scholarly research on AVT may fare better at exploring the intricacies and resulting phenomena that the current mediascape brings about so as to continue to contribute fruitfully to the advances in theory and practice.

In light of this, the provocative ‘what’ in the title above aims to draw the readers’ attention to the fact that many issues in AVT have yet to be properly

addressed by academia. One aspect that has already received some attention (Chaume 2007; Zanotti 2015) yet is still a relatively unexplored area of research (Baños and Díaz-Cintas 2015: 5; O’Sullivan 2018: 269) is the retranslation of audiovisual material. This thematic issue will hopefully contribute to the ongoing research on this multifaceted phenomenon and its underlying reasons. To this end, Chaume (this volume; cf. also Chaume 2007) offers a compelling explanation of contingent factors that may lead to the retranslation of AVT material. He mentions: changes in broadcasting format due to new technologies (e.g. VoD, Blue-Ray, TV etc.); changes in translation mode (from dubbing to subtitling or vice versa); the obsolescence of the material used to create a previous version; language planning and variety; economic reasons such as the need to pay to acquire the copyright for the translation or the author’s copyright. In Italy, for instance, the Italian law protects the adaptors’ rights, as they are considered authors as much as the writers of the original screenplay. Adaptors can claim 50% of the cost of the dubbed version if asked to create subtitles based on their dubbed version. Alternatively, s/he can claim 25% of the cost if the subtitles are done by someone else<sup>1</sup>. To date, subtitlers unfortunately do not enjoy similar benefits.

Many of the aspects described above have also been tackled by some of the authors in this volume (most notably Cabanillas, Zanotti and Raffi). Throughout extensive textual analysis, they unveil the differences between two versions of the same film. Most importantly, they succeed in shedding light on how historical and archival data can be used to corroborate their claims, along with the difficulties connected to finding and obtaining such material (cf. also Mereu-Keating 2016; Cornu and O’Sullivan 2016). Elsewhere, even if studies in the field are few and far between, other scholars have debated retranslation from different perspectives. For example, I have

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the Contratto Collettivo Nazionale di Lavoro del Settore Doppiaggio, 30/01 2008, p. 17: “Qualora all’Adattatore-dialoghista venga richiesta la realizzazione della lista sottotitoli, gli verrà corrisposto un compenso minimo pari al 50 per cento di quello indicato nella fascia di appartenenza dell’opera. Tale compenso sarà riconosciuto al 25 per cento se tale lista viene elaborata da terzi dalla lista dialoghi fornita all’Impresa per le lavorazioni di doppiaggio”, <https://www.aidac.it/images/pdf/ccnl.pdf> (last accessed 30/12/2018).

analysed the British and the subsequent American English subtitled version of the Italian TV series *Il commissario Montalbano* (Alberto Sironi, 1999- ). Allegedly, one of the reasons why this series was resubtitled is that having a version in standard American English could make the target text easier to process and linguistically more familiar to the American audience (Dore 2017, forthcoming). However, legal and economic reasons linked to copyright certainly cannot be discounted. Sometimes redubbed and or resubtitled versions might be commissioned due to a new and, at times, more liberal approach to (taboo) topics such as religion, (homo)sexuality and politics. For instance, some old movies whose original subtitling or dubbing was influenced by particular political situations at the time they were first produced (e.g. the Spanish and Italian dictatorships; cf. Zabalbeascoa 2010; Mereu-Keating 2016) are now being retranslated and made available to cinema-goers or marketed on DVD or other formats. Zanotti (2015) considers obsolescence and censorship as two reasons that may lead to retranslation and redubbing in particular. In considering the ideology behind the process, Mereu-Keating (2016) sees audiovisual (re)translation as a new way to question and/or interpret power relations and manipulation. While Cabanillas (this volume) supports the “improvement of the translated text” as the result of retranslation (O’Sullivan 2018), Raffi (this volume) questions it (cf. also Dore, forthcoming for similar considerations).

Chaume (this volume: 11) also claims that apart from very few exceptions, “[r]etranslated audiovisual products are mostly limited to films, since all other genres are hardly ever retranslated”. However, he mainly refers to dubbed productions (e.g. documentaries, TV series etc.) that rerun over and over again because they have achieved art-like status (Ibid.), and some of their lines have also become memorable. For example, “che cavolo stai dicendo, Willis?” in the Italian version of the American TV series *Diff’rent Strokes* (Jeff Harris and Bernie Kukoff, 1978-1985, *Il mio amico Arnold*) or Phoebe Buffay’s song ‘Gatto rognoso’ (‘Smelly Cat’ in the original English version) in *Friends* (Marta Kauffman and David Crane, 1994-2004) can still be remembered by Italian people in their thirties and forties. However, the situation with subtitling may be different and multiple versions of the same TV series can easily be retrieved. As Zanotti (2015: 111) explains, this may depend on the

fact that “resubtitling is seen as inevitable and is hardly ever noticed or remarked upon” (cf. also Dore, forthcoming; Raffi, this volume).

Another interesting aspect that may become readily apparent while reading the title of this introduction and the articles that follow is that retranslation still needs to be clearly defined. This complex phenomenon is obviously often difficult to pinpoint because of the many variables it entails. For instance, Chaume (this volume) compares ‘retranslation’ to ‘translation’ proper by claiming that the latter is described as “the first translation of a given text into a given TL; conversely, the former is to be seen as the second, third, fourth or nth-translation of the same text produced at a later stage” (Ibid. 10). The diachronic perspective that is used to put forward this definition adequately fits examples already debated in the literature as the time span between one and the other dubbed or subtitled version is remarkable (Zanotti 2015; O’Sullivan 2018; Mereu-Keating 2016). Yet, the concept of time is somehow relative as Chaume further contends that “two translations of the same text into a given TL (e.g. in the case of concurrent circumstances) cannot be considered as retranslations but as (first) simultaneous translations” (Ibid.). Strictly speaking, the concept of ‘simultaneous translations’ therefore applies, for example, to the dubbed and the subtitled version of a new film or TV series that appear on streaming platforms such as Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime (cf. Sandrelli and Zottola, this volume). Yet, if we are dealing with a programme or film whose subtitled version of an old dubbed film has been created to cater for this new type of service, then we will still be talking about retranslation. This is a personal consideration that is however open to discussion.

Another aspect that concerns Chaume (this volume: 12-16) is the distinction between ‘retranslation’ and ‘indirect or mediated translation’. Generally speaking, indirect or mediated translation mostly applies to video games translation. Since most video games are created in Japan and translated into English, the latter becomes the pivot language upon which all the translations in the other languages are based (e.g. Italian, Spanish, German and so forth). However, this practice can also be used when the source text is, for example, in a lesser-known language for which it is difficult to find a translator. In other cases, the definition of indirect or mediated translation is

not clear-cut. In fact, Chaume contends that in the case of translations from Spanish into its regional varieties (e.g. Catalan, Galician and Basque; cf. Cabanillas, this volume), the translation process *almost equals* retranslation because “the product is not a retranslation, but an indirect translation carried out as a retranslation” (Ibid. 13). Conversely, whether translations of regional varieties into standard language and, subsequently, into another standard language are instances of indirect or mediated translation or retranslation still needs to be established. A case in point is *Gomorra-La serie* (Sollima, Stefano, 2014- , *Gomorra-The Series*; cf. Fruttaldo, this volume) in which Neapolitan (an Italian regional variety) is used for most of the dialogues; Neapolitan is translated into English subtitles via its existing Italian version. A similar case is the very recent HBO and RAI TV series *L'amica geniale/My Brilliant Friend* (Saverio Costanzo, 2018) based on Elena Ferrante's (2011) novel of the same title. It was simultaneously broadcast in Italy and America, respectively with Italian and English subtitles because the original screenplay is mostly in Neapolitan. Since it stands to reason to suggest that the English subtitles were translated from the Italian subtitles already provided, it may be intriguing to find out whether the mediating process has had any effect on the final English outcome.

It is fair to state that retranslation is a versatile notion that still requires proper definition and even conceptualisation. The term ‘retranslation’ could be used as an umbrella term under which a diverse set of practices can be clustered, each of which however retains its own underlying peculiarities. When investigating one or the other practice, such features necessarily need to be taken into account. The exploration of the many ways of AVT can offer fertile ground for a better understanding of the industry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century from both a theoretical and professional standpoint, because, after all “[a] discipline must be able to describe and explain all those phenomena that occur in its field of enquiry” (Chaume this volume: 16).

## In this collection

In light of the foregoing, this essay collection seeks to further enhance scholarly research in audiovisual retranslation by looking at this phenomenon from different angles.

As anticipated above, Frederic Chaume's opening contribution *The Retranslation and Mediated Translation of Audiovisual Content in Multilingual Spain: Reasons and Market Trends* offers an overarching discussion of the topic, clarifying some of its many procedural aspects and driving reasons. Moreover, by focusing on Spain as a multilingual country, Chaume explains how redubbings or resubtitlings are commissioned and carried out. Chaume debates the economic, historical, linguistic and political issues triggering retranslations and their consequences from a translational point of view.

Candelas Cabanillas's article *Redubs in Basque Public Television: Western Films as a Case in Point* links nicely to Chaume's work by providing us with an extensive overview of the local Basque public television as a service that invests in the redubbing of Western films. Her comparative analysis of the first dubbing and the redub of the same material demonstrates how a host of factors (e.g. changes in local AVT norms, self-censorship, commissioner, etc.) come into play during the redubbing process. All in all, although general trends can be detected, each redub is likely to be the result of techniques applied by different translators at different times with disparate effects on the target audiences.

The diachronic perspective of redubbing is also the centre of Serenella Zanotti's *Archival Resources and Uncertainties in Film Retranslation Research*. Not only does she show how retranslation takes place by concentrating on her case study *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, which was dubbed at least three times for distribution in Italy, but she takes the discussion a step further. Intriguingly, she addresses the important role that archival resources have in producing sound scholarly research that strives to explore film retranslation by looking at past and present audiovisual products. This approach helps to cast a good deal of light on the norms at work regarding political, ideological and taboo issues in different periods of time and how they have changed.

Francesca Raffi's *Retranslation as Resubtitling. The Case Study of Federico Fellini's La Strada* explores retranslation from a diametrically opposed standpoint. She concentrates on resubtitling from Italian into English (defined as 'upstream translation', i.e. from a dominated into a dominant language, Gottlieb 2014: 28). Her historical account of the way Fellini's films were dealt with and received in the UK and the USA is particularly illuminating regarding the rationale behind adopting dubbing or subtitling in these contexts. Cultural and marketing reasons are debated and thoroughly explained before analysing two subtitled English versions of Fellini's *La Strada*, which were produced 37 years apart. The starting point for this analysis is that 'retranslation as improvement' is often allegedly the reason why such an endeavour is undertaken. However, Raffi's examination demonstrates that, although the more modern retranslation features major improvements at the technical level, it appears to depart from the source text more than its older counterpart. Hence, this leads her to question the very notion of 'improvement' in resubtitling.

The articles summarised this far clearly fall within the 'retranslation' category *strictu sensu*. However, as I have mentioned earlier, other practices can be subsumed under this broad phenomenon. Angela Zottola's *Orange Is the New Black. Popularizing gender and sexual identities* focuses on 'simultaneous translation' from a synchronic standpoint. Zottola's analysis of the original English dialogues and their Italian dubbed and subtitled version shows the importance of these practices as forms of knowledge popularization, whereby knowledge is understood as increased awareness of issues such as identity and homosexual identity in particular.

Antonio Fruttaldo's contribution also concentrates on another aspect of retranslation, which has been described above as 'intermediate or mediated translation'. *(Re)Translating Culture-Bound Elements in Gomorrah – The Series: A Corpus-Based Investigation into Relocated Identities* explores how this programme has been adapted for an international audience. In particular, this author examines the process of crating the English subtitles using the Italian translation of the Neapolitan screenplay, which features a plethora of local culture-specific references. In his contrastive analysis of the original Neapolitan, the Italian subtitles and the English subtitles, Fruttaldo concludes that, when it comes to works that are representative of an extremely local society, intermediate

translation may somehow impoverish the source context references in the target language environment.

All the authors that contributed to this collection, as well as others, have remarked on the dearth of research on how audiovisual (re)translation is received (cf. for instance O’Sullivan, 2016; Dore, forthcoming). Annalisa Sandrelli’s work seeks to partly fill this gap. Her article *An Italian Crime Series in English. The Dubbing and Subtitling of Suburra* gives us the opportunity to reflect on how different versions of the same audiovisual product are perceived by viewers. She reports on the results of a small-scale experiment that aimed to verify whether any appreciable differences can be detected when an audience traditionally accustomed to subtitling is exposed to dubbing. In the case of English native speakers watching an Italian dubbed and subtitled series, viewers still tend to prefer the latter; yet, the former is also appreciated by a significant number of viewers. Because of this, Sandrelli concludes that new market niches are likely to open up for the AVT industry.

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