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Quality in Subtitling

Theory and Professional Reality

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Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Translation Studies Unit

Imperial College London

2014

Abstract

The issue of quality is of great importance in translation studies and, although some studies have been conducted in the field of subtitling, most discussions have been limited to aspects such as how to become a good subtitler and how to produce quality subtitles. Little research has been carried out to investigate other potential factors that may influence the quality of subtitling output in practice. In recent years, some subtitling courses at postgraduate level have attempted to bridge the gap between academia and industry, not only by incorporating the teaching of linguistic and technical skills into the curriculum but also by informing students about ethics, working conditions, market competition, and other relevant professional issues. This instruction is intended to prepare them for promising careers in the subtitling industry, where a progressively deteriorating trend has been observed by some professional subtitlers.

The main aim and objective of this study is to explore both theoretical and practical aspects of subtitling quality. The study aspires to call attention to the factors influencing the quality of subtitles and also to provide suggestions to improve the state of affairs within the subtitling industry in terms of quality. In order to examine the potential factors that influence the perception of subtitling quality, particularly in the professional context, two rounds of online surveys were conducted to establish the working conditions of subtitlers. Despite the fact that the participants in the first survey were based in thirty-nine different countries, the data collected is more representative of the situation in Europe, where subtitling is a relatively mature industry compared to other parts of the world. The second survey targeted subtitlers working with the Chinese language in an attempt to study the burgeoning Chinese audiovisual market.

This thesis provides a systematic analysis of the numerous parameters that have an impact on the quality of subtitling, both in theory and in professional reality, and offers a detailed insight into the working environment of subtitlers. At the same time, it endeavours to draw attention to the need to ensure decent working conditions in the industry. The general findings are discussed in terms of their implications for the development of the profession as well as for subtitler training and education.

Copyright Declaration

Declaration of Originality

I, Szu-Yu Kuo, declare that this thesis is my own work and is based on the research that I conducted during 2009-2014. It has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university. Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given in the bibliography.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to God, who made it possible for me to pursue my dream and to complete this project. This thesis is also dedicated to both my mother and father; my mother for having the strength to support my decision despite all the odds; and my father, who always remains in my heart.

Acknowledgement

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Abbreviations

AATI	Association of Asian Translation Industry
AIDAC	Associazione Italiana Dialoghisti Adattatori Cinetelevisivi
ALCS	The Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society
ATAA	Association des Traducteurs et Adaptateurs de l'Audiovisuel
ATIDA	Arabic Translation and Intercultural Dialogue Association
ATRAE	Asociación de Traducción y Adaptación Audiovisual de España
AV	Audiovisual
AVT	Audiovisual Translation
AVTE	Audiovisual Translators Europe
BZO	Beroepsvereniging van Zelfstandige Ondertitelaars (the Dutch association of subtitlers)
CNY	Chinese Yuan Renminbi
CPS	Characters per second
ESIST	European Association for Studies in Screen Translation
EUR	Euros
FEF	Filming East Festival
GBP	Pound Sterling
LVCSR	Large Vocabulary Continuous Speech Recognizers
MT	Machine Translation
NAER	National Academy of Education Research (Taiwan)
Ofcom	The Office of Communication
PPM	Per Programme Minute
QC	Quality control
SAVAS	Sharing Audio Visual Language Resources for Automatic Subtitling
SDH	Subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing
SEK	Swedish Krona
SGAE	Sociedad General de Autores y Editores
SGD	Singapore Dollar

SL	Source language
ST	Source text
STAW	Stowarzyszenie Tłumaczy Audiowizualnych (the Polish association of audiovisual translators)
SUBTLE	The Subtitlers' Association
SUMAT	Subtitling via Machine Translation
TAC	The Translators Association of China
TATI	Taiwan Association of Translation and Interpretation
TL	Target language
TRAG	TRAducciones de Guiones (the Spanish Lista de traductores audiovisuales)
TT	Target text
TWD	New Taiwan Dollar
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USD	US Dollar

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

In 1929, films with audible dialogue were introduced to audiences worldwide and since then, subtitling has become one of the primary means of film translation (Gottlieb, 1995). Subtitling can be produced very fast and it costs considerably less than other translation modes such as dubbing, due to labour expenditure being much cheaper. These two major advantages have made subtitling the most widely adopted language transfer method in the audiovisual production world. Thanks to the developments brought about by digital technology, the audience can now easily choose from subtitles in different languages, as is the case with DVDs and Blu-rays. The accelerated global distribution of mass media also increases the demand for subtitle production in an ever-diminishing period of time. Critical consciousness of subtitle quality has been raised among audiences, as nowadays they seem to have a better understanding of different cultures as well as languages compared with the time when the world was less globalised. As Lauscher (2000: 149) points out, in the globalised world in which we find ourselves, "the growing importance of translating and translations […] has turned translation quality and translation quality assessment into topics of public interest". In the field of intralingual subtitling[1] for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing, this awakening has been led in the UK by the Office of Communication (Ofcom, 2013: online), which decided that:

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[1] For a definition of intralingual subtitling, please see section 3.1.1.

It should review the issues affecting the quality of live subtitling, primarily from the viewer's perspective, with a view to tackling these in conjunction with those broadcasters that account for the overwhelming majority of live or near-live programmes [...] as well as their subtitling contractors.

In the field of interlingual subtitling[2], the blooming film industry is now also paying more attention to the quality of subtitles. In line with the increasing awareness and importance attached to subtitling quality, subtitling has not only been gaining ground in translation studies, but is also gradually attracting more attention and discussion on quality issues within the field (Abdallah, 2011; Díaz-Cintas, 2001; James, 2001; Schröter, 2003; Schröter, 2010).

Due to its distinctive semiotic attributes, as well as the ultimate commercial objectives, the subtitling of audiovisual programmes often requires greater technical skills and involves more complex translation issues than other types of translation. Arguably, these factors further aggravate the challenges facing subtitlers. On the one hand, subtitles nowadays are used not only for entertainment, but also for the purpose of language learning, with separate purposes leading to differing audience expectations for subtitles and, consequently, diversified views on the quality of subtitles. On the other hand, the ceaseless pursuit of financial profits in the industry has worsened under the current ailing economy, arguably impacting upon the working conditions of subtitlers, who are confronted with low remuneration and tight deadlines in a commercial attempt to reduce costs and boost turnaround.

Despite being a rather young discipline when compared to the more mature translation studies, subtitling has existed as a professional practice for over nearly a century although it was not until the mid-1990s that it started to receive full attention from academics due to the proliferation and distribution of audiovisual

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[2] For a definition of interlingual subtitling, please see section 3.1.1.

materials. Subtitles have become part and parcel of our daily life, albeit the actual practice of subtitling is constantly subject to change with the advancement of technology. The inherent attributes of subtitling make it distinct from other types of text translation, with its development being more dynamic because the film and audiovisual industry, to which one could also add the video game sector, never stops seeking to devise new ways to capitalise on technological advancements to attract new audiences and thus generate new income. In view of the need for subtitles and the prosperity of the film industry, the development of subtitling both as a profession and as a discipline should be promising. However, the reality is that the recognition and visibility of the profession seem to neither increase with the passing of time nor grow with the progress of the discipline. The fact that attention has been drawn to the quality of subtitles in both industry and academia, as previously mentioned, denotes the existence of dissatisfaction or concerns regarding the existing quality of subtitles.

Despite the fact that quality issues have been identified in translation studies, and that the need for better-quality subtitles has been recognised in the industry, there seems to be a missing link in the discussion of quality between translation studies in general and subtitling studies. In addition, there seems to be an inadequate connection between academic research and professional reality. With respect to the gap in the research carried out to date, further details are discussed in the next section.

1.2 Gap in Existing Research

Substantial research has already been conducted in order to investigate the various parameters that can be used to evaluate the quality of translation. The existing

literature in translation studies regarding quality issues and quality assessment mainly focuses on the translation of general text types (House, 1997; Lauscher, 2000; Reiß, 1971). With subtitling gradually being recognised as a new area of interest and an important field of translation research, increasing attention is also being paid to the corpora of audiovisual texts (Baños et al., 2013); however, the existing literature in audiovisual translation (AVT) has concentrated among others on analysing the behaviour of translators when faced with certain transferences (Díaz-Cintas and Remael, 2007; Egoyan and Balfour, 2004; O'Hagan and Ashworth, 2002), on discussing the mechanisms of cinematographic adaptation (Lomheim, 1999; Zatlin, 2005), on looking into the concrete case of the translation of film titles (Lu, 2009; Martí and Zapater, 1993), and on the criticism and exploration of film subtitles based on case studies (Li and Ji, 2008; Wang, 2007). The literature discussing the factors that determine the quality of subtitles as a special genre is still very thin and incipient (Bugucki, 1996; Díaz-Cintas, 2001).

Studies on the field of audiovisual translation encompass a variety of modalities such as dubbing, audio description for the blind and the partially sighted, voiceover, and subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing (SDH). However, this study mainly focuses on interlingual subtitling aimed at the hearing audience.

As the most unique attribute of subtitling is the need to take image and sound into consideration, it may be a logical deduction to conclude that investigations into translation quality in a conventional sense, along with those tackling quality from a technical perspective in AVT, should be a solid foundation to tackle the study of quality issues in subtitling.

Back in the 1990s, academics and professionals from the subtitling industry worked together under the auspices of the European Association for Studies in Screen

Translation (ESIST) in an attempt to propose a prototype of good subtitling practice, with the aim of establishing an industry standard to which professionals, trainers and students of AVT can refer. The fruit of this collaboration materialised in the Code of Good Subtitling Practice, propounded by Ivarsson and Carroll (1998: 157-159), and which is discussed in further detail in section 3.3. Nonetheless, the existence of a widely accepted code of good practice and the various discussions of translation quality underpinned by the existing literature do not seem to help ease the turmoil found in the industry when it comes to the perceived low quality subtitles that are in circulation. From a research perspective, a gap was identified between the theoretical suggestions to achieve high quality subtitling and the actual factors that in real practice may have an impact on the quality of the subtitling output. In an attempt to address the contentious topic of subtitle quality, this study was proposed with the ultimate goal of exploring the influential factors that affect the quality of subtitling, both from a theoretical and professional perspectives.

Before being able to come up with a list of potential factors that may be behind the phenomenon of crumbling subtitle quality, an investigation into the working conditions of subtitlers was deemed to be sine qua non. Information on these topics in the existing literature is almost absent, mostly outdated, and it is my contention that this under-researched external environment is very likely to have contributed to the widening gap between theory and practice. Therefore, this thesis also aims to explore the working conditions of subtitlers and their potential implications as to the resulting quality of the subtitling output.

The working conditions of audiovisual translators in general, and subtitlers in particular, have been mostly veiled in mystery throughout history, with very few works written on the topic. In the case of subtitling, this is mainly because the majority of subtitlers tend to work on a freelance basis. Since contractors work alone, independently and very frequently in isolation, it is difficult for outsiders to gain an

understanding of their profession and working conditions, and it has also obstructed the circulation of information among these professionals. In accordance with the desire to offer a clearer picture of the working environment in which subtitlers operate, as well as an overview of the realities that define the interlingual subtitling industry, an initial online survey was carried out in order to reach the target populations, i.e. practising subtitlers across the world.

Despite a healthy number of replies received in the initial round of surveys, the fact that a majority of respondents were based in European countries confined the possibility of gaining a better understanding of the subtitlers' working conditions within the European continent and thus inspired a second round of surveys targeting those whose working languages include Mandarin. The further desire to explore the state of affairs of the Mandarin subtitling industry mainly originated from the recent flourishing of the Chinese audiovisual market and its increasing influence on the international film industry. In addition, due to my background, I was particularly interested in the Taiwanese market. However, as it will be explained below, focusing exclusively on the working conditions of subtitlers in Taiwan was not feasible. For this reason, a wider focus, on subtitlers working with Mandarin, was adopted in the end.

Mandarin, also known as Mandarin Chinese and Standard Chinese, is a variety of Chinese, mainly spoken in the People's Republic of China (hereafter known as China), the Republic of China (hereafter known as Taiwan) and Singapore, being the primary language of the governments, the media and education in China and Taiwan and one of the four official languages in Singapore. Written Chinese is based on Mandarin but it underwent fundamental changes in the 20th century and developed differently in China (including Hong Kong and Macao), Taiwan and other countries with large Chinese communities, such as Malaysia and Singapore. Today, Mandarin can be written using two different sets of characters – traditional and simplified;

traditional Chinese characters are used exclusively in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, while simplified Chinese characters are officially used in Mainland China and Singapore. Hence, in the context of subtitling, the language used for Chinese subtitling refers to Mandarin, albeit often simply referred to as Chinese, and can be further divided into traditional and simplified Chinese. In spite of this distinction between the two sets of Chinese characters, most educated Chinese-native speakers can read and understand both traditional and simplified characters, although they may be more familiar with one set than the other when it comes to writing.

The media and entertainment industries in Hong Kong and Taiwan are relatively more developed and advanced, and to some extent, they are also under each other's influence. Despite Cantonese being the de facto official spoken form of Chinese in Hong Kong, the standard written Chinese is based on Mandarin and traditional characters, the same as in Taiwan. Hence, it is not uncommon for subtitles produced in Taiwan to be also used in Hong Kong, or for a Taiwanese subtitler to work directly with a Hong Kong based company. Over the past decade, gradual steps have been taken to lift restrictions on personnel, trade exchanges and shipping links across the Strait between China and Taiwan, with the cross-Strait interactions having therefore been significantly boosted in all aspects. As a result of this flurry of strengthened people-to-people and commercial ties, spoken Mandarin across the Strait has also evolved, with increasing homogeneity in the use of the language. Hence, subtitlers who usually produce traditional Chinese subtitles may sometimes be asked to translate them into simplified Chinese, and vice versa, in a similar manner as subtitling companies deal with other languages spoken across several countries and continents like Spanish, French and Portuguese for instance. For this reason, it is rather difficult to clearly divide the Chinese subtitling market according to countries. Considering the entanglements of the Chinese subtitling market, in a world where commercial operations tend to be global, and the fact that an in-depth analysis of subtitling in Taiwan is also impossible without a preliminary understanding in the first instance of the Chinese subtitling industry on a macro-level, the exploration of

quality issues concerning Mandarin subtitling within this study is not limited to the sole scope of Taiwan despite the possibility of focusing on the working conditions of subtitlers and related quality issues in Taiwan were considered when conducting the second round of surveys.

The thriving Chinese film market has meant that subtitling quality has also started to gradually receive more attention in Chinese-speaking countries. As far as Taiwan is concerned, the government has been systematically promoting the development of cultural and creative industries in general and the film industry in particular in recent years. With the Taiwanese director Ang Lee gaining international fame, a number of Taiwanese films as well as directors have also won international recognition in recent years, making a mark on the world stage. The reignited passion for films on this island has triggered a closer attention to the quality of subtitles on the part of the audience. However, the development of subtitling in the East, in terms of both profession and discipline, seems to be far behind the West. The existing literature on the quality of subtitling in the context of the Chinese language is even thinner than that found for Western languages.

In order to bridge the research gap mentioned above, an additional survey was conducted. In addition to the first round of surveys (hereafter known as the first round) carried out across the world, a second round of surveys (hereafter known as the second round) targeting subtitlers who translate to and/or from Mandarin was conducted. The purpose of both rounds is to gather information not only to gain a global perspective of the subtitling industry from the point of view of subtitlers, but also to provide a contrastive overview between West and East.

Following the above discussion, the aims and objectives are further elaborated in the following section.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The main aims of this study are, firstly, to explore the deciding factors of quality in translation as well as in subtitling and also, what is considered good practice in the professional world of subtitling, in an attempt to bridge the gap between academia and industry. Secondly, it endeavours to investigate the opinion of practising subtitlers on the perceived quality of their work and on the systems in place to guarantee its quality levels. Finally, the ultimate goal and aspiration of this thesis is to contribute to the scarce literature already written on the topic.

The precise research goals are as follows:

(1) to revisit existing literature on the essential elements of translation quality and to explore the constituents of subtitling quality as well as examples of good practice adopted in the industry;

(2) to gain a better understanding of the current working conditions of subtitlers in different countries globally, with the addition of a specific focus on the burgeoning Chinese audiovisual market;

(3) based on the results of the empirical research on subtitlers' working conditions, to explore the possible factors that affect the quality of subtitling output in professional reality;

(4) based on the results of the empirical research on subtitlers' working conditions, to investigate the opinion of practising subtitlers on the perceived quality of their work and on the systems in place to guarantee its quality levels;

(5) to discuss the implications of the findings for the development of the profession as well as for subtitler education;

(6) to coordinate the findings and implications in order to propose suggestions that would contribute to the safeguarding of quality in subtitles; and

(7) to contribute to the literature and debate on subtitling quality from both industry and academic perspectives.

Due to the scope and limitations of this study, the empirical research and the resulting discussions are primarily centred on subtitling quality issues from the angle of subtitlers. The reason behind this decision is that subtitlers are the ones who produce subtitles and have a direct impact on the quality of subtitles. In addition, their working conditions can also reflect, to some extent, the attitude of their clients, i.e. translation agencies, subtitling studios or direct clients. Thus, the discussions included in this thesis are a viable starting point to acquire a broad overview of influential factors on subtitling quality in professional reality. With respect to other potential angles from which the quality of subtitling can be viewed, related discussions are included in section 7.3.

1.4 Thesis Outline

In what follows, a brief outline of the thesis contents is presented. The thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter One, the current chapter, describes the background to the study, identifies a gap in existing research, and expounds the aims and objectives of this thesis.

Chapter Two explores the concept of quality as understood by various authors in translation studies, examines the criteria put forward in order to evaluate the quality of a translation and delves into theories of equivalence in translation where theories of translation quality assessment originate and stem from. An overview of the various approaches suggested by some academics to assessing translation quality is also provided.

Chapter Three explicates the differences between translation quality and subtitling quality, and provides a synopsis and detailed discussion of industry standards in subtitling drawn from a widely accepted code of good subtitling practice. Following that, theoretical factors that have been considered to have an impact on the quality of subtitling are examined from three aspects: temporal, spatial and stylistic dimensions.

Chapter Four begins with an explanation of the various research questions, followed by an argued presentation of the methodology used for this study, discussing the main implications encountered when defining research paradigm and method. Subsequently, the rationale behind the decision of using online questionnaire surveys as the main research method to collect information is stated and the questionnaire design is discussed in detail. To finish this chapter, details are provided as regards the distribution of the survey, the collection of data and the procedures followed in the analysis of the data.

In Chapter Five, the survey results are presented and discussed grouped under seven different areas, including subtitling rates, the negotiation power of subtitlers, the practice with payments of royalties, the use of acknowledgment credits, the time allowed for giving notices and deadlines, the formality of signing contracts for given commissions, as well as the provision of any software and/or support materials to enhance the task of the subtitlers.

Building upon the survey findings, Chapter Six discusses the multiple factors that actually affect the quality of subtitling on day-to-day professional practice from the perspective of the subtitlers themselves, from aspects including among others their working conditions, the quality of the materials provided by the clients, the

existence of adequate quality control procedures, and the (social) visibility of the subtitlers. This chapter further delves into the implications that the findings may have for the development of the subtitling profession and also the training and education of future generations of subtitlers.

Finally, Chapter Seven recapitulates the survey findings and their implications, discusses the contributions and limitations of this study, suggests directions for future research, and concludes this study with final marks.

A bibliography and various appendices are also included at the end of the thesis for reference.

Chapter Two

Translation Quality

2.1 Introduction

Before delving fully into subtitling quality, an understanding of the constituents of translation quality is a prerequisite. Translation quality as a subject for academic discussion is a relatively recent phenomenon, although the debate of fidelity in translation can be traced back to the first century BC when Cicero and Horace distinguished between word-for-word translation and sense-for-sense translation (Bassnett, 1980; Munday, 2008). Since the 1980s, and particularly since the advent of the Internet, the accelerating flow of information, people, cultures, and commodities across political and geographical boundaries has boosted a high demand for translation, and consequently a greater global awareness of the intricacies and the power that translation has in exchanges across countries. Thus, knowledge gaps have been narrowed to some extent and cultural barriers have been lowered.

As a result of these new trends, translation not only bridges the gulf between speakers of different languages and residents in different geographies and cultures, but it can also foster and facilitate foreign language acquisition. Constant exposure to media translation of all sorts, particularly in the case of subtitling where original text and translation co-exist in the same programme, has enhanced the ability of readers and audiences to distinguish, or at the very least to acquire a general

concept of, the quality of a translation.

Translation itself as a product is therefore now open to criticism, challenged not only by service providers, but also by some end users. Quality, however, remains a very slippery concept that may be defined and perceived differently by different audiences, greatly depending on the user's or evaluator's standpoint. Hence, as pointed out by Samuelsson-Brown (1995: 83), the crux here is to find the right answer to the question: "Who or what determines an acceptable level of quality?".

Since the purpose of translation is to transfer meaning across two languages (and cultures) and the process of translation is to pursue the equivalence of meaning between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT), it is a prerequisite to revisit the fundamental concepts of 'meaning' and 'equivalence' in translation studies. By clarifying these essential constituents of translation quality, a more solid ground can be built for further discussions on quality issues concerning translation and subtitling. Hence, in the following sections, the notion of meaning and equivalence, as well as various theories of equivalence, will be discussed before concrete approaches to translation quality assessment are examined.

2.2 Translation and Meaning

Translations can be evaluated not only by readers, but also by a myriad of professionals at different stages of production and delivery. Despite the fact that each individual may ultimately apply their own definition of quality, there is normally some common ground shared by the stakeholders in the use of criteria. The concept of 'meaning' is generally agreed to be the most significant parameter in terms of translation quality, because a good translation is said to "have the same meaning" as

the original (Catford, 1965: 35). In Catford's (ibid.) words, meaning is defined as "the total network of relations entered into by any linguistic form – text, item-in-text, structure, element of structure, class, term in system – or whatever it may be".

Although, from time to time, an argument may be raised over the interpretation of the specific meaning embedded in a ST, it is undeniable that the main interest of all parties involved in the translation process is the actual meaning conveyed in the resulting TT. As House (1995: 982) clearly indicates, the way in which this meaning is preserved in the language transfer is therefore pivotal to the quality of the translation.

The preservation of meaning across languages is an arduous and challenging task for translators, since many words and expressions in one language simply do not exist in another, or have different connotations. Catford (1965: 1) defines translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)". In accordance with this definition, he identifies the central problem of translation practice as that of finding TL translation equivalents (ibid.: 21). With a similar view, Nida and Taber (1969/1982: 12) propose that "[t]ranslating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style", once again placing the primary emphasis on the importance of meaning.

Since meaning must be given priority, House (1997: 30) discusses three aspects of meaning that are particularly important for translation, as follows:

1) the semantic aspect gives account of "the relationship of linguistic units or symbols to their referents in some possible world, where possible world

means any world that the human mind is capable of constructing";

2) the pragmatic aspect relates to "the correlation between linguistic units and the user(s) of these units in a given communicative situation"; and

3) the textual aspect refers to the "various relations of co-textual reference […] in the process of text constitution", that is, the connectivity between successive sentences and the semantic meaning conveyed in a text.

Based on the above tripartite distinction, House (ibid.: 31) proceeds to suggest a definition of 'translation' that she posits as "the replacement of a text in the source language by a semantically and pragmatically equivalent text in the target language". In line with this definition, which clearly draws from Nida and Taber's (1969/1982), she also takes the concept of 'equivalence' to be a fundamental criterion of translation quality.

2.3 Equivalence in Translation

Equivalence inevitably became the crucial concept of discussion in translation theories for many years, whether it was referenced directly or not. Over the past fifty years, many theorists such as Baker (1992), Catford (1965), House (1997), Jakobson (1959), Newmark (1988), Nida and Taber (1969/1982) and Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), among others, have discussed the concept of equivalence with different foci. In the following sections, the key discussions that have taken place on equivalence will be reviewed in chronological order.

2.3.1 Vinay and Darbelnet: Situational Equivalence

In Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995: 342) *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation*, which was originally written in French under the title *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais: méthode de traduction* and published in 1958, equivalence is defined as a procedure which "replicates the same situation as in the original whilst using completely different wording".

Due to the fact that glossaries and collections of equivalent expressions between language pairs can never be exhaustive, the method of (re)creating equivalences in any given target language (TL) is frequently used as a translation strategy, especially when dealing with idioms, proverbs, clichés, nominal or adjectival phrases, and onomatopoeia of animal sounds (ibid.: 38). Vinay and Darbelnet (ibid.) further expound that calques sometimes become accepted by the other language, "especially if they relate to a new field which is likely to become established in the country of the TL". Central to Vinay and Darbelnet's (ibid.: 255) discussion is the priority given to the SL and the context in which it has been created, when they state that "the need for creating equivalences arises from the situation and it is in the situation of the SL text that translators have to look for a solution".

In their opinion, the use of calques is viewed somewhat negatively and is considered to be a symptom of poor quality. It is also stressed that the responsibility for introducing calques in a TL should fall upon original writers of that language, while translators are advised to use traditional forms of expression in order to avoid accusations of using Gallicisms, Anglicisms, Germanisms, Hispanisms, and so on (ibid.: 38-9). However, arguably, the attitude of audiences towards the use of calques may evolve with their increasing knowledge of other cultures and languages.

2.3.2 Jakobson: Equivalence in Difference

Jakobson (1959: 233) presents the notion of 'equivalence in difference', which he considers to be "the cardinal problem of language and the pivotal concern of linguistics". He also famously suggests that translation can be divided into three types:

1) Intralingual translation: within one and the same language;

2) Interlingual translation: between two languages and what he calls translation proper; and

3) Intersemiotic translation: between verbal and nonverbal sign systems.

Jakobson believes that, in the case of intralingual translation, it is synonyms rather than equivalents that are used to transfer the ST message. Likewise, on the level of interlingual translation, there exists no full equivalence between code-units or messages in different languages. Most frequently, the translator recodes and transmits a message from the SL into another substitute message in the TL. Following this argument, he asserts that "translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes" (ibid.: 233).

Since languages differ from one another to a greater or lesser degree in representations of meaning and grammatical forms, translators may face the problem of not finding a translation equivalent. On these occasions, Jakobson (1987: 431) suggests that "wherever there is a deficiency, terminology can be qualified and amplified by loanwords or loan translations, by neologisms or semantic shifts, and, finally, by circumlocutions". The quality of a translation, in a sense, thus lies in whether the translator is able to adopt the most suitable approach to tackle the equivalence deficiency between the two languages.

2.3.3 Nida and Taber: Formal Correspondence and Dynamic Equivalence

Nida first introduced two types of equivalence, 'formal equivalence' and 'dynamic equivalence', in his seminal book *Toward a Science of Translating*, published in 1964. For him, "[f]ormal equivalence focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content" while a translation based on dynamic equivalence "aims at complete naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behaviour relevant within the context of his own culture" (ibid.: 159). In Nida and Taber's (1969/1982) joint work, a revised, more detailed definition of these two types of equivalence is provided, where formal equivalence is referred to as 'formal correspondence', concentrating on correspondence at a linguistic level with respect to grammar, phonetics, lexis, syntax and so on.

In their new reformulation, Nida and Taber (1969/1982: 201) point at the very concept of translation quality when they state that formal correspondence shows in the "quality of a translation in which the features of the form of the [ST] have been mechanically reproduced in the receptor language". However, since there are not always formal equivalents between language pairs, the use of some formal equivalents in the TT might be counterproductive, as they do not allow the target audience to understand the TT easily. As Nida and Taber (1969/1982: 201) claim, "formal correspondence distorts the grammatical and stylistic patterns of the receptor language, and hence distorts the message, so as to cause the receptor to misunderstand or to labour unduly hard".

Dynamic equivalence is defined by these two authors as "the quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the RESPONSE of the RECEPTOR is essentially like that of the original receptors" (ibid.: 201). Frequently, as opposed to formal correspondence, "the form

of the original text is changed; but as long as the change follows the rules of back transformation in the source language, of contextual consistency in the transfer, and of transformation in the receptor language, the message is preserved and the translation is faithful" (ibid.: 200).

Following these definitions, it is not surprising to observe that the application of dynamic equivalence is the approach favoured by Nida and Taber as a more effective translation procedure, and hence as a better method to attain a high quality translation. Their emphasis is, accordingly, centred upon the pursuit of equivalent semantic quality, that is, fidelity to the original message instead of the form of the ST. In the field of subtitling, dynamic equivalence could be seen as essential for the audience to quickly grasp the meaning within the audiovisual text.

2.3.4 Catford: Translation Shifts

Catford (1965: 27) uses the terms 'formal equivalence' and 'textual equivalence' to refer to interlingual and intertextual equivalence respectively. The former, according to Catford's (ibid.) definition, is "any TL category (unit, class, structure, element of structure, etc.) which may be said to occupy, as nearly as possible, the 'same' place in the economy of the TL as the given SL category occupies in the SL". On the other hand, textual equivalence for this author is "any TL form (text or portion of text) which is observed to be the equivalent of a given SL form (text or portion of text)" (ibid.).

Formal equivalence can be easily established when the lexical category in both languages operates in approximately the same way, as, for Catford (ibid.), an equivalent for each word (or even for each morpheme) in the ST can probably be

sought in the TL without difficulty. Where formal correspondence is impossible, it is still possible to arrive at textual equivalence through what he calls "translation shifts" (ibid.: 32). The term 'shifts' is defined by Catford (ibid.: 73) as "departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL".

According to Catford, there are two major types of shifts: 'level shifts' and 'category shifts'. A level shift means that "a SL item at one linguistic level has a TL translation equivalent at a different level" (ibid.: 73), and the only possible level shifts are from grammar to lexis and vice-versa. Catford (ibid.: 77-80) goes further by dividing category shifts into four types, based on a linguistic system:

1) Structure shifts, which imply changes in word order;

2) Class shifts, which lead to changes of syntactical class;

3) Unit shifts, which mean a change in the number of syntactical units; and

4) Intra system shifts, which occur when the selection of a non-corresponding term in the TL system is involved in the translation. This happens where SL and TL possess approximately the same system, e.g. when the SL term or expression in singular becomes a TL term or expression in plural.

In terms of equivalence, Catford also argues that, in the linguistic sense, the SL and TL items rarely have the same meaning, although they can function in the same situation. In his understanding of equivalence, "SL and TL texts or items are translation equivalents when they are interchangeable in a given situation" (ibid.: 49), irrespective of their lexical category. In accordance with this argument, Catford (ibid.: 50) generalises the conditions for translation equivalence as follows: "translation equivalence occurs when a SL and a TL text or item are relatable to (at

least some of) the same features of substance".[3] Such conditions, therefore, pave the way for a translation of ultimate quality.

2.3.5 House: Overt and Covert Translation

In the second half of the 1970s, House (1977) first suggested a basic division into two major translation types, namely 'overt translation' and 'covert translation', which have had significant implications on the way translation quality has been perceived since then. In House's (1997: 66) definition, an overt translation is "one in which the addressees of the translation text are quite 'overtly' not being directly addressed". In an overt translation, therefore, it is not necessary to recreate a second original, since the TT is overtly being passed as a translation. Covert translation, on the other hand, is defined as a translation "that enjoys the status of an original [ST] in the target culture" and thus "is not particularly tied to the source language and culture" (ibid.: 69). Since the TT is not source-culture linked, the covert type of translation may involve more subtle and intricate cultural translation problems and the resulting evaluation challenges.

This dichotomy, along with the previous discussion on the three aspects that make up the concept of meaning (see section 2.2), reveals House's view of the notion of equivalence. She contends that striving for translation equivalence is difficult in cases of overt translation because there exists a dialectical relationship between preservation and alternation (ibid.). In such a relationship, thorny problems which endanger the quality of a translation may arise, as the status of the TT "in the socio-cultural context of the source language community, which must be topicalised in the

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[3] Fawcett (1997: 55) provides an explanation of what the word 'substance' means in Catford's theory, as follows: "Writing, sound and the things out there in the world are 'substance'. Language is an abstract and formal representation of that substance".

target culture, necessitates major changes" (1995: 992). According to House (1997: 67), a direct match of the original function of a ST with that of the TT is thus not possible in overt translation, either due to the fact that the ST is "tied to a specific non-repeatable historic event in the source culture […] or because of the unique status (as literary text) that the [ST] has in the source culture". In spite of this limitation, House (ibid.: 68) still stresses that a similar second-level functional equivalence, i.e. a kind of topicalisation of the original function, must be achieved in the TT and "may have to be posited as a criterion for adequate translation".

On the contrary, in the case of covert translation, a ST and its covert translation are pragmatically of equal concern for SL and TL addressees; that is, they have equivalent purposes and are meant to be read as original texts. Accordingly, House (ibid.: 69) concludes that "it is thus possible and desirable to keep the function of the [ST] equivalent in the [TT]". Since such texts are not source-culture specific and possess truly equivalent functions, the translator would need to view the ST through the lenses of readers in the target culture, and make "allowances for underlying cultural differences by placing a cultural filter between the [ST] and the [TT]" (ibid.: 70). As House (ibid.: 29-30) suggests, the use of a cultural filter is one of the means to achieve functional equivalence, and it is with this cultural filter that "shifts and changes along various pragmatic parameters (e.g. the marking of the social role relationship between author and reader) are conducted".

In order to create a translation which is fit for its purpose, House (ibid.: 37) claims that "each individual text must be referred to the particular situation enveloping it", thus expanding the horizon from the mere linguistic to the wider pragmatic dimension. The translator must identify the situation first and gauge its textual function, so as to precisely state the equivalence which may be sought for the TT. House (1997: 42) also adapts the system of situational dimensions proposed by

Crystal and Davy (1969),[4] and, based on it, further propounds a refined basic criterion for functional equivalence: "a translation text should not only match its [ST] in function, but employ equivalent situational-dimensional means to achieve that function". In this sense, this criterion can also serve as an indicator of a good quality translation, which also stands true for subtitling.

2.3.6 Newmark: Equivalent Effect

Newmark's (1981; 1988) linguistic-textual approach to translation has also been an important and fruitful source of inspiration for other scholars. For Newmark (1981: 137), the translation process is a "basic artistic process [...] requiring the translator's taste, wit and elegance" rather than a science; hence, he does not establish a consistent model for translation quality assessment. Instead, he proposes a distinction between semantic translation and communicative translation in the hope of narrowing the gap between a ST and a TT. The former, semantic translation, "attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original", whilst the latter, communicative translation, "attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original" (ibid.: 39). In line with this definition, the criterion for evaluating semantic translation lies in the accuracy of the TT to be able to reproduce the linguistic idiosyncrasies as well as other formal features of the ST, whereas in the case of communicative translation, quality hinges on whether the TT can achieve the desired pragmatic impact.

Newmark (1988: 48) considers that to achieve an 'equivalent effect' is "to produce

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[4] Further details regarding the original and the adapted model of situational dimensions can be found in House (1997: 38-42).

the same effect (or one as close as possible) on the readership of the translation as was obtained on the readership of the original"; this is also called the 'equivalence response' principle, which had been previously labelled by Nida (1964) as dynamic equivalence. Instead of viewing the equivalent effect as the overriding aim of any translation, Newmark (ibid.: 48) regards it as the desirable result, and identifies two conditions under which the result is unlikely to be attained: 1) "if the purpose of the SL text is to affect and the TL translation is to inform (or vice versa)", and 2) "if there is a pronounced cultural gap between the SL and the TL text". This suggests that translators may face greater challenges in attaining quality if the TT is meant to serve a different purpose from the ST, and if there is a systematic difference between the source and target culture, as is the case when translating between English and Chinese, for instance. In such cases, the difficulty in assessing translation quality may also be raised.

Newmark (ibid.: 48-49) further expounds the concept of the equivalent effect in accordance with three different text types:

1) Vocative texts: in communicative translation of vocative texts (e.g. publicity, propaganda, persuasive or eristic writing), the equivalent effect is essential rather than solely desirable, and it is the very criterion by which the effectiveness and therefore the value of the translation is to be assessed.

2) Informative texts: in informative texts, the "equivalent effect is desirable only in respect of their (in theory) insignificant emotional impact" and is not possible "if SL and TL culture are remote from each other, since normally the cultural items have to be explained by culturally neutral or generic terms" (ibid.: 48).

3) Semantic texts: in terms of semantic translation, two problems regarding

the equivalent effect are presented: (a) "for serious imaginative literature, there are individual readers rather than a readership" (ibid.), thus the equivalent effect is unlikely to be achieved; and (b) "whilst the reader is not entirely neglected, the translator is essentially trying to render the effect the SL text has on himself […], not on any putative readership" (ibid.: 48-49).

In essence, a broad equivalent effect is more likely to be achieved when the text is more universal since Newmark (ibid.: 49) argues, "the more cultural (the more local, the more remote in time and space) a text, the less is equivalent effect even conceivable unless the reader is imaginative, sensitive, and steeped in the SL culture". Firmly based on the different types of texts, Newmark (ibid.: 192) also elaborates his views on translation quality, stating that:

> A good translation fulfils its intention; in an informative text, it conveys the facts acceptably; in a vocative text, its success is measurable, at least in theory, and therefore the effectiveness of an advertising agency translator can be shown by results; in an authoritative or an expressive text, form is almost as important as content, there is often a tension between the expressive and the aesthetic functions of language and therefore a merely 'adequate' translation may be useful to explain what the text is about […], but a good translation has to be 'distinguished' and the translator exceptionally sensitive.

This assertion is also valid in the case of subtitling. When the content of the programme is more local and remote in time and space, the challenge facing subtitlers may be even greater because the translated subtitle has to match the image on the screen as well.

2.3.7 Baker: Various Levels of Equivalence

Baker's (1992) seminal coursebook on translation, *In Other Words*, provides a

detailed discussion on equivalence by exploring this notion at different levels. She proposes the following classification, which has great potential as a possible set of parameters to help distinguish several dimensions that can be used in order to gauge the quality of a given translation:

1) Equivalence at word level.

Bolinger and Sears (1968: 43) define 'word' as "the smallest unit of language that can be used by itself". Having disagreed with this definition, Baker (1992: 11) argues that meaning can be carried by units smaller than words, and prefers to use the term 'morpheme' to describe the minimal formal element of meaning in language. A distinctive difference between morphemes and words is that a morpheme cannot contain more than one element of meaning and cannot be further analysed, while a word may or may not contain several elements of meaning or morphemes. As Baker points out, one-to-one correspondence between orthographic words and elements of meaning within or across languages does not always exist. In order to select a suitable equivalent in a given context, translators need to consider not only the linguistic system, but also be aware of the way both the writer of the ST and the translators themselves choose to manipulate the linguistic systems in question (ibid.: 18).

2) Equivalence above word level.

Words, in any language, are restricted insofar as they can be combined among themselves in certain ways in order to convey meaning. As Baker (ibid.: 49) states, each language community has their own way of portraying an event, and shows preferences for certain modes of expression and linguistic configurations. As a result of the differences in lexical patterning (collocations, idioms, and fixed expressions) between SL and TL, "a certain

amount of loss, addition, or skewing of meaning is often unavoidable in translation" (ibid.: 57), thus bringing potential negative effects on the quality of a TT.

3) Grammatical equivalence.

Apart from lexical differences among languages, the fact that grammatical rules vary across languages also points to inevitable changes in the way a message is carried across. Baker (ibid.: 84) highlights the most important difference between grammatical and lexical choices, stating that the former are largely obligatory while the latter are mostly optional. Compared with lexical structure, grammatical structure is more resistant to change. Since not all languages have morphological resources for expressing certain grammatical categories such as number, tense, or gender, translators may need to tread carefully when confronted with these challenges and either add or omit the information in the TT.

4) Textual equivalence.

A text is identified as such because the established connections within and among its sentences can be perceived by readers. In this respect, Baker (ibid.: 121, 181) divides these connections into two broad categories: (a) thematic and information structures, which are two primary types of structure helpful for analysing a clause as a message; and (b) cohesion, understood as the network of lexical, grammatical, and other relations which provides links between the various parts that make up a text. Every language has its own idiosyncratic devices for establishing links between textual elements. Consequently, Baker (ibid.: 190, 200-201) urges that parameters such as the languages in use, the text-type preferences, the presumed readership, as well as the ultimate purpose of the translation

must be taken into consideration during the process of translation, if the end result is to be of a satisfactory, high standard.

5) Pragmatic equivalence.

'Coherence' and 'implicature', in Baker's opinion, are particularly helpful concepts in exploring how a given text comes to make sense to a given readership. A text which coheres for one reader may not gel for another and, likewise, an implicature which one reader can easily decode may not be figured out by another. In line with this, Baker (ibid.: 219) contends that "the ability to make sense of a stretch of language depends on the hearer's or reader's expectations and experience of the world". Therefore, one of the main difficulties in language transfer concerns a translator's ability to properly assess the target readers' range of knowledge and assumptions about various aspects of the world (ibid.: 254). This understanding of equivalence goes a step further than in the definitions presented by previous scholars by including the target readers and the world in general as important parameters that affect the reception and quality of a translation.

The translation theories concerning the concept of equivalence discussed above also apply to subtitling to a certain extent. After examining the constituents of translation quality from a linguistic perspective, the next section will extend the discussion to translation quality assessment, before exploring other factors that may have an impact on subtitling quality.

2.4 Translation Quality Assessment in Translation Theories

As seen in the previous sections, equivalence, understood as the nature of the relationship between a ST and its TT, is at the heart of most discussions of translation criticism. From the above discussion, it is clear that the notion of equivalence has been interpreted in a variety of ways. These diverse views of equivalence and its role in translation serve as a basis for different approaches that can help assess the quality of a translation. In this section, with reference to House's (1997) categorisation of approaches to assessing translation quality, an overview of various theories concerning translation quality assessment is provided.

To begin with, six approaches to evaluating the quality of a translation based on House's categorisation will be reviewed: subjective, behavioural, linguistically-oriented, functionalist, descriptive, and deconstructionist. Following the discussion of these approaches, which are mainly designed to account for literary translation, an excursus into the interpretative model derived from Interpreting Studies will also be carried out due to its significant implications for the evaluation of quality in language transfer. A review of House's functional-pragmatic model will wrap up the discussion on the theory of translation quality assessment. At the end of this section, the focus will move to the assessment of translation quality.

2.4.1 Subjective Approach

Subjective[5] and intuitive evaluations of translations have been undertaken by writers, poets, philosophers, philologists, practicing translators and many other individuals

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[5] Subjective approaches are also termed as anecdotal, biographical and neo-hermeneutic approaches, and mentalist views by House (1997; 1998; 2001). For more information on neo-hermeneutic approaches, please refer to Stolze (2002).

since time immemorial. Most proponents of these approaches believe that the quality of a translation "depends largely on the translator's subjective interpretation and transfer decisions, which are based on his linguistic and cultural intuitive knowledge and experience" (House, 1997: 3). House (1998: 197) opines that such approach is atheoretical in nature and insufficient to establish general principles for translation quality.

2.4.2 Behavioural Approach

Behavioural approaches, also referred to as response-oriented and psycholinguistic approaches in House's (1997; 1998; 2001) categorisation, are most famously associated with Nida's (1964) dynamic equivalence theory. These approaches to evaluating translations tend to be communicatively oriented and consider readers' reactions to a translation to be the main yardstick.

Nida (1964: 182) suggests three fundamental criteria for judging translations: (a) general efficiency of the communication process, (b) comprehension of intent, and (c) equivalence of response. However, House (1997: 4) casts doubts upon the possibility of accurately testing the degree to which the criteria are met, deeming that the appeal to achieve 'equivalence of response' is as vague and non-verifiable as the philologists' and hermeneuticists' criterion of 'capturing the spirit of the original'.

A few years later, Nida and Taber (1969/1982: 173) propounded another set of criteria, namely: (a) the correctness with which the message of the original is understood through the translation, (b) the ease of comprehension of the message and (c) the involvement a person experiences as a result of the adequacy of the form of the translation. In a like manner, House (1997: 5) considers that such criteria

cannot be equated with the overall quality of a translation, and whether the responses in question can be adequately measured remains unanswered. Thus, this set of criteria are insufficient for providing a solid theoretical ground that can be used as the main basis in the assessment of translation quality.

Proponents of this approach have put forward various techniques and rating scales for testing these behavioural criteria. For instance, Nida and Taber (1969/1982: 168-173) suggest the following methods for testing the criteria, with the main purpose to gauge the appropriateness of wording and expressions and the fluency of a translation via the help of potential readers.

1) the cloze technique: the reader is provided with a TT in which every fifth word is deleted, and then is asked to fill in whatever words seem to fit the context best. The greater the number of correct guesses, the more comprehensible the text is, as the text's degree of predictability is higher;

2) the elicitation of respondents' reactions to several translation alternatives;

3) the reading aloud of the translation text to another person; and

4) the reading aloud of a translation by several individuals before an audience.

There are also psycholinguists such as Carroll (1966: 65) who use 'intelligibility' and 'informativeness' scales for assessing translation quality. Yet, none of these methods or criteria provides the fundamental linkage that is needed between the original and its translation, hence leading to a major controversy. That is, the existence of original texts is ignored, and therefore a reader cannot really determine whether the meaning of a translation is in line with the original meaning. Although this approach can help to ensure the TT fluency and comprehensibility, using it to evaluate translation quality on its own may risk failing to identify potential inaccuracies in the TT.

2.4.3 Linguistically-oriented Approach

In linguistically-oriented approaches, as opposed to behavioural approaches, the original text is seen as the most important constitutive factor in the translation process. Proponents of this approach compare STs and TTs, aiming to identify syntactic, semantic, stylistic and pragmatic regularities during the transfer process (Baker, 1992; Hatim and Mason, 1997; Steiner, 1998). As Neubert and Shreve (1992: 19) state, the linguistic model of translation "concentrates on systemic relationships between the source and target languages".

One may find narrow linguistic approaches, which focus on the restrictive concept of traditional or structural syntax and semantics, while there are also many other approaches which not only examine the linguistic dimension, but they also pay attention to the textual structure, as well as the ST's potential for meaning at various levels (Koller, 1995). In earlier linguistically oriented views on translation theory, the text was seen as a linear sequence of units, and "translation was merely a transcoding process involving the substitution of a sequence of equivalent units" (Snell-Hornby, 1995: 16). Under this conception, the task of a translator then consists of choosing the 'optimal equivalent' from the diverse 'potential equivalents' in the TL. The scope of linguistic oriented works on translation evaluation has been gradually extended to including discussions of other subfields of linguistics, such as pragmatics, stylistics, sociolinguistics, discourse and register analysis, and so forth. The desired effects which a translator is expected to achieve in a TT thus become more diverse and sophisticated, and hence, more challenging.

Reiß's text-based approach to translation quality assessment can be said to be one of the most influential works in translation studies. For Reiß (1971/2000: 16), in order to use adequate standards to judge a translation, one must "be clear as to the kind of text represented by the original", as the typology of a text determines all the

choices a translator must make. Based on Bühler's (1934/1990: 28) three language functions, namely to represent, to express, and to appeal, Reiß (ibid.: 25) categorises texts into three basic types: 'content-focused', 'form-focused', and 'appeal-focused'. This text typology, however, came under criticism due to its inability to provide explicit rules for determining ST types and language functions. As mentioned by House (1997: 17), "at what level of delicacy this can and should be done" is also left unexplained.

Despite the criticism, the subsequent development of linguistically-oriented approaches such as text analysis has made a crucial contribution to the field, by increasing the awareness of the fact that the linguistic form of a TT is mainly determined by the text-typological conventions of the target language, as well as by the intended communicative purpose that a TT needs to fulfil (Nord, 1991: 13). Bearing greatly on the socio-cultural dimension, these debates have thus offered a foundation for the rise of the functionalist approach.

2.4.4 Functionalist Approach

The major contribution of the functionalist approach has been the introduction of the function and/or the purpose of the TT as the most important criterion for evaluating a translation. In other words, the quality of a translation lies in whether its intended function in the TL is adequately fulfilled. Functionalist approaches were largely initiated by Vermeer's 'skopos theory', first presented in 1978, and subsequently developed by Reiß and Vermeer (1984). Vermeer (1978, in Schäffner, 1998b: 236) argues that "as a general rule it must be the intended purpose of the [TT] that determines translation methods and strategies", and from this statement, he proposes the skopos rule, whereby "[h]uman action (and its subcategory: translation) is determined by its purpose (skopos), and therefore, it is a function of its purpose".

The emergence of the skopos theory in the 1970s and its expansion in the 1980s signifies a shift of focus from ST to TT in translation theories on quality assessment. From the functionalist perspective, it is the prospective function or skopos of a TT as defined by its initiator, i.e. the client, that determines the translation process, and "not the [ST] as such, or its effects on the [ST] recipient, or the function assigned by the author" (ibid.). The quality of translation, therefore, lies in the degree to which the intended purpose of a TT and the expected effect on the target readers is fulfilled. The way in which the TT is now considered also reveals that the translator and the TT users are given a higher status, compared with the minor roles they play in the earlier equivalence-based theories propelled by authors like Catford (1965) and Nida and Taber (1969/1982).

As Hönig (1998: 9) indicates, "skopos theory and functionalism focus on the translator, giving him/her more freedom and more responsibility". In this context, translating is considered to be a personal decision-making process, during which translators become visible actors. As Munday (2008: 80) points out, such visibility is also connected to an important advantage of the skopos theory, namely, the possibility for the same text to be translated in different ways according to the potential various purposes of a TT and the commission which is given to the translator.

In skopos theory, however, 'the end', i.e. the expectations and the needs of the target readers, have been frequently criticised for their insufficiency to 'justify the means'. Critics contend that "in a functionalist approach the ST is dethroned, the role of the client is exaggerated, and that there is no clear delimitation between translation and adaptation or other textual operations" (Schäffner, 1998a: 3). In line with this argument, House (2001: 245) points to a similarity between the subjective and functionalist approaches, and asserts that:

> since any translation is simultaneously bound to its [ST] and to the presuppositions

and conditions governing its reception in the new environment, skopos theory cannot be said to be an adequate theory when it comes to tackling the evaluation of a translation in its fundamental bidirectionality.

2.4.5 Descriptive Approach

Descriptive approaches are referred to as 'literature-oriented approaches' by House (1997) and are discussed under the name of the 'Manipulation School' in Snell-Hornby's work (1995), referring fundamentally to the seminal collective work edited by Hermans in 1985 and entitled *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*. The so-called Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) postulated by Toury (1980; 1995), and an extension of Even-Zohar's (1978) polysystem model, is built upon conventional studies in comparative literature. Many scholars who have worked on these approaches confine themselves exclusively to literary translation, although there has also been a fair amount of research carried out under this prism in the field of AVT (Ballester Casado, 2001; Díaz-Cintas, 1997; Remael, 2000). In descriptive approaches, a TT is seen as an entity existing in the target polysystem in its own right, as an integral part of the target culture and not merely as a reproduction of another text (Shuttleworth, 1998: 178; Snell-Hornby, 1995: 24). That is, the discussion is no longer limited to the nature of the equivalence that can be established between ST and TT. According to Gentzler (2001: 131), Toury's theory has contributed to the development of translation studies in four key aspects:

1) the abandonment of both one-to-one notions of correspondence as well as the possibility of literary/linguistic equivalence, unless this occurs by accident;

2) the involvement of literary tendencies within the target cultural system in the production of any TT;

3) the destabilisation of the notion of an original message with a fixed, unified identity; and

4) the integration of both the original text and the TT in the semiotic web of intersecting cultural systems.

The quality of translation, in such target-oriented approaches, is assessed in accordance with the function performed by a translation in the system of its host TL literary world and the importance of the ST is thus played down to a considerable extent (House, 1997: 7). In line with the change of focus, the emphasis of assessment is now shifted from the translation as a process and the potential problems underlying it to the translation as a product, i.e. the TT. Nonetheless, Toury (1995) also endeavours to clarify that a source-oriented position or a target-oriented approach is nothing more than a matter of orientation. It is a difference in perspective and focus, "not two diametrically opposed positions which would never converge" (Toury, 1995: 173).

House (2001: 246) is of the opinion that Toury's "solid empirical-descriptive work and the emphasis put on contextualisation at the micro-level of the reception situation and the macro-level of the receiving culture at large", is certainly commendable. However, there remain no explicit criteria for judging the merits and weaknesses of a given TT, and also, a 'retrospective' focus from translation to the original seems inappropriate "for making valid statements about how and why a translation qua translation is as it is" (ibid.).

2.4.6 Deconstructionist Approach

Despite the different angles adopted, most of the approaches mentioned above draw a clear distinction between original texts and their target counterparts, and use it as the foundation from which to establish subsequent arguments upon the nature of translation. While these traditional translation theories focus more on verbal

forms of communication and expression, deconstructionists question "the logocentrism of Western philosophical tradition with its fixation on the written word" (Snell-Hornby, 2006: 61).[6] Deconstructionist approaches, which are also referred to as post-modernist, post-structural or cannibalistic approaches, challenge "limits of language , writing, and reading by pointing out how the definitions of the very terms used to discuss concepts set boundaries for the specific theories they describe" (Gentzler, 2001: 146). Derrida (1980), with whose name these approaches are chiefly associated, dismisses such definitions and resists systems of categorisation that separate ST from TT and language from meaning.

Derrida revises the notion of 'original' as well as the relationship between translator and translation. A text, according to Derrida (1988: 121), is original insofar as it is a 'thing', and a 'thing' of the mind is meant to survive beyond "the death of the author", which in turn highlights the non-existence of an intended meaning. It is the translator who takes on the role of the author, offering the original text a new life and identity in a different language. In this sense, a translation is merely one possible interpretation, which may vary in accordance with every new reading. The visibility of the translator is thus revealed, as the task of translation does not lie in preserving the original meanings of an author, but rather in producing (new) meanings in a different language. The process of translation, in this context, consists of deconstructing "texts and [returning] to a point before a thing has been named, thereby making visible a path by which meaning has been rerouted or diverted" (Gentzler, 2001: 165). Clearly drawing from Benjamin's (1923/2000) concept of the Überleben or after live of a translated work in a different language and culture, the role of a translator, as argued by Derrida (1985: 188), is to extend the life and the value of an 'original' by absolving oneself of his/her own 'debt' with the 'original'.

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[6] By 'logocentrism', Derrida (Powell, 1997: 33) refers to the attitude that propounds that *logos* (the Greek term for speech, thought, law, or reason) is the central principle that articulates language and philosophy.

The quality of a translation, in the eyes of the deconstructionist, depends on whether the translator can make politically pertinent and correct statements about the relationship between features of the ST and the TT (House, 2001: 246). With such a focus on the influence that a translator can exert on the receiving literary system and its canon through translation, this line of thinking has also joined forces with other disciplines, leading to fruitful discussions on post-colonial theory (Robinson, 1997) and feminist theory (Simon, 1996; Spivak, 1992; von Flotow, 1997).

While translators are now empowered to speak on their own, House (2001: 246) points out one of the major problems underlying deconstructionist thinking by wondering how one can "ever differentiate between a translation and any other text that may result from a textual operation which can no longer claim to be in a translation relationship with an original text".

2.4.7 Interpretative Approach

The interpretative approaches, also known as the 'theory of sense' and 'the Paris School', were initially developed in the late 1960s on the basis of research carried out in the connate field of conference interpreting, and later extended to the field of written translation. The main representative of this approach is Seleskovitch (1962: 16), who developed the so called 'de-verbalisation theory' based on the distinction between linguistic meaning and non-verbal sense, and introduced a three-stage model of translating process: comprehension, de-verbalisation, and reformulation. In Seleskovitch's (1977: 28) view, the translation process shall be seen as a "conversion from the [SL] to sense and then an expression of sense in the [TL]", instead of a "direct conversion" of the linguistic meaning in a ST.

Delisle (1988) takes the interpretative approach a step further, focusing on the cognitive processes involved in translation. Based on discourse analysis and text linguistics, he also proposes three stages that take part in the translation process: comprehension, reformulation, and verification. This concept of stages is in fact similar to Nida and Taber's (1969/1982) three dynamic phases of 'analysis–transfer–reconstructing'. The first stage refers to the decoding of linguistic signs in the ST, the second stage to the use of TL signifiers to re-verbalise the concepts of the ST, and the third and final stage to confirming the accuracy and acceptability of the final translation in terms of the rules and styles predominant in the TL.

Proponents of this approach deem all translation as a form of interpretation, a dynamic process of comprehension and re-expression of ideas, with much emphasis placed upon the communicative needs of the target readers. From this point of view, as highlighted by Salama-Carr (1998: 114), the quality of a translation hence lies in "the clarity and intelligibility of the translation and its acceptability in the target culture in terms of writing conventions, use of idioms, etc., as well as the communicative function of oral or written discourse".

Research within interpretive approaches is heavily focused on the translation process rather than the product, and based on examples drawn from real-life translating/interpreting situations. Despite its potential, this approach has not yet been widely acknowledged in translation theories in general, nor in terms of quality assessment. Its application to date is mainly related to the teaching of translation and interpreting.

2.4.8 House's Functional-pragmatic Model

House (1977; 1997; 1998; 2001) proposes a model for translation quality assessment which is based on pragmatic theories of language use developed by authors such as Bühler (1965), Halliday (1973), Halliday and Hasan (1989), Hymes (1968), Jakobson (1960), Malinowski (1923), Ogden and Richards (1946), and Popper (1972). The basic concepts underpinning this model, House's viewpoints of 'meaning' and 'equivalence', have been discussed in sections 2.2 and 2.3.5. The three aspects of meaning, namely semantic, pragmatic and textual aspects, are deemed to be particularly important for translation, and functional, pragmatic equivalence is considered to be the most appropriate type of equivalence for describing relations between the original text and the translation. Accordingly, the fundamental criterion for translation quality in this model relies heavily on 'functional-pragmatic' equivalence. Translation, correspondingly, is viewed as the recontextualisation of a SL text by a semantically and pragmatically equivalent text in the TL.

The inception of the model begins with an analysis of the original based on a set of situational dimensions, by which text-specific linguistic correlates are to be identified. The resulting profile characterising the function of the ST is then taken as the norm, according to which the TT is evaluated. As House (1998: 199) contends, "the degree to which the textual profile and function of the translation (as derived from an analogous analysis) match the profile and function of the original is the degree to which the translation is adequate in quality".

In line with its foundations in situational dimensions, House (2001: 248) views 'text' and 'context of situation' as one entity, since a text must refer to a particular situation in which it is embedded. The broad notion of the 'context of situation' or 'situational dimensions' can be broken down into manageable parts by resorting to Halliday's (1985: 12) three contextual register-categories: field, tenor and mode. As

House (1997: 108-109) explains, field refers to "the nature of the social action that is taking place, it captures […] the field of activity, subject matter, the topic, the content of a text or its subject matter". Tenor refers to "the nature of participants, the addresser and the addressees, and the relationship between them in terms of social power and social distance, as well as the 'degree of emotional charge'" (ibid.). Finally, mode refers to "both the channel – spoken or written […], and the degree to which potential or real participation is allowed for between the interlocutors" (ibid.).

Field, tenor and mode collectively constitute 'register', a concept defined by Gregory and Carroll (1978: 4) as a "contextual category correlating groupings of linguistic features with recurrent situational features". Although register signifies the relationship between text and context, register descriptions alone cannot lead to a statement of an individual textual function. 'Genre' is thus proposed by House (1997: 107) to serve as "a category linking register (which realises genre) and the individual textual function (which exemplifies genre)". By House's (ibid.) definition, genre is "a socially established category characterised in terms of occurrence of use, source and a communicative purpose or any combination of these". Through genre one is enabled to "refer any single textual exemplar to the class of texts with which it shares a common purpose" (House, 2001: 248). That is, while genre reveals the linkage between a text and its macro-context of the linguistic and cultural community in which the text is embedded, register shows the connection between a text and its micro-context.

In Martin's (1992: 495) view, the relationship between genre and register is regarded as:

> two communication planes, genre (context of culture) and register (context of situation), with register functioning as the expression form of genre, at the same time as language functions as the expression form of genre, at the same time as language functions as the expression form of register.

Incorporating the relationship between genre-register-language and the trinity of Hallidayan dimensions field-tenor-mode, the resultant scheme proposed by House (1997: 108) for textual analysis, comparison and assessment is outlined in Figure 1 as follows:
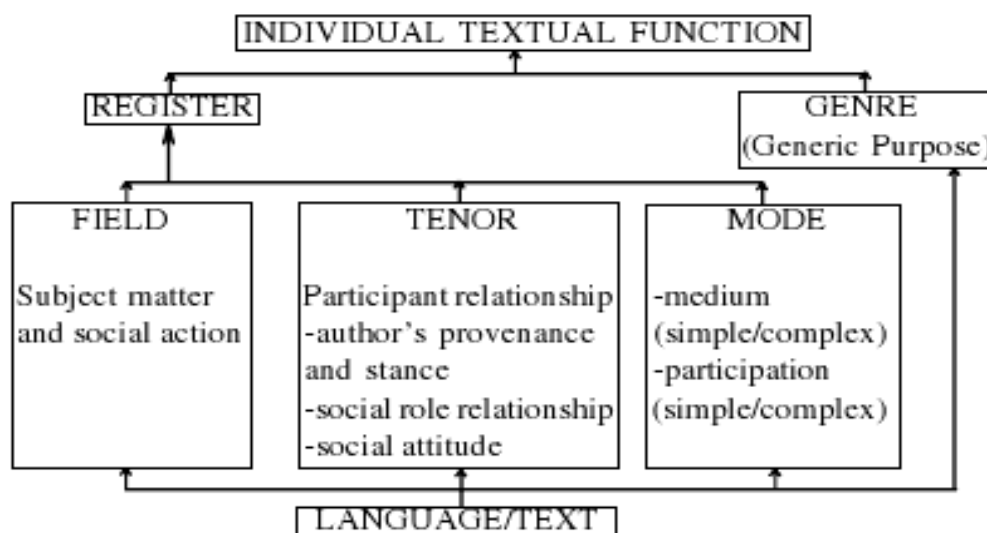
Figure 1: Scheme for analysing and comparing original and translation texts (House, 1997: 108)

All in all, the analysis generated by House's systematic model yields a text-context profile which gives account of a particular discourse and characterises its main individual textual function. Yet, as House (2001: 249) herself indicates, whether and how this textual function can be maintained across languages and cultures depends on the type of translation that one wishes to perform with respect to the original, as the concept of 'functional equivalence' varies greatly according to the distinction between overt and covert translation (see section 2.3.5). When choosing between an overt and a covert translation, House (1997: 118) emphasises that it depends "not just on the translator himself, or on the text of the translator's personal interpretation of the text, but also, and to a considerable extent, on the reasons for the translation, on the implied readers, on publishing and marketing policies", thus opening the translation universe to a potential myriad of stakeholders.

In her final analysis, House (2001: 254) calls attention to the difference that exists between (linguistic) analysis and (social) judgement when evaluating translations, i.e. "the distinction between describing and explaining linguistic features of the original text and comparing them with the relevant linguistic features of the [TT] on the one hand and judging 'how good a translation' is on the other hand". Text-based, linguistic analysis cannot enable an evaluator to pronounce judgements on the quality of a translation, as a large variety of factors are involved in a social evaluative statement and these should be also taken into account. In other words, linguistic analysis serves as a basis for arguing an evaluative judgement, but it is the analytic process of translation criticism the one which leads to an ultimate evaluative judgement.

For House (1997: 119), the concept of 'quality' in translation is problematic, especially when one does not know anything about, or cannot take into account, the ideals and ideas about translation quality which the translator or reviewer may hold. Consequently, there is no easy way to pass a 'final judgement' on the quality of a translation that fulfils the demands of objectivity. This model is not, as House herself stresses, intended to provide for an absolute evaluation, but to offer a basis for evaluation in a particular case.

Translation quality, to some extent, "is a matter of agreement", as Lauscher (2000: 162) argues, in that the translation quality assessment in practice (i.e. the quality control process) is often subject to prescriptive judgement. That is to say, the quality of the TT relies on whether it fulfils the requirements agreed between the client and the translator.

While the above discussions are centred on the assessment criteria of translation quality, the next section will bring the focus to the quality assessment procedures in

the professional sphere.

2.4.9 Translation Quality Assessment Procedures

According to Brunette (2000: 170), the assessment procedures that can be applied to the evaluation of translation work can be divided into five types: "pragmatic revision, translation quality assessment, quality control, didactic revision, and fresh look (sometimes called quality assurance)". Revision is defined by Künzler (2007: 115) "as the process in which a person other than the translator checks a draft translation for errors and makes any necessary changes". The focus of this process may vary slightly depending on the purpose of revision. Pragmatic revision focuses on the TT and aims to amend the final translation in order to suit its pragmatic purpose in accordance with clients' requirements. This approach matches Sager's (1989: 97), who emphasises that more importance should be attached to the assessment of translation "in terms of the appropriateness for its intended purpose". Didactic revision, by contrast, requires more rigorous input from the reviser and involves engaging the translator during the process in order to achieve the intended didactic or pedagogical purposes. The ultimate objective is that translators can improve their skills while the translation output can also achieve more consistent quality. In the case of quality assurance, Brunette (2000: 172) claims that the main task of the reviser is to examine the TT "almost exclusively for the target audience's point of view", an attempt to determine how the TT will be received by the target culture.

Proofreading, a type of quality control, is a task that is likely to be carried out in practice at the end of most translation projects. According to Gouadec (2007: 24), proofreading "consists in correcting any kind of blatant defects (spelling or grammar mistakes, missing bits, faulty formatting) and pointing out any apparent defects, discrepancies or translation errors". What Gouadec proposes, however, is an utopian

definition from an ideal perspective. In reality, proofreading may simply be performed by a native speaker of the TL who checks obvious errors without cross-checking the TT against the ST. In cases like this, proofreaders are unable to assess whether or not a translation is accurate and hence of good quality. In the context of translation, the key difference between revision and proofreading lies in that the former involves making appropriate amendments to improve translation quality while the latter is limited to making only the necessary corrections.

As far as translation service providers are concerned, working with good professional translators is also one of the ways to increase the possibility of achieving the desired high quality outcomes. As Brunette (2000: 171) argues, translation quality assessment is used, in most cases, when recruiting translators. The text evaluated by the assessor could be one of those already delivered to the client and, based on the ensuing evaluation report, the company's management would then decide whether to give employment to the translator or not. The results of the assessment may also have a bearing on the rates offered to the translator.

These various procedures all contribute to the assessment of the quality of the translation output, and they can be applied somewhat differently depending on the clients, the budget and the time frame given for the completion of a specific project. In other words, the procedures can theoretically help ensure translation quality to some extent; however, the effectiveness of the procedures is subject to realistic scenarios, i.e. available budgets, the time frame for a certain project and so on.

While scholars such as Brunette (2000) and Graham (1983) deem revision as an essential part of the assessment procedures, there are also many others such as Thaon and Horguelin (1980) and Mossop (1982), who consider revision as an intrinsic part of the translator's task, and not only linked to external assessment. In order to

avoid confusion, Mossop (2007: 12) uses the term "self-revision" to distinguish between the revision conducted by the translators themselves and the revision that involves external revisers. With adequate self-revision, the translator can, to some extent, attain a high level of quality in translation by avoiding basic errors and complying with applicable specifications, before proceeding to other quality assessment procedures.

In the professional setting, there is an emerging trend that consists in developing and applying static evaluation models in translation quality evaluation, such as shown in the project undertaken by O'Brien (2012) in collaboration with the Translation Automation User Society (TAUS, www.taus.net). This initiative attempts to improve the functions of some of the tools used in the industry for evaluating and enhancing translation quality, hoping to develop a dynamic quality evaluation model for translation that can respond to different text types or varying communicative situations. Projects of this kind also suggest the need for professionals to keep an eye on the development and related applications of translation technology, so as to increase their productivity, output quality and adaptiveness to the changing work environment. As Drugan (2013: 28) argues, automation of translation process is an irreversible trend as it allows "greater consistency, productivity, and speedier recall than human translators could ever achieve".

With the development in the industry of machine translation (MT) and the increasing use of automation technology, post-editing has become a more prominent activity in the profession. According to Gouadec (2007: 25), post-editing refers to "proofreading and revising translations carried out by any kind of translating automation [which] is becoming a job in its own right". Allen (2003: 297) defines the task of the post-editor as "to edit, modify and/or correct a pre-translated text that has been processed by an MT system from a source language into (a) target language(s)". Post-editing is gaining popularity since it is seen as a solution to

satisfying the increasing demand for translation services within a reasonably affordable price range by boosting translators' productivity (ibid.: 300). Post-editing, aiming at improving a translation generated by a machine with minimum human input, has become more common in diversified fields other than localisation and technical translation and has recently extended to the field of subtitling (see section 6.1.5 and section 7.1).

Various theories and approaches concerning translation quality and quality assessment have been examined in this chapter, in an attempt to answer the question concerning who or what determines translation quality. It is, however, impossible to draw a conclusion on this matter from the differing views on the concept of equivalence in translation, and to provide a perfect definition of translation quality; otherwise, translation quality would not have long been a subject of disagreements and arguments. Based on the above discussions, quality is relative to the emphasis that the evaluator places on a translation (e.g. its purpose, function, level of equivalence needed, and so on), and to the stance of the evaluator (e.g. if the assessment is done from the point of view of the translator, the audience, the client, and so on. To a large extent, these theories also apply to subtitling in terms of cross-language transfer. However, it can still be argued that ascertaining subtitling quality, compared with translation quality, is even more of a conundrum due to the spatial and temporal constraints that have an impact on the resulting text. Following the above discussions on translation quality, the next chapter will be centred on quality issues focused on subtitling whilst exploring other factors that also contribute to the quality of subtitling, based on the existing literature on the topic.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Parameters
of Subtitling Quality

3.1 Towards Understanding Subtitling Quality

Because of the spatial and temporal constraints, the translation of subtitles is more akin to creative writing than to literal translation on most occasions. What can be considered an optimal translation solution from a linguistic point of view may not be appropriate as a subtitle when the translated text violates any of the constraints imposed by the medium. Subtitlers can thus sometimes behave like poets, who in search of an appropriate translation have some margin of manoeuvre to deviate from linguistic norms at all levels and in different forms, yet not arbitrarily. As a higher degree of flexibility and compromise is permitted in subtitling, the level of complexity in assessing quality is correspondingly increased. In line with the previous discussion on translation quality, this chapter attempts to explore what other factors are relative to quality, with a marked focus on the theoretical parameters of subtitling.

The fundamental concepts of 'meaning' and 'equivalence' discussed in sections 2.2 and 2.3 are also applicable to audiovisual translation. However, both 'meaning' and 'equivalence' are taken a step further in the context of subtitling, as subtitles are just one of the various carriers of meaning in the semiotic transfer (Delabastita, 1989). In a subtitled programme, meaning is formed by a synergy of messages conveyed in a

semiotic blend of images and sounds, and the equivalence pursued in this activity seeks to transmit the same or a very similar spirit to the one which is expressed through the semiotic mode of communication imbricated in the original. In this sense, subtitling, which is usually a cross-medium activity from oral to written communication, arguably, can be more complex than some of other forms of translation. Nonetheless, and despite the particular nature of subtitling, the notion of translation quality discussed in the previous chapter can serve as a viable starting point for further research on subtitling quality.

A study into the definition and the communicative aims of subtitling is essential before trying to fully understand subtitling quality. In the following debate, after the presentation of a working definition of subtitling and an initial discussion of its aims, a code of good subtitling practice widely followed in the industry is then presented as a starting point towards a deeper understanding of the factors and actors that play a role in determining the quality of subtitling. In section 3.4, the various factors, as well as the possible rationale behind the need for a code of good subtitling practice, are discussed in detail.

3.1.1 Definition of Subtitles

Subtitles are defined by Luyken et al. (1991: 31) as:

> condensed written translations of original dialogue which appear as lines of text, usually positioned towards the foot of the screen. Subtitles appear and disappear to coincide in time with the corresponding portion of the original dialogue and are almost always added to the screen image at a later date as a post-production activity.

As for a working typology of this post-production activity, Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 14) classify subtitles into three main categories based on linguistic parameters: (a) intralingual subtitles, (b) interlingual subtitles, and (c) bilingual subtitles. Intralingual subtitling, also called vertical subtitling by Gottlieb (1998) and known as

(closed) captioning in American English, refers to the variety of subtitling that "involves a shift from oral to written, but stays always within the same language" (Díaz-Cintas and Remael, 2007: 14). Interlingual subtitling, also called diagonal subtitling by Gottlieb (1998), refers to the variety of subtitling that "involves a shift from one language to another along with a change of mode, from oral to written" (Díaz-Cintas and Remael, 2007: 17). As for bilingual subtitling, subtitles in two different languages are simultaneously provided at the bottom of the screen, a practice mostly seen in bilingual countries or regions (e.g. Belgium, Finland, Switzerland, Jordan, Israel, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, etc.) and very often in international film festivals where bilingual subtitles are used to attract a wider audience.

From the perspective of the technical processes involved in the production of subtitling, subtitles can also be classified as either 'open' or 'closed'. The former are transmitted together with the film sound and images as an inseparable part of the film, whereas the latter are traditionally transmitted via teletext and can be activated at the discretion of the viewers (Gottlieb, 1998: 247). According to this distinction, film subtitles that are an integral part of the film, and are usually laser engraved, belong to the category of 'open subtitles', whilst DVD and Blu-ray subtitles, which are stored in a digital format and transmitted via a separate coded channel, fall under the category of 'closed subtitles'.

3.2 The Aim of Subtitling

Exploring the aim of subtitling is one of the keys to understanding subtitling quality. Karamitroglou (1998: online) proposes that the general practice of the production and layout of TV subtitles should be guided by the aim "to provide maximum

appreciation and comprehension of the target film as a whole by maximising the legibility and readability of the inserted subtitled text". The subtitling service provider Film and Video Untertitelung provides a similar definition on their website (www.untertitel-gmbh.de/untertitelung_e.html), stating that the aim of subtitling is "to communicate film dialogue to the audience accurately, and in an appropriate style and rhythm of speech", and to allow the viewer to "read subtitles calmly and understand them immediately". The above statements foreground the basic need of the target viewer and the primary aim of subtitling. Nonetheless, they are no more than very basic parameters that can be instrumental when defining subtitling quality.

Subtitles, as part of the image, should never be meant to complicate the viewer's experience of reading text and image at the same time. Accordingly, transmitting the message rather than the form seems to be essential; this also corresponds to Newmark's (1988) view of equivalent effect being difficult to be achieved in the translated text when it comes to imaginative genres, as discussed in section 2.3.6. As McCormick (1997: 5) proposes, the ultimate aim of subtitling should be:

> to fashion subtitles which are attuned so thoroughly to their audiovisual environment that they appear to "melt" into the total fabric of the program. By making the linguistic sign as unobtrusive as possible, the very best subtitling seeks to foster the illusion of unmediated comprehension on the part of the viewer. When an audience stops being aware of reading the subtitles, the subtitler has achieved a major goal. In effect, the material substance of the subtitles shrinks and vanishes before our very eyes, leaving only the message.

The subtitler is the one in charge of fulfilling this aim and, therefore, is expected to produce subtitles that are so in sync with the mood and rhythm of the audiovisual programme that the audience is not even aware of reading them. This need for subtitling invisibility has been adhered to by many scholars and professionals (Georgakopoulou, 2009; Gottlieb, 2000; Ivarsson and Carroll, 1998) and heralded by some as one of the clear signs of good subtitling (Jokelainen, 2009; Lindberg, 1989). As metaphorically argued by the professional subtitler Béhar (2004: 85), "[s]ubtitling is a form of cultural ventriloquism, and the focus must remain on the puppet, not the puppeteer".

3.3 Code of Good Subtitling Practice

Before probing into the factors that exert an impact on subtitling quality, it is expedient to examine one of the widely used industry standards for good subtitling practice in order to gain an understanding of the larger context prior to entering a detailed discussion. Jan Ivarsson, former head of development of Swedish Television, and Mary Carroll, ex-managing director of Titelbild Subtitling, proposed a 'Code of Good Subtitling Practice' (1998: 157-159) that had been drawn up a few years earlier together with other professionals and academics under the auspices of the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation (ESIST, www.esist.org). Since its launch, this code has grown in acceptance and has been used by many companies within the industry over the years, though for many professionals the time might have come to revisit it and update it. As things stand nowadays, this is the only Code of Good Subtitling Practice that has wide acceptance within professionals[7] and academics; many scholars such as Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007), Gottlieb (2004), McClarty (2012), Munday (2008) and Pedersen (2011) have built their research upon or made a reference to the content of this code. The code, presented below as it appears in Ivarsson and Carroll (1998), is divided into two main areas, the first one concentrating on subtitling spotting[8] and translation, and the second one on some of the technical aspects:

Subtitle Spotting and Translation

1. Subtitlers must always work with a (video, DVD, etc.) copy of the production, a copy of the dialogue list and a glossary of unusual words and special references.

2. It is the subtitler's job to spot the production and translate and write the subtitles in the (foreign) languages required.

3. Translation quality must be high with due consideration of all idiomatic and

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[7] Some professionals even specify that they follow the Code of Good Subtitling Practice on their professional online profiles. Stefan Schilling (www.schillingtranslation.com/subtitling) is an example of one of the subtitlers who make such statement on their websites.

[8] For a definition of spotting, please see section 3.4.2.

cultural nuances.

4. Straightforward semantic units must be used.

5. Where compression of dialogue is necessary, the results must be coherent.

6. Subtitle text must be distributed from line to line and page to page in sense blocks and/or grammatical units.

7. As far as possible, each subtitle should be syntactically self-contained.

8. The language register must be appropriate and correspond with the spoken word.

9. The language should be (grammatically) "correct" since subtitles serve as a model for literacy.

10. All important written information in the images (sign, notices, etc.) should be translated and incorporated wherever possible.

11. Given the fact that many TV viewers are hearing-impaired "superfluous" information, such as names, interjections from the off, etc., should also be subtitled.

12. Songs must be subtitled where relevant.

13. Obvious repetition of names and common comprehensible phrases need not always be subtitled.

14. The in- and out-times of subtitles must follow the speech rhythm of the film dialogues, taking cuts and sound bridges into consideration.

15. Language distribution within and over subtitles must consider cuts and sound bridges; the subtitles must underline surprise or suspense and in no way undermine it.

16. The duration of all subtitles within a production must adhere to a regular viewer reading rhythm.

17. Spotting must reflect the rhythm of the film.

18. No subtitle should appear for less than one second or, with the exception of songs, stay on the screen for longer than seven seconds.

19. The number of lines in any subtitle must be limited to two.

20. Wherever two lines of unequal length are used, the upper line should preferably be shorter to keep as much of the image as free as possible and in left-justified subtitles in order to reduce unnecessary eye movement.

21. There must be a close correlation between film dialogue and subtitle content; source language and target language should be synchronised as far as possible.

22. There must be a close correlation between film dialogue and the presence of subtitles.

23. Each production should be edited by a reviser/editor.

24. The (main) subtitler should be acknowledged at the end of the film or, if the credits are at the beginning, then close to the credit for the script writer.

25. The year of subtitle production and the copyright for the version should be displayed at the end of the film.

Technical Aspects

1. Subtitles should be highly legible with clear lettering and a font which is easy to read. The characters should have sharp contours and be stable on the screen.

2. The position of subtitles should be consistent, e.g.

   a) Centred for film applications;

   b) Left-justified or centred for TV and video applications;

   c) Two-person dialogue in one subtitle should be left-justified or left-centred; individual speakers should be indicated by a dash at the beginning of each line.

3. In video applications character clarity can be enhanced by a drop shadow or a semi-transparent or black box behind the subtitles.

4. In laser subtitling, sharp contours and removal of residual emulsion can be achieved by precise alignment of laser beam focus and accurate adjustment of power output.

5. In laser subtitling, the baseline must be set accurately for the aspect ratio of the film.

6. The number of characters per line must be compatible with the subtitling system and visible on any screen.

7. Due to the different viewer reading times and the different length of lines for TV/video/DVD and film subtitles, TV/video/DVD subtitles should be adapted for film application and vice versa.

The rationale behind the code, as well as the constituents of subtitling quality as perceived from a theoretical perspective, are further examined in the following section. Some of the other influential factors associated with the quality of subtitling that are more tightly linked to the wider state of affairs in the industry will be discussed in Chapter Five and Chapter Six.

3.4 Factors Determining Subtitling Quality from a Theoretical Perspective

The Code of Good Subtitling Practice stated in the previous section provides a general picture of quality subtitling. Building on it, this section examines in thorough detail the various theoretical factors that impinge on the quality of subtitling. Rooted in the existing literature on subtitling quality, discussions associated with the professional code comprise three main dimensions, including temporal and spatial constraints as well as stylistic considerations. Meanwhile, in addition to these parameters that seem to impinge more on subtitling into Western languages, relevant practices with regard to Chinese subtitling are also elaborated when appropriate.

The quality of subtitling is also subject to the influence of professional practices such as the availability and quality of any support materials provided to the subtitlers that facilitate the process of subtitling and contribute to better their working conditions. Details of the professional reality and the relationship between the state of affairs with the industry and the quality of subtitling will be investigated in Chapter Five and Chapter Six.

3.4.1 Temporal Dimension: Duration of Subtitles

The Code of Good Subtitling Practice states that 'the duration of all subtitles within a production must adhere to a regular viewer reading rhythm'; this is because viewers' comprehension and enjoyment of subtitles is closely related to their reading speed. According to Karamitroglou (1998: online), the reading speed of the 'average' viewer – whom he considers to be aged between 14-65 and to come from an upper-middle socio-educational class – for a text of average complexity hovers around

approximately 150 to 180 English words per minute (wpm). From a technical perspective, this means that a full two line subtitle containing between 14 and 16 English words should remain on the screen for about 5 ½ seconds. In practice, an extra 1/4-1/2 of a second would be added on top to allow for the time that the brain needs to start processing the subtitle that it has traced. Hence, most subtitling service providers follow what it is known as 'the six-second rule', which is proven to be an adequate length of time for an average viewer to read two full subtitle lines, when each line has around 35 to 37 characters (d'Ydewalle et al., 1987; Díaz-Cintas and Remael, 2007).

Karamitroglou (1998) also indicates that for a full single-line subtitle and a single-word subtitle, it actually takes slightly more time to read than pure mathematics would lead us to believe from the above statement because "for the two-line subtitle it is the visual bulk of the text that signals an acceleration of the reading speed". For this reason, even the briefest subtitle such as 'Yes' or 'No' would ideally have to stay on the screen for about a second and a half (Ivarsson and Carroll, 1998: 64). In the industry, however, sometimes the minimum duration is set even shorter, preferably at one second but also on certain occasions as low as at 20 frames as the very minimum, echoing the first half of point 18 of the Code of Good Subtitling Practice (see section 3.3) that states that: "No subtitle should appear for less than one second".

On the other side of the spectrum, the same guideline provides advice on the maximum duration that a subtitle should remain on the screen, explicitly stating that no subtitle, "with the exception of songs [should] stay on the screen for longer than seven seconds". The reason for this duration cap is to ensure that the subtitle does not remain on the screen longer than necessary, otherwise it may cause automatic rereading of the subtitle on the part of the viewer (Karamitroglou, 1998).

The standard reading speed applied in the industry tends to rise from 150 wpm to 180 wpm in cases where the original dialogue is delivered at a high speed. Characters per second (cps) is another way of measuring reading speeds and in the industry 12 cps is considered rather slow; around 15 cps is normal/fast, and around 17 cps is rather fast (Díaz-Cintas, 2013a: 276). In terms of DVD reading speed, Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 98) indicate that the 180 wpm is increasingly becoming the norm, and some companies are applying even higher rates.

Most discussions on reading speed have been centred on European languages or the Roman alphabet (Díaz-Cintas and Remael, 2007; Gottlieb, 1995; Karamitroglou, 1998; Korhonen, 2004; Pagano and Alves, 2011; Pedersen, 2011). The literature on Chinese reading speeds is very thin; most relevant arguments within the scope of audiovisual translation are still built upon previous studies that were carried out for non-Chinese languages (Chen, 2009; Fong, 2009; Yang, 2008).

Despite the lack of legitimate reasoning regarding the feasibility of applying the subtitle reading speed of English/Western viewers reading English/Western languages to Chinese viewers reading Chinese characters, some research results obtained in the field of cognitive psychology and physiology may be able to provide a scientific basis for the similarities in reading English and Chinese. Although Chinese is radically different from English or other languages that are based upon phonetic spelling, according to Miles and Shen (1925: 360), "the process of reading Chinese is essentially the same as for reading English". With the help of eye tracking experiments, Sun et al. (1985) also note the resemblances between reading eye movements used for Chinese and English in terms of fixation durations, recognition spans, and reading rates. As for the latter, the reading rates of their subject group "were about 385 equivalent words per minute for Chinese and 380 words per minute for English for the same scientific textual material" (ibid.: 505). Sun (1993: 253) further elaborates the reason behind such resemblance by indicating that

"reading eye movements are controlled by the high level centre of brain", which decodes the meaning of languages, "not by peripheral visual feature detectors". In terms of recognition spans, these are "determined by the linguistic information, not by the visual geometric form of the reading text" (ibid.). Language information processing capability, as he concludes, "is limited to the brain, not by the peripheral system of vision" (ibid.). In this sense, it appears reasonable to assume the practicability of applying the same maximum and minimum duration to subtitles in Chinese as in English, as well as the equivalent, similar number of words per minute or characters per second.

Like most European countries, China and Taiwan adhere to the PAL system, which means that films are usually projected at 25 frames per second in the broadcasting arena and 24 frames per second in cinema. As for the professional practice of Chinese subtitling, the basic principles are in line with those of English subtitling. However, in the case of Chinese subtitling, particularly in simplified Chinese, the rules tend to be more flexible due to the lack of commonly used standards. In general, the minimum duration for a subtitle is 20 frames, and ideally, at least two seconds for a full line, and at least four seconds for a full two-line subtitle. The maximum duration also tends to be set at 6 seconds but on occasions it can go up to seven or even eight seconds (see Appendix 1).

As for reading speed, some would set the maximum reading speed at four Chinese cps (see Appendix 2). In this case, a two second subtitle would have eight characters at most, and a five second subtitle would have no more than 20 characters. However, similar to what happens in Western languages subtitling, some companies also apply higher rates for Chinese subtitling, with a reading speed of five Chinese cps also being widely adhered to in the industry.

One issue that should be noted is the fact that the numbers stated above are still subject to adjustment on a case-by-case basis in line with a variety of parameters, such as the complexity of the language and the density of the information contained in the dialogue, the viewers' familiarity with the subject at hand, the language ability of viewers (children vs. adults), the genre and rhythm of the film, and so on. Subtitlers sometimes inevitably face the seesaw war between the constraint imposed by the maximum duration that the subtitle can remain on screen and the ambition for quantitative faithfulness to the original. In this respect, the pursuit of absolute perfection may endanger the quality of the final output in one aspect or another.

With the surge in three dimensional films, 3D subtitling also calls for some changes in the production of stereographic films, particularly from an aesthetic dimension and an appropriate way of breaking the lines. As Díaz-Cintas (2013b: 127-128) observes:

> This migration to high definition and 3D in broadcasting as well as in digital cinema is bringing along fresh challenges and new ways of working in subtitling and is bound to have an impact on the time it takes to produce 3D subtitles and the skills and workflows required.

Arguably, 3D films are visually more demanding than traditional films, at least for the time being as audiences are still not fully familiar with them; hence, some of the challenges facing subtitlers are the need for line breaks that do not jar with the perspective of the images as well as the consideration of whether a longer duration is required for each of the subtitles depending on their interaction with the image. Two leading subtitling companies, RuFilms LLC based in Russia and Screen Subtitling based in the UK, have conducted research on 3D subtitling, and the results indicate that viewers need more time "to re-focus on the subtitles at a given depth, then back to the action on a different plane", and therefore, the subtitle should be shown on screen "for perhaps an additional three seconds depending on the difference

between the depth of the action and the chosen fixed position of the subtitle" (Kozoulyaev, 2011: 41). However, such an additional time is unlikely to be added in most cases, considering the restrictions imposed by potential shot changes and the rhythm of conversation. As a consequence, the subtitler's exquisite skill of condensation is bound to be even more important in retaining the meaning and flavour of the original dialogue.

3.4.2 Temporal Dimension: Spotting

According to Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 88), spotting, also known as timing, cueing or originating, consists of "determining the in and out times of subtitles, i.e. the exact moment when a subtitle should appear on screen and when it should disappear". The golden rule for ideal spotting is that subtitles should keep temporal synchrony with the utterances as closely as possible (ibid.: 88). That is, subtitles should appear simultaneously when the person starts to speak and should disappear as soon as the person stops speaking. The same idea is also mentioned by Ivarsson and Carroll (1998: 158), when they state that "the in and out times of subtitles must follow the speech rhythm of the dialogue". In order to achieve 'real' synchronisation between human auditory and visual perception, Karamitroglou (1998: online) suggests that subtitles should be inserted ¼ of a second later than the initiation of the utterance as "the brain needs ¼ of a second to process the advent of spoken linguistic material and guide the eye towards the bottom of the screen anticipating the subtitle". As for the time-out code, subtitles should not remain on the image for more than one or 1½ seconds after the end of the utterance, as viewers would be suspicious of the correspondence between what has been said and what they have just read on screen and thus, distrust the quality of the subtitles.

Equally important as the synchronisation between the auditory and visual perception

is the guideline that "a minimum of four frames should be left between subtitles to allow the viewer's eye to register the appearance of a new subtitle" (Ivarsson and Carroll, 1998: 159). Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 92) explain that without a slight, clear pause between two consecutive subtitles, the viewers' eyes would find it difficult to realise the presence of new information, and a pause shorter than two to three frames would not be effective. Hence, many subtitling programs have an automatic delay function which assures that the necessary pause is inserted between subtitles. Although professional practice differs, the tendency is to allow for a gap of two to six frames between consecutive subtitles.

Overlapping dialogue, i.e. when two or more actors speak at the same time, is always tricky for spotting. On these occasions, subtitlers must decide what information to keep in the subtitles and what to delete, and they should try every possible means to avoid confusing the viewers. In the profession, dashes (–) or hyphens (-), depending on house rules, are used in the same subtitle to indicate the exchange of utterances between speakers, and these typographical devices also count as one character and must be considered when working out the total word limit. The following is a common example in which the first line is for the speaker heard first and the second line is for the second speaker:

Example 1

– 晚安 – 明天見	[Goodnight] [See you tomorrow]

Practice also varies slightly from company to company with regard to the use of blank spaces between dash and text. For example, some prefer to leave a blank space between the dash and the first character (see Example 2 - left) while some other guidelines do not (see Example 2 - right):

Example 2

– Good night	–Good night
– See you tomorrow	–See you tomorrow

In Chinese subtitling, the standard practice is not to leave a space between dash and text. However, some companies prefer to use the English hyphen (see Example 3 - left) while others prefer a dash generated by ALT 0150 (see Example 3 - right). In terms of visual effects, the latter allows some room between dash and text without literally inserting a space, while the former tightly attaches the text to the hyphen.

Example 3

-晚安	– 晚安
-明天見	– 明天見

For short dialogue exchanges, some house rules tend to prefer fitting the two lines into one, using dashes or hyphens to indicate that the utterances belong to different speakers, as illustrated in Example 4:

Example 4

– 明天？　– 對
[–Tomorrow?　–Yep]

As far as Chinese subtitling is concerned, with the prevalence of fansubbing and the industry lacking commonly used standards, this usage has gradually been accepted by audiences and companies, particularly in simplified Chinese. This is, however,

rarely seen in subtitling carried out in languages that use the Roman alphabet, as two lines are usually the convention for dialogue subtitles and any diversion from this rule still tends to be perceived as a sign of poor quality.

As Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 111-112) suggest, a new approach that appears to be gaining ground in the profession attempts "to rationalise the space available in each line" by using only one dash in the second line, as shown in Example 5. This is not unseen in Chinese subtitling, although it is probably the least common type when compared to the above examples:

Example 5

Tomorrow?
– Yep.

Temporal synchronisation between subtitle and soundtrack has a major influence on the viewer's appreciation of subtitling quality, as does the respect of shot changes. In this sense, and from an aesthetic and reception point of view, it is advised that a subtitle should not over-run shot changes in order to avoid causing perceptual confusion (Díaz-Cintas and Remael, 2007; Karamitroglou, 1998; Tveit, 2004). This approach echoes Ivarsson and Carrolls's (1998: 158) stress in the Code of Good Subtitling Practice on the need for "taking cuts and sound bridges into consideration" when doing the spotting. However, as it happens, in occasional cases a shot change may take place whilst the conversation is still under way, with the lack of synchronisation between subtitle and image appearing more discernible in hard cuts than in soft cuts. On these occasions, the subtitle usually stays on the screen and the shot change is not to be respected. One of the reasons behind this procedure is because the attempt to further compress the duration in order to follow the shot

change may result in the subtitle lasting for less than a second, in which case the text will not be perceived by the audience. As a result, it is considered a sign of good quality that priority is given to the soundtrack over the shot changes when spotting subtitles.

Nowadays, some subtitling programs, both professional and amateur, come with a shot change detector that eases the automation of video file analysis and shot change identification, hence facilitating the process of spotting and making it faster. However, there is controversy in the profession regarding when to time the subtitles before the shot change, as Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 91) point out. Some argue that displaying a subtitle at precisely the time when a shot change takes place can lead to distraction to the eye and cause disruption to the reading of the subtitle; others prefer to cue the subtitle out exactly when the cut occurs.

In terms of where the responsibility for spotting lies, there is some discrepancy between theory and practice. Ivarsson and Carroll (1998: 157) assert in the *Code* that "it is the subtitler's job to spot the production and translate". The advantage of subtitlers performing the spotting is that they then have more flexibility to make adjustments in accordance with whatever knotty situation they are faced with in a production and thus more possibilities are open in order to "reflect the rhythm of the film" (ibid.). In reality, however, many companies, usually multinationals, develop clear-cut divisions of labour in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of 'the production line', where the time-spotter is not necessarily a translator and thus is less capable of noticing certain issues that may have an impact on the way the translation can be accomplished. The subtitler who has to work with the spotting lists, known in the industry as 'master titles' and 'templates' (see section 6.1.3), and who only translates the subtitles is deprived of the capability to resort to means other than linguistic modifications when faced with complex situations such as, for instance, subtitles overrunning shot changes or wrong

durations (too short or too long) which cannot be solved by adapting the translation.

The drawbacks from such an approach would be more evident in the context of subtitling in Mandarin when the subtitler is offered a spotting dialogue list and asked to closely adhere to the cueing of the master subtitles in English. This is mainly because the grammatical structures of English and Chinese are markedly different. Compared to Chinese, English has a relatively complex affixation and simple syntax. The difference in chronological sequence, particularly, poses a genuine challenge to the subtitler. Therefore, the more technical flexibility granted to the subtitler, the greater the likelihood that the resulting quality of the translation will be high.

3.4.3 Spatial Dimension: Safe Area and Position on the Screen

In addition to the temporal parameters, it is also imperative for the subtitle text to adhere to what is known in the industry as the 'safe area' or 'safe zone'. This usually means that the lowest line of the subtitles should appear at least 1/12 of the total screen height from the bottom, with a margin of at least 1/12 of the total screen width on both left and right sides for the sake of eye movement and to make it easier for the audience to read the subtitles (Karamitroglou, 1998). Nowadays, subtitlers can easily configure the setting of the safe area if they work with subtitling programs. Once the setting is completed, the subtitle text will be limited to appear within the main area of the screen, which is the area shown in black in Figure 2 and the area within the green-lined square shown in Figure 3:
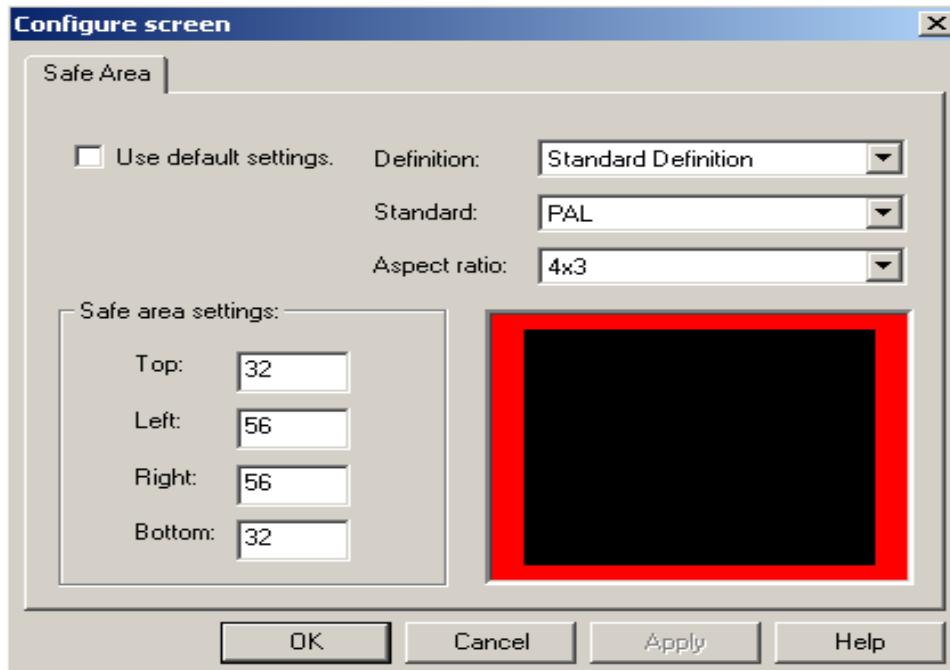
Figure 2: Safe area configuration in the subtitling program WinCAPS
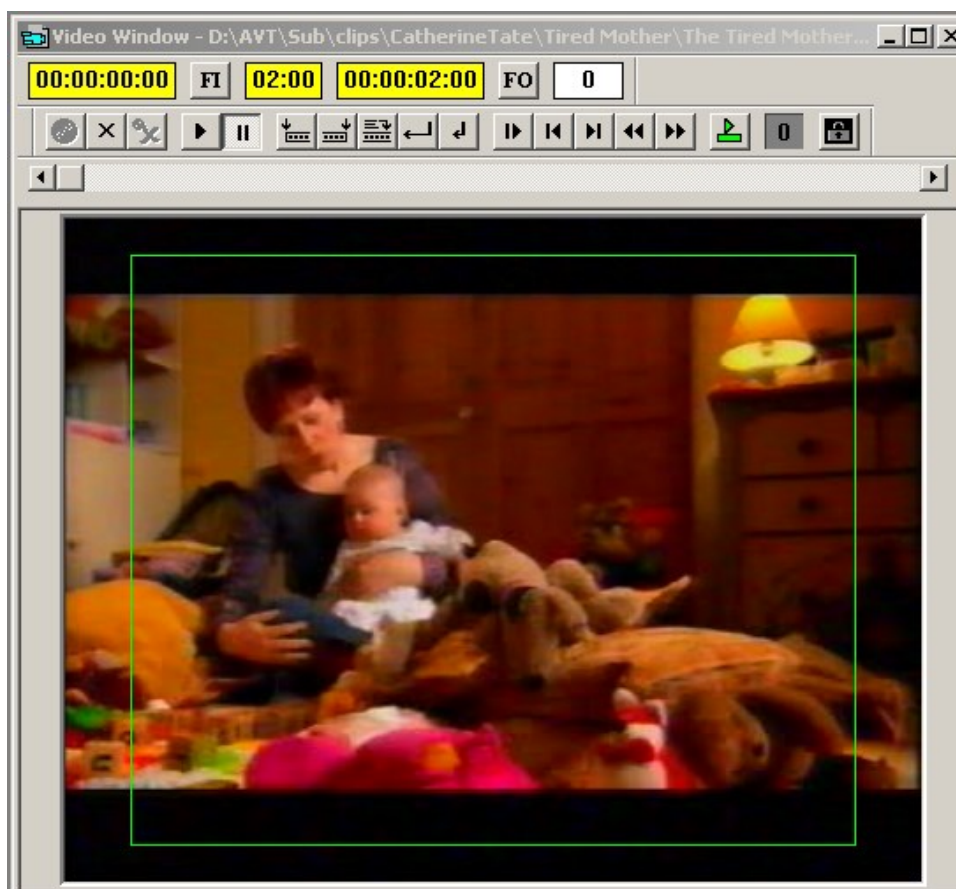
Figure 3: Safe area in the subtitling program WinCAPS

Another reason for respecting the safe area is that, as Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 82) point out, the written text and graphics shown on the screen may be distorted if they appear too close to the edges as "TV manfacturers deal with the screen edges differently".

With respect to the position on the screen, the most conventional way for subtitles to appear is horizontally centred at the bottom of the screen. This is because the lower part of the picture is considered to be of less importance to the aesthetic appreciation of the audiovisual programme, and hence this positioning is less likely to have an adverse effect on the visibility of the image. In addition, centring the subtitles also facilitates the eye's movement, as the travel distance is shorter from the centre of the screen to the beginning of the subtitle.

There are also situations when subtitles are moved to other parts of the screen, probably to avoid overlapping with key information on screen (see Figure 4); in cinemas, the second most likely place for subtitles to appear is the top of the screen whilst there are further possibilities for TV screens (see Figure 5):

Figure 4: Subtitle on top of the screen

Figure 5: Subtitles appearing on different parts of screen

Despite the fact that subtitling programs allow subtitles to be positioned in different places, one issue that should be noted is the negative effect that too many changes in their position on the screen can have on the viewers, as this is bound to result in a decrease in the readability of the subtitles. In addition to subtitles that translate the various dialogue exchanges, there can also be other texts appearing on the screen, such as the title of the programme, narrative inserts (e.g. street signs, legends, temporal indications), newspapers, placards, graffiti, restaurant names, etc. The positioning of the subtitles that translate these inserts, unlike those that give account of the dialogue exchanges, is often adjusted so they are appear close to the original texts, as illustrated in Figure 5 above. Nonetheless, subtitles positioned at places other than the top and bottom of the screen are more likely to be seen on TV programmes and they are still rather uncommon in cinema.

With the globalisation of audiovisual communication, the current practice for the positioning of subtitles is similar in most parts of the world, including Chinese-speaking countries. Traditionally, Chinese is written in vertical columns and read from top to bottom, right to left. However, Chinese printing has shifted to a left-to-right, horizontal-line format in the past few decades, under the influence of English and other Western languages. The format and layout of subtitles, has similarly experienced a couple of changes. In the first instance text has started to be written

from left-to-right vertical to right-to-left horizontal, and then later to the present left-to-right horizontal. Today, vertical subtitles are still seen on television as news tickers or as scrolling text; and sometimes they are also used in film festivals and theatres, particularly in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao. This practice is also found in non-Chinese speaking countries such as Japan and Korea. In Figure 6 below, the original burn-in subtitle in Japanese (SL) is placed on the left side of the screen, whereas the translated subtitle in traditional Chinese (TL) is placed at the bottom:

Figure 6: Vertical subtitle

In Figure 7 below, a subtitle of scrolling news in traditional Chinese is placed vertically on the left side of the screen:

Figure 7: Scrolling subtitle in the news

When vertical subtitles are used in film festivals, they are usually presented as one-liners and placed at the right side of the screen. Likewise, when the subtitles appear vertically as news tickers or as scrolling text on television, they tend to be also in one line but can be placed on either the left or right side of the screen.

The positioning of subtitles is also one of the main challenges to the burgeoning field of 3D film production, as fixed positioning risks jeopardising 3D imagery and cause visual fatigue. As González et al. (2012: 192) explain, the main problem is that the subtitle and the images are located at different depths or regions, thus requiring viewers to constantly switch focus between the subtitle and the scene at a fast speed "while our eyes converge always to the same distance". As mentioned earlier in section 3.4.1, 3D subtitling also faces a challenge that results from the need for longer exposure of the subtitles on the screen and shorter, more condensed translations, and which is unlikely to be properly resolved by linguistic means only. Hence, Kozoulyaev (2011: 42) proposes an approach called 'image blending',

whereby subtitles and credits are "put on roadside billboards [thus] becoming indispensable parts of the scenes". This approach has already been tested in some 2D films like the Russian vampire movie *Dnevnoy Dozor* [*Night Watch*], shot by Timur Bekmambetov in 2004, a director who, in Rawsthorn's (2007: online) words, conceives subtitles as "another character in the film". Foerster (2010: 95) also conducts a case study on *Night Watch* and makes direct reference to the Code of Good Subtitling Practice (see section 3.3), arguing that greater innovation in subtitling is necessary and that more subtitles should be tailored to the aesthetic properties of individual films. Despite, or indeed because of, their creativity, Foerster's conclusion is that the subtitles of *Night Watch* still fail to "meet all the criteria necessary to be regarded as satisfactory by experts", pointing to the long road ahead for this type of subtitle to become mainstream. The subtitles in *Night Watch*, as shown in Figure 8 below, can appear anywhere and at different speeds on the screen and, in a dynamic way, they move along with the action within a scene, thus creating an effect to some extent similar to the bubbles in comic strips:

Figure 8: Dynamic positioning of subtitles in *Night Watch*

Subtitles have become one of the visual design elements of 3D films and are seen as an inseparable part of the artistic presentation by many. The impact that the quality of subtitles has on a 3D film therefore outweighs the effect that they may have on a 2D film. Subtitles of poor quality in the latter will lead to distraction or obstructed vision; however, subtitles that fail to meet quality standards in the former may even

cause viewers to suffer from motion sickness, the symptoms of which include headaches, dizziness, fatigue, nausea, etc. (Hoffman et al., 2008). In this sense, the contribution of subtitlers to the production of subtitles in 3D films, rather than being limited to bridging linguistic barriers, is also the creation of a non-conflicting 3D environment for the interaction between images and subtitles, as well as the avoidance of unnecessary extra costs on ruined 3D immersion.

3.4.4 Spatial Dimension: Number of Lines

Subtitling conventions regarding the maximum number of lines per subtitle vary in different countries, and even between those speaking the same language. Interlingual subtitling is usually limited to a maximum of two lines, as stated in the Code of Good Subtitling Practice (see section 3.3). However, bilingual subtitles can sometimes occupy up to four lines, i.e. two lines per language. In multilingual countries such as Malaysia, cinemas sometimes even provide trilingual subtitles: one line in Malay, one line in English, and one line in Chinese. When the subtitles are aimed at the deaf and the hearing impaired, three to four lines are very common as well. In 3D subtitling, the maximum number of lines may no longer be limited to two, especially if subtitles need to be short, placed in a dynamic positioning mode, and are considered to be part of the artistic composition.

As far as subtitling in Chinese language is concerned, conventions differ from one country to another and are in constant flux. For instance, in Taiwan, the use of single-line subtitles was preferred to two-line subtitles wherever possible. However, this convention has begun to change in recent years and clients tend to give subtitlers more freedom to make their own choices between one-liners or two-liners, although, of course, the final decision is usually still up to the client. In Hong Kong, "the subtitles are usually single-lined" (Chen, 2009: 109); however, sometimes cinemas also provide bilingual subtitles, one line in Chinese and one to two lines in

English, if the original language of the film is neither Chinese nor English. In Mainland China, although one-liners and two-liners are more common, three-line subtitles are also sometimes acceptable. As for multilingual countries such as Malaysia and Singapore, where Chinese is one of the main languages, the number of lines appearing on the screen can be three to four lines as mentioned previously and illustrated in Figure 9.

When it comes to the formal presentation of two-liners, point 20 of the Code (see section 3.3) states that "wherever two lines of unequal length are used, the upper line should preferably be shorter to keep as much of the image as free as possible". Nonetheless, other authors like Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 87) have argued that in terms of line distribution, the first concern should not be aesthetics, but rather the syntax of the language used. That is, a long sentence should be divided in accordance with the syntactical and grammatical logic of the sentence. However, when various possibilities exist that respect syntactic blocks, an ideal ratio of 2:3 between the first and second lines is suggested by some subtitling industry guidelines in order to ensure that the audience has an optimised view. Another reason put forward by authors like Lomheim (1999: 193) is that "the viewer's eye takes less time to read subtitles with a short first and full second line than those with a full first line and shorter second line" and hence, under time pressure, this arrangement of an pyramid would make it easier for the viewer to read the text in a faster manner.

Concerning the use of three or four-line subtitles, one issue that should be noted is that an oversized layout will obstruct the view of the audience and negatively decrease the quality of visual perception by occupying 1/4 to 1/3 of the image, as can be seen in Figure 9, Figure 10 and Figure 11 below:
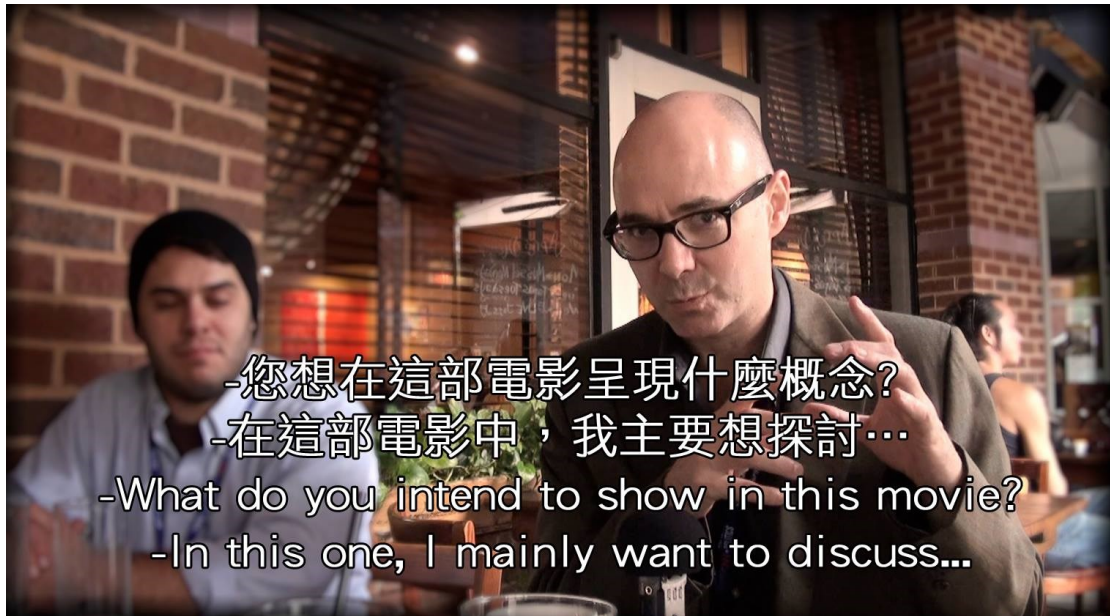
Figure 9: Bilingual subtitles in traditional Chinese and English

Figure 10: Four-lined intralingual subtitle in simplified Chinese
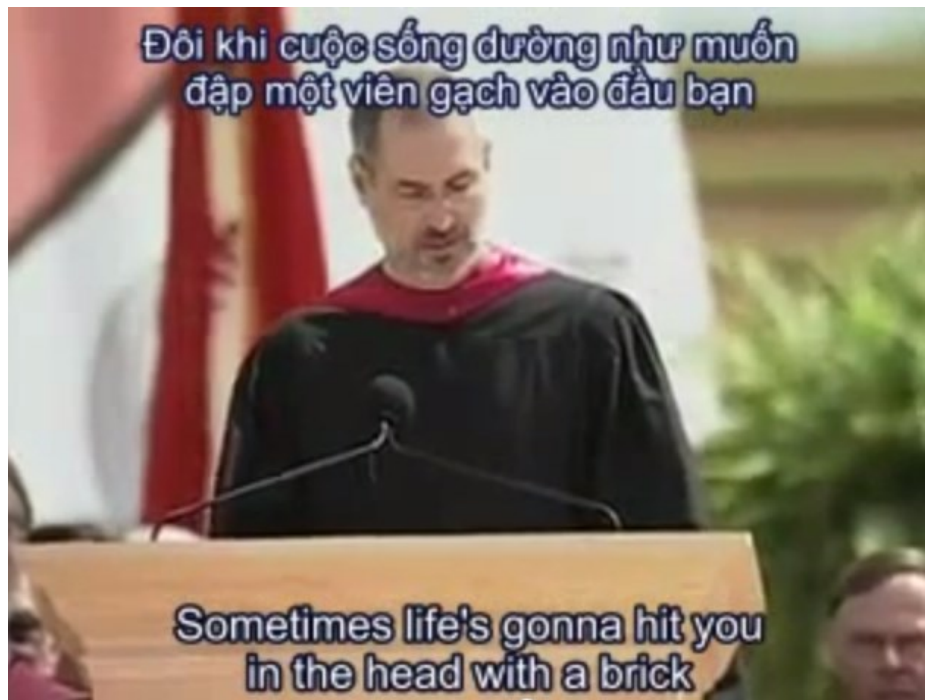
Figure 11: Bilingual subtitles in Vietnamese and English

Hence, despite the subtitles being able to cater for different language needs, the program may not be as appreciated and understood by the audience as it could be expected.

3.4.5 Spatial Dimension: Line Length and Font Type

The maximum number of characters per line for languages that rely on the Roman alphabet, according to Díaz-Cintas (2013a: 274), has traditionally hovered between 35 and 39, including blank spaces and typographical signs. However, cinemas may use up to a maximum of 40 or 41 characters, and even 43 at some film festivals, "since it is an accepted norm in the profession that the viewer is able to read subtitles more easily and quickly on a cinema than a television screen" (Díaz-Cintas and Remael, 2007: 24). The conventions, again, may vary in different countries and among different media.

Technical developments, however, have loosened considerably the restrictions on the number of characters allowed per line. As Díaz-Cintas (2013a) points out, some of the professional subtitling programs work now with pixels and have moved away from using monospaced fonts to proportional lettering. Monospaced fonts (e.g. Courier New, Lucida Console), which provide the same amount of horizontal space for each letter and character, were used in the past. Today, the vast majority of professional subtitling programs allow subtitlers to choose proportional fonts (e.g. Times New Roman, Arial), in which the letters and symbols differ in size to one another, and, for example, an 'i' or an 'l' occupy a smaller space than a 'u' or an 'm'. In this sense, more letters and characters can be accommodated in a subtitle depending on the actual letters used and the proportions of the safe area, as can be seen in Figure 12, where the bottom line occupies slightly less space despite having more characters than the top one:
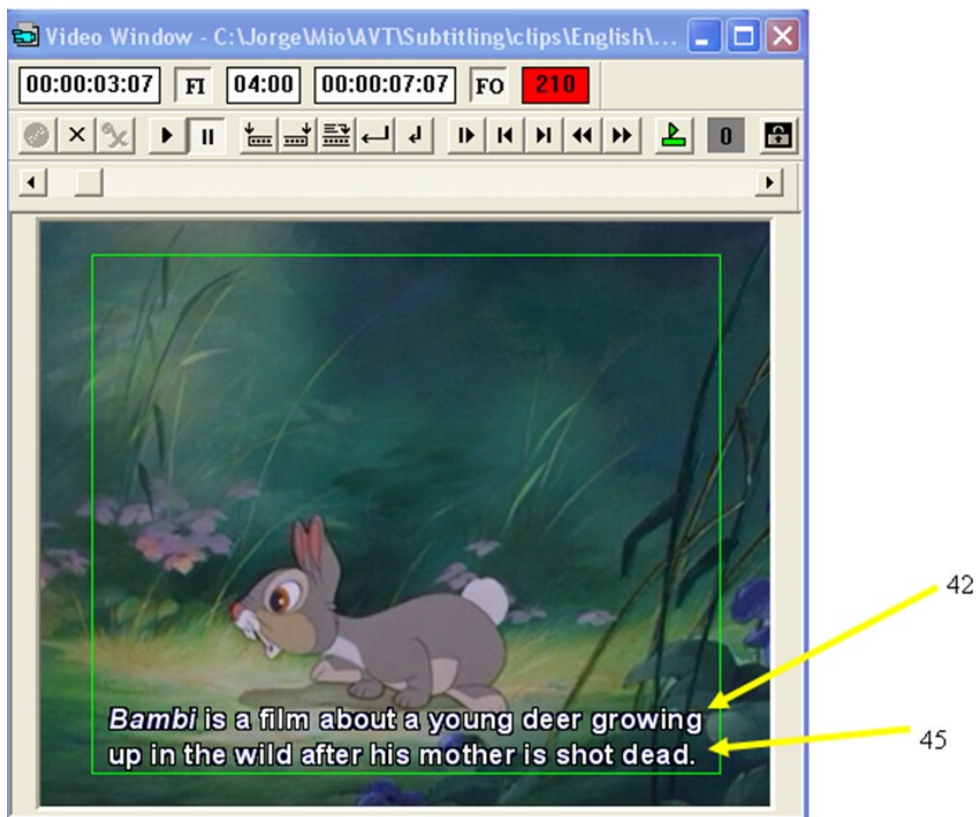
Figure 12: Subtitle in proportional font

As for the Chinese language, in Taiwan the most common standard is to allow a line length that hovers around 13 to 14 Chinese characters per line as a maximum, which makes a maximum total of 26 to 28 characters for a two-liner. In Hong Kong, it can be up to 15 or 16 characters per line, as the subtitles are usually single-lined. In the case of mainland China, restrictions on the character limit vary greatly, and range from 12 to 20 characters per line.

As far as Chinese is concerned, traditionally all characters inhabit the same perfect square shape and have the same fixed width. With respect to font types, in the case of traditional Chinese, mainly used in Taiwan and Hong Kong, lettering such as MingLiU [細明體] and MSJH.TTF [微軟正黑體] are often used in subtitling. For simplified Chinese, SimSun [宋体] and SimHei [黑体] are two of the most commonly used font types. Of these four types, MingLiU and SimSun are monospaced, while MSJH.TTF and SimHei are proportional. However, since the perfect square shape cannot be changed in any case and Chinese characters are double-byte,[9] even if a proportional font is used, it would be unlikely that an additional character could be squeezed in. As shown in Figure 13, the font SimSun is used for the first line of the subtitle and the font MSJH.TTF for the second line, yet the lengths of the two lines remain exactly the same. If an additional word were to be added to the second line, the font size will be reduced proportionally both in width and height, thus decreasing legibility, and the characters of the second line will look much smaller than the first line:

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[9] Double-Byte Character Sets are foreign-language character sets that require more than one byte of information to express each character and, hence, require more space. Examples of double-byte languages are Mandarin, Japanese and Korean, whilst English, Spanish or German are, by contrast, single-byte languages.

Figure 13: Monospaced font vs. proportional font

Yet another point is that although subtitles written in proportional fonts in Roman alphabet languages can accommodate more characters in the same space, the resulting long subtitles are not necessarily given more exposure time to ensure the viewer's comfortable reading. This is why Díaz-Cintas (2013a) raises the need for more empirical research, in an attempt "to ascertain the appropriate reading speed of today's viewers". Failing to allow enough time for viewers to properly read subtitles can severely endanger the quality of subtitling, even though the original meaning may remain virtually intact in the subtitle.

A more varied choice of fonts has sprung up in recent years in several languages. Although some research projects have been conducted to discuss the readability and legibility of fonts, as in the case of Tiresias,[10] so far no consensus has been reached on which typeface is easier to read on screen, on whether sans-serif typefaces are truly better than serif fonts on the screen, and on whether subtitles written in proportional fonts are faster to read than those written in fixed-width fonts (Chang, 2007; Chen et al., 1997; Nielsen, 2012; Wheildon, 1995; Xiang et al., 2010; Zhang et

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[10] Tiresias (Tozer, 2012) is a typeface designed for best legibility on screen by people with impaired vision and is used in subtitles for digital terrestrial television (DVB-T), and digital satellite (DVB-S), targeting the UK. More details about this font type can be found on: www.tiresias.org/fonts.

al., 2011). Apart from the fact that there are too many font types available to be properly tested, the main reason for obstructing research in this field is that, in terms of readability and legibility, the variables to be considered are too numerous, including font size, font colour, display media, viewer age, and so on, and any empirical experiments are unlikely to test all possible combinations. In any case, the clarity and simplicity of the font are usually considered the fundamental guiding principles when choosing one for subtitles.

3.4.6 Spatial Dimension: Font Colour and Background

In interlingual subtitling, the use of colours is much more restricted and far less creative than in intralingual subtitling aimed at the deaf and the hard-of-hearing, in which different colours are used to help speaker identification and to indicate the tone of voice. In the profession, the most common custom font colour used in interlingual subtitling is white as "white characters are denser and more luminous" than coloured letters (Ivarsson and Carroll, 1998: 45). In cinema, subtitles are also mostly white because "they have been laser engraved on the celluloid" (Díaz-Cintas and Remael, 2007: 130) and hence, what we see as viewers is the 'white' screen onto which the celluloid is being projected. Karamitroglou (1998: online) further stresses that the white colour must be pale, not snow-bright white, because "a too flashy pigment would render them tiring to the viewer's eye". Yellow is another colour often employed in subtitling, particularly in the subtitles of black and white films; however, in cinema and on DVD and Blu-rays, monochromatic subtitles in white seem to be a universal trend.

To aid legibility and avoid clashing with the images, it is often suggested that subtitles should be presented against a fixed dark background, i.e. a 'black box', although the background does not necessarily need to be black. In fact, the colour

grey as the subtitle background is favoured for being less intrusive (Ivarsson and Carroll, 1998: 46; Karamitroglou, 1998). Another way to ensure the legibility of subtitles is to add sharp contours to the characters, as suggested in point one of the technical aspects of the Code (see section 3.3). 'Shadowing', however, is regarded as the most appropriate solution for cinema, as the audience can still see the picture behind the subtitle, and hence, it is considered to be less intrusive and more aesthetically pleasant. In Chinese-speaking countries, a 'black box' is rarely seen and a black outline around the text, and possibly a soft shadow, is normally used to enhance the readability of subtitles, in a method similar to that used when subtitling into Western languages.

Given that the black bar at the bottom of the screen is blamed for blocking the audience's view of the picture behind the subtitle, and that the visibility of subtitles written in any given fixed colour without the black box can be negatively influenced by the background screen colour, a novel approach to subtitling has been proposed. It relies on automatic text colour adaptation, which, in turn, is based on fuzzy logic, to ensure colour harmony between subtitle and background image (Davoudi et al., 2012). 'The fuzzy logic-based video subtitle and caption colouring system' has been designed to avoid illegibility when the preponderant colour of the background is similar to that of the subtitle. In those cases, the colour of the subtitle is adapted for better visibility, in accordance with optimal visual perception and colour psychology. The idea is to test viewers' preference for subtitle colours in order to develop fuzzy rules that can serve as a basis for the real-time colouring system. The test group was shown 30 different screen shots, and each was subtitled with five different colours: (a) the exact opposite colour (e.g. the exact opposite colour of A is B, as shown in Figure 14), (b) a cooler opposite colour (e.g. C to A in Figure 14), (c) a warmer opposite colour (e.g. D to A in Figure 14), (d) fixed yellow, and (d) fixed white:
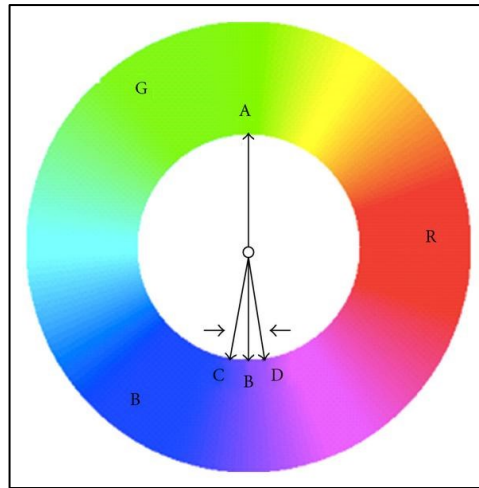
Figure 14: Complementary colours on a colour wheel[11]

In order to establish the potential of B, C, and D colours for a subtitle, a descriptive distance formula that computes each pixel's distance to the centre of the subtitle area was used to gauge "the averaged summation of image background colour" (ibid.: online), i.e. the A colour. It is argued that the closer the image pixel to the subtitle, the greater the effect it would have on the colour of the subtitle. Accordingly, the image screen was divided into three regions as shown in Figure 15 below, under the prerequisite that the subtitle was positioned at the bottom:

(1) Full screen image

(2) Below region

(3) Subtitle region
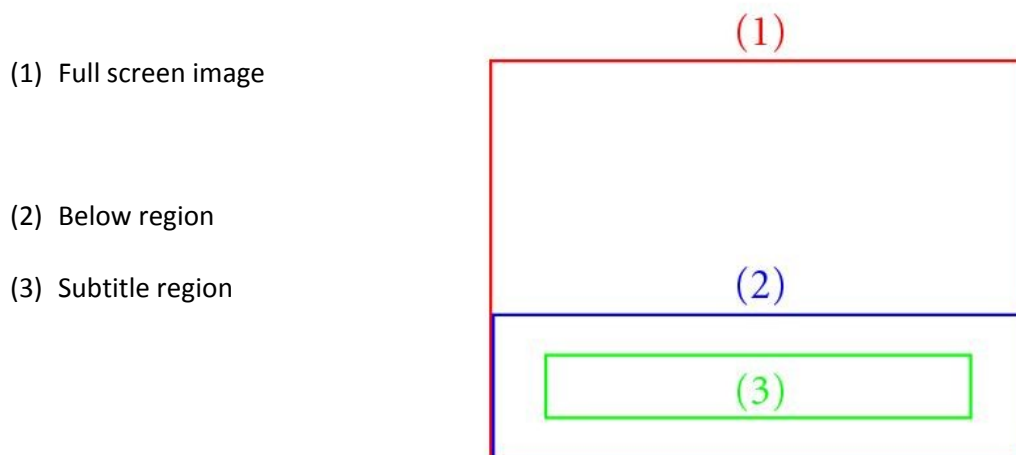
Figure 15: Screen division[12]

The three regions were then weighted differently in the computation in accordance with their importance in terms of visibility: W(3) > W(2) > W(1). In other words, the background colour of the region (3) was the most relevant and influential regarding the colour of the subtitle.

The test results indicated that nearly 70% of the viewers favoured subtitles with a cooler opposite colour when the average colour of the background was cooler, whilst 65% preferred subtitles in a warmer colour when the average colour of the background was warmer; in many cases, fixed white and fixed yellow were the second choices. The fuzzy rules were then built according to the results obtained in the tests on people's visual preferences for subtitle colour, colour psychology, and colour harmony between subtitle colour and image background colours, which can be summarised in the following three principles:

    a)   to maximise the subtitle visibility, the colour of subtitles should be opposite to the averaged summation of the image background colours,

    b)   in an image with warm colours (red, orange, or yellow) do not use very cool colours like blue as a subtitle colour and vice versa,

    c)   in a dark image do not use very bright subtitle colours (and vice versa).

(Davoudi et al, 2012: online)

The researchers also suggest that the performance of the system can be further expanded by adding more information such as the subtitle context and emotional aspects so as to find the optimal colour for the subtitle. Despite the fact that this subtitling approach is rather recent and the hardware system may not yet be fully developed, it might trigger a new way of thinking about the relationship between font colour and subtitling quality.

In the context of 3D subtitling, the following effects are used in order to reduce the ghosting between the eyes: lighting, shades and colour gradients, or even different

colours. Ghosting is the undesired effect that appears when parts of an image intended to be seen by one eye only become visible to the other eye. As González et al. (2012: 195-6) demonstrate, using shading to reduce the contrast of colours can help to decrease the ghosting effect, as shown in Figure 16 and Figure 17 below:

Figure 16: Ghosting present in the image due to high contrast in the scene

Figure 17: Reduced ghosting because of decreased contrast in the image

In summary, for many scholars temporal and spatial constraints tend to make subtitlers' task more challenging than translating literature, as there is usually no room for wordy expressions, lengthy complex sentence structures or explanations for certain solutions. The condensation of the original dialogue is always inevitable for subtitles, with an average of 25 to 50 per cent of the original information normally being lost during the process of the diagonal shift (Ivarsson, 1992); in 3D subtitling, the percentage could be even higher. On occasions, some information that might well be relevant to the programme has to be deleted. When the redundant words have already been excluded from the translation, the subtitler then

has difficult decisions to make for further condensation. Needless to say, omitting one or two words can cause significant changes in meaning or lead to misunderstanding, thus putting the quality of subtitles in danger. Even when the subtitler can encapsulate all the information in one subtitle, the way the text is presented onscreen will also have an impact on its readability. Aesthetically, chromatic conflict with the background can lead to poor perception on the part of the viewer. Content-wise, bad line breaks within a subtitle or illogical spotting between subtitles will cost the viewer more time to comprehend the message and, hence, greater cognitive effort that can, in turn, be detrimental to the appreciation of the whole message.

3.4.7 Stylistic Dimension

In addition to the temporal and spatial constraints discussed in the previous sections, the style of subtitles also contributes to the quality of subtitling output. As Halliday (1994: 61) indicates, "[w]ritten language tends to be lexically dense, but grammatically simple; spoken language tends to be grammatically intricate, but lexically sparse". Accordingly, as the condensed written text of spoken dialogue, it is expected that subtitles would possess a higher lexical density and a more structured syntax than the dialogue exchanges. Some of the typical features of spoken language are inevitably lost during the transition from speech to writing, which poses another difficulty for subtitlers when it comes to retaining the nuances of the stylistic features contained in the soundtrack.

Bannon (2010: online) stresses that "subtitles should complement the tonal nature of language—the sounds, pauses, and stresses of an actor's on-screen performance". In his view, "tonal quality is as much a part of the aural experience of a film as its visual impact"; it is the primary concern of many actors, and "subtitlers must be equally concerned" (ibid.). One may argue that the audience can indeed perceive the

actors' tones by their facial expressions, gestures, and the way in which they speak, although certain nuances in the lines are sometimes very subtle and not easily noted by people without a native command of the language. In this respect, differences in tone and intonation can have a dramatic impact on how the source audience perceive a scene, which may not be necessarily the same as the target audience. To counterbalance this mismatch, Bannon (ibid.) suggests that subtitle capitalisation can be used to echo the stress points in the dialogue, thus illustrating the character's intent to the audience. He provides the following example:

Example 6

Worried: MUST you go?
Confrontational: Must YOU go?
Frantic: Must you GO?

The Chinese language does not include capitalisation in its writing system. To produce the same effect, English quotation marks (" ") and Chinese quotation marks (「 」) are often used instead, depending on the house rules of the subtitling company. As shown above, the same subtitle with different stress points can have slightly different meanings. Confusion and distraction, and even distrust of the translation among the audience, can be avoided when the tones of delivery successfully match the original soundtrack and the written subtitle. Subtitlers, in consequence, should endeavour to ensure that the linguistic encoding of the subtitles stylistically reflects and complements the dialogue and action on screen, in order to ensure the quality of the whole audiovisual experience.

In subtitling, similarly to the case of literary translation, "the language register must be appropriate and correspond with the spoken word"; as stated in the Code of Good Subtitling Practice (see section 3.3). However, there seems to be a tendency in subtitling to use neutral language rather than colloquial expressions (Mailhac, 2000:

144). Sometimes this neutral register does not strongly influence audiences' perception, but on other occasions an illogical mismatch may cause a negative impact; for example, when a Mafioso sounds like a preacher, or a thief like a policeman. Hence, subtitlers should pay extra attention to identifying the correct register and avoid mixing registers; otherwise, the odd result may either distract viewers or hinder their understanding of the characters' psychology.

When it comes to vulgar language, subtitlers do not always have the freedom to take certain stylistic decisions. Different clients may have different preferences and requirements. As Nikolić (2005: 33) states, "the job of subtitling for clients that have different goals and organisational structures may impose even further constraints". Public television channels usually aim to provide educative and informative programmes, thus standard language is preferred. As for commercial programmes, the effects of entertainment are normally the primary concern, thus the flexibility to use swearwords and street language may be higher. Even when vulgar language is permitted, subtitlers are still constantly reminded to tone down or neutralise strong language, since it is considered that written foul language is "more offensive than actual oral usage" (Roffe and Thorne, 1994: 258). When offensive language is not allowed at all, subtitlers must be imaginative when replacing these omnipresent words with other expressions without falling in the ridiculous. In essence, the stylistic quality of subtitling lies in the subtitler's ability to combine content and form, conveying the spirit of the original as far as possible but within the stylistic constraints imposed by clients.

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, in addition to the linguistic parameters that can be considered when it comes to measuring translation quality, more factors have to be taken into consideration when evaluating subtitling quality. The guidelines for the formal presentation of subtitling output are certainly important in terms of providing an objective standard against which good subtitling can be measured. However, along with these rather prescriptive theories, industry guidelines such as the Code discussed in section 3.3 seem to presuppose a

mechanical view of the practice of subtitling. Assuming that a certain level of subtitling quality can be achieved by adhering to these norms, it is logical to argue that there must be other factors contributing to the quality of subtitling output in professional reality; otherwise, subtitling quality would have been a much less controversial issue. Hence, an empirical study has been conducted in order to explore other potential factors that may also have an impact on the quality of a subtitler's output in practice. The specific research questions and research methodology are elaborated in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

Research Design
and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In Chapters Two and Three, the concept of quality was discussed from a theoretical perspective, in translation in general, and in subtitling in particular. The factors determining subtitling quality in the professional world, as previously mentioned, are still largely under-researched. Hence, in order to explore quality issues in the current subtitling industry, an empirical study has been conducted. The aim is to shed light on the working conditions under which subtitlers perform their activities in different countries and to investigate the relationship between working conditions and the quality of their output.

In line with the purpose of this study, a pragmatic stance has been adopted in order to retain a certain level of flexibility in the data collection method, in the hope of maximising the potential to generate both descriptive and exploratory results. The former are usually empirically based and aim to describe situations, e.g. the working conditions of subtitlers in this study, whilst the latter are of a qualitative nature and seek to provide insights into a social phenomenon, e.g. the attitude of subtitlers towards quality, through both first and secondary information sources (Engel and Schutt, 2012). The rationale for the chosen research paradigm, methodology and

online questionnaire survey method is outlined, followed by a discussion of issues regarding validity and reliability. Grounded upon the consideration of these issues, the second half of this chapter features discussions in relation to the questionnaire design, survey distribution and data collection, as well as data analysis procedures.

4.2 Research Questions

Based on the general aims stated in Chapter One, along with the discussion in Chapters Two and Three, a number of specific research questions and issues emerged and were further refined in the course of developing the research design. The main questions are as follows:

1. What are the working conditions of subtitlers in general with regard to rates, deadlines, royalties, acknowledgement credits, relationship with clients, use of dedicated software, and provision of support material?
2. What is the attitude of subtitlers towards subtitling quality? Would they compromise quality for speed and/or money?
3. Apart from those factors discussed by scholars from a theoretical perspective, are there any other factors that can influence the quality of subtitling output in the professional world?
4. What are the implications of the above findings for both the industry and the training of future subtitlers?

4.3 From Paradigm and Methodology to Method

When discussing research philosophies, a distinction between 'positivism' and 'interpretivism' is frequently made. There has long been a debate in social sciences regarding the most appropriate position from which research methods should be

derived (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Hughes and Sharrock, 1997). The two paradigms represent different sets of philosophical and metatheoretical assumptions that characterise scientific investigation "concerning the nature of reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), and the principles inspiring and governing scientific investigation (methodology), as well as technical issues regarding the practical implementation of a study (research methods)" (Gelo et al., 2008: 269). According to Acton (1951: 291), "[p]ositivism is the view that the only way to obtain knowledge of the world is by means of sense perception and introspection and the methods of the empirical sciences". Positivists argue that there is a single, external and objective reality, and the only truth is grounded in scientific empiricism; hence, legitimate knowledge can only be obtained from objective, effectively controlled and directly observable empirical evidence (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Travers, 2001).

In contrast with positivism, interpretivists acknowledge the existence of multiple and relative realities, believing that the best way to acquire knowledge is through socially constructed and subjective interpretations (Carson et al., 2001). The world and reality are not objective and exterior and are thus difficult to measure. The intention of interpretivism is therefore to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them, and furthermore to interpret human behaviour (Deetz, 1996). In this sense, motives, reasons and other subjective experiences that are time and context bound are what interpretivist researchers strive to analyse.

Pragmatism, another research paradigm, is set apart from the confrontation between the positivist and interpretivist research philosophies, granting researchers the freedom to determine their research framework based on research questions, rather than, as is the custom of positivism and interpretivism, starting off by questioning ontology and epistemology (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). According to Maxcy (2003: 79), pragmatism "seems to have emerged as both a method of inquiry and a device for the settling of battles between research purists and more practical-minded scientists". That is, a pragmatic researcher does not believe in mutual exclusivity between objectivist and subjectivist perspectives, and will hence use a

mixture of those methods, techniques and procedures typically associated with quantitative or qualitative research to better understand social reality. The basic beliefs of pragmatism, along with those of positivism and interpretivism, are summarised in Table 1:

Table 1: Fundamental beliefs of positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism

Research Paradigms	Fundamental Beliefs
	Ontology *The position of the nature of reality*
Positivism	External, objective and independent of social actors
Interpretivism	Socially constructed, subjective, may change, multiple
Pragmatism	External, multiple, view chosen to best achieve an answer to the research question
	Epistemology *The view on what constitutes acceptable knowledge*
Positivism	Only observable phenomena can provide credible data and facts. Focus on causality and law-like generalisations, reducing phenomena to the simplest elements
Interpretivism	Subjective meanings and social phenomena. Focus is upon the details of a situation, the reality behind these details, subjective meanings and motivating actions
Pragmatism	Either or both observable phenomena and subjective meanings can provide acceptable knowledge, but are dependent upon the research question. Focus on practical applied research, integrating different perspectives to help interpret the data
	Axiology *The role of values in research and the researcher's stance*
Positivism	Value-free and etic. Research is undertaken in a value-free way, the researcher is independent of the data and maintains an objective stance
Interpretivism	Value-bound and emic. Research is value bound, the researcher is part of what is being researched, cannot be separated and so will be subjective
Pragmatism	Value-bound and etic-emic. Values play a large role in interpreting results, the researcher adopts both objective and subjective points of view
	Predominant Research Methodology *The model behind the research process*
Positivism	Quantitative
Interpretivism	Qualitative
Pragmatism	Qualitative and quantitative (mixed or multi-method design)

(Source: based on Saunders et al. (2009: 119) and Carson et al. (2001: 6))

A pragmatist position is held in this study to explore the subtitling profession, hoping to maximise the possibility of finding answers to the research questions without the mental and practical constraints imposed by the forced choice dichotomy between positivism and interpretivism. As mentioned in Chapter One, subtitling is a relatively mysterious profession due to its unique business ecosystem, where information is largely exclusive to industry insiders. Hence, situated in the pragmatist paradigm, the researcher will have greater scope to address the issues under discussion and integrate observable phenomena and subjective information into the analysis.

Stemming from positivist and interpretivist theoretical perspectives, the notion of quantitative and qualitative approaches underpins much of the discussion in research. Positivism is traditionally equated with quantitative research due to its heavy reliance on the mathematical analysis of data (Deshpandé, 1983; Hinchey, 2008; Sale et al., 2002). Interpretivism, on the other hand, is usually considered more qualitative because it leans towards the collection of qualitative data (Altheide and Johnson, 1994; Crotty, 1998). Pragmatism, in a similar sense, is commonly characterised by the adoption of a mixed methodology, using both quantitative and qualitative data in the same research. In this study, in accordance with the pragmatic stance, a mixed methodological approach will be used to gain insight into the parameters that have an impact on the quality of subtitling, as well as into how the working environment of subtitlers relates to those parameters. To this end, online surveys with semi closed-ended questions have been adopted as the main data collection method in an attempt to elicit both descriptive and exploratory information. In addition, an addendum of information drawn from insiders, through subtitler discussion forums and personal communications, supplements the survey findings to provide a deeper understanding of the contextual variables and explanations that may influence subtitlers' intentions to safeguard the quality of their output. The use of an online questionnaire survey as the research method is discussed further in the following section.

4.4 Online Questionnaire Survey as Research Method

Questionnaire surveys tend to be a popular research tool because they provide a relatively objective and efficient means of collecting information about people's knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours (Oppenheim, 1992; Sapsford, 1999). With the advancement of telecommunication technology and the prevalence of the Internet, online questionnaire surveys have gradually, to some extent, replaced traditional data gathering methods such as paper-and-pencil interviewing, mail surveys, telephone surveys and so on. The attributes of online surveys have been extensively discussed by authors like Fricker and Schonlau (2002), Furrer and Sudharshan (2001), Ilieva et al. (2002), Malhotra (2004), McDaniel and Gates (2005),Tingling et al. (2003), and Wilson and Laskey (2003) among others. Evans and Mathur (2005: 197) compile an existing literature and provide a comprehensive analysis on the strengths and potential weaknesses of this research method, summarised in Figure 18 below:

Major Strengths

- Global reach
- B-to-B and B-to-C appeal
- Flexibility
- Speed and timeliness
- Technological innovations
- Convenience
- Ease of data entry and analysis
- Question diversity
- Low administration cost
- Ease of follow-up
- Controlled sampling
- Large sample easy to obtain
- Control of answer order
- Required completion of answers
- Go to capabilities
- Knowledge of respondent vs. non respondent characteristics

Attributes of Online Surveys

Major Potential Weaknesses

- Perception as junk mail
- Skewed attributes of Internet population: upscale, male, etc.
- Questions about sample selection and implementation
- Respondent lack of online experience/expertise
- Technological variations
- Unclear answering instructions
- Impersonal
- Privacy issues
- Low response rate

Figure 18: The strengths and potential weaknesses of online surveys

Based on this list, a further discussion focusing on those areas directly applicable to the context of this study will be provided.

As mentioned in Chapter One, one of the main reasons for the subtitling industry being shrouded in mystery is that the target population, namely subtitlers, are somewhat difficult to reach. Hence, the use of the online questionnaire survey

method may increase the likelihood of approaching these hard-to-reach respondents due to its strengths, particularly its global reach, flexibility, convenience and access to a large sample. Most subtitlers, if not all, are Internet-savvy and rely heavily on the Internet for their everyday tasks, from communication with clients to assignment-related research. In this sense, online surveys are especially effective in contacting and obtaining information from respondents around the world and, in particular, those who would be difficult to reach through other channels. Online surveys also provide a high level of flexibility, such as the possibility of sending a survey web link via email and distribution lists and posting them on websites and forums, thus raising the visibility of the project in cyberspace. Language options can also be provided to respondents, increasing their willingness to complete a questionnaire. In addition, Internet-based surveys can be completed at the respondent's convenience without time constraints, apart for any specified final submission deadline. Given these upsides, the possibility of accessing a large sample of respondents is also elevated.

In addition to the ease of access mentioned above, Wright (2005) considers 'short time' and 'low cost', which correspond to 'speed and timeliness' and 'low administrative cost' in Figure 18, as the other two main advantages of online survey research. Indeed, Internet-based survey research can shorten the time needed to gather, enter and analyse data; which also mirrors two other strengths: 'ease of data entry and analysis' and 'technological innovations' (see Figure 18). Online survey providers like SurveyMonkey and SurveyGizmo offer feature-rich tools that can facilitate the data collection process and raw data analysis. Updated features are constantly released, with more advanced functions catering for the needs of paid users who have greater requirements for their survey design and exploitation. Some examples of the strengths of online surveys associated with survey design are shown in Figure 18, namely 'question diversity,' 'control of answer order,' 'required completion of answers' and 'go to capabilities.' Online surveys also makes it possible for researchers to collect and monitor data while working on other tasks, thus saving

time (Andrews et al., 2003). Furthermore, when survey links are posted on online forums and bulletin boards, comments and questions following the posts can also be monitored and answered in time, which highlights the strengths of 'timeliness' and 'ease of follow-up' listed in Figure 18. In this sense, researchers are provided with greater control and flexibility in the way in which they interact with respondents. Concerning financial cost, resorting to an electronic medium can save money, not only on the use of paper, but also on other costs that may be incurred through travel, printing, postage and so on (Ilieva et al., 2002). Finally, since online surveys are self-administered, personnel expenses can also be kept to a minimum.

As Figure 18 shows, this research method has potential weaknesses if certain issues are not properly addressed, some of which are not deemed to be pertinent to this study, for example, 'skewed attributes of Internet population' and 'respondents' lack of online experience/expertise'. The former refers to the lack of representativeness of samples, when not everyone has access to the Internet and therefore the sample may not be fully representative of the general population (Gjestland, 1996; Ray and Tabor, 2003). Nevertheless, the differences between offline and online populations are diminishing rapidly with the prevalence of Internet use across an ever increasing number of individuals (Fricker and Schonlau, 2002). In addition, the target samples in this study, as already mentioned, tend to be heavy Internet users because of the nature of the job itself. Hence, the fact that the surveys are conducted online will not reduce the representativeness of the sample. For the same reason, the second drawback mentioned above is not applicable either.

'Perception as junk mail' and 'questions about sample selection and implementation' are the other two potential weaknesses listed in Figure 18. As Lefever et al. (2007: 576) state, "[e]mail messages announcing surveys are frequently interpreted as junk mail and are deleted without hesitation from the mailbox or automatically diverted by screening programmes". This is mainly because many online surveys rely on an email database to reach respondents in an unsolicited manner, thus endangering the

representativeness of the sample. In this study, however, the survey information was distributed through established email lists from numerous (audiovisual) translators and subtitlers associations, as well as related training programmes in higher education, and it was also posted on professional forums, bulletin boards and the associations' official websites. Sample selection methods that have been heavily criticised, such as blanket emailing, as indicated by Evans and Mathur (2005: 201), were avoided; consequently, the emails were less likely to be filtered as spam. Further details of the survey distribution are discussed in section 4.7.

Concerning the potential weaknesses of 'sample implementation', Evans and Mathur (ibid.) refer to the possibility that an unintended person may respond to or complete a questionnaire. This shortcoming can be minimised by specifying the target population in the survey introduction and the also, survey responses can be filtered individually to ensure validity (see section 4.5). With respect to 'technological variations', the hidden problems lie in the monitoring of configurations and web browser types, which may cause abnormal screen displays such as distorted text/images. To avoid this complication in the study discussed here, testing took place using four popular browsers: Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Chrome and Safari. In the meantime, tests were also run on various desktop computers, laptops, tablets and mobile phones to ensure that all the features functioned properly.

'Unclear answering instructions', 'impersonal' and 'privacy and security issues' are three potential issues that can lead to a decrease in the willingness of respondents to complete a questionnaire. As Ray and Tabor (2003: 37) indicate, since online surveys are self-administered and impersonal, instructions for responses must be clear; if not, respondents may become frustrated or impatient and exit a survey without finishing all the questions. The problem surrounding questionnaires being impersonal is the limited ability of an online survey to probe in-depth due to its standardised design and format. To avoid this, partially closed-ended questions were used and comment boxes also inserted wherever appropriate, allowing the

respondents to provide more information and use the space available to express their feelings and attitudes towards the questions. While the researcher strives to elicit information from respondents, privacy and confidentiality concerns can also potentially hinder participation (Dunkan, 1996; Eysenbach, 2005). Cho and LaRose (1999: 421) assert that online surveyors may commit multiple violations of physical, informational, psychological and interactional privacy that can be more intense than those found in conventional survey methods. The four types of privacy violation are defined as follows:

> Solitude, or physical privacy, is the state of privacy in which persons are free from unwanted intrusion or observation. Anonymity, or informational privacy, is the desire to have control over the conditions under which personal data are released. The dimension of reserve, or psychological privacy, is defined as the control over release or retention of personal information to guard one's cognitions and affects. Intimacy, or interactional privacy, is relevant to relationships in social units as it preserves meaningful communication between individuals and among group members.

> (ibid.: 422)

The issue of unsolicited spam has been discussed previously. In order to reduce the impact of the remaining three disadvantages in this study, the survey was accompanied by an introduction that explained the purpose of the research, guaranteed anonymity and the confidentiality of the responses, listed all the supporting bodies (see section 4.7), and explained how and by whom the results of the survey would be used. This design attempted to develop a trusting relationship between the survey subjects and the researcher that was expected to increase the willingness of the respondents to disclose information. Further details related to the questionnaire design are presented in section 4.6. As far as the 'low response rate' is concerned, this potential weakness is not applicable to this study because the survey links were not only sent out in emails, but also posted on the web. Hence, response rates could not be computed.

After various trials with diverse survey applications, the online survey website SurveyGizmo was finally chosen for this study and used to distribute the survey questionnaires. The rationale behind this decision is discussed in section 4.7.

4.5 Validity and Reliability

Validity, in general, is concerned with the level of 'accountability' and 'legitimacy' that is achieved through data collection, analysis and interpretation (Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie, 2003). The concept of validity is categorised and defined differently by various scholars (Anastasi and Urbina, 1997; Cohen et al., 2007; Cook and Campbell, 1979; Johnson and Christensen, 2000; Maxwell, 1992), but there is an underlying common dichotomy, in a broad sense, shared among all authors: internal and external validity. In the context of this study, with regard to surveys, internal validity refers to "the rigour of measurement", i.e. "the concepts one sets out to measure, and are actually measured"; whereas external validity refers to "the validity of the survey beyond the study", i.e. "its generalisability, both to the population, and across contexts" (Wiersma, 2012: 2).

Accordingly, the internal validity of this survey lay in whether the questions included in the questionnaire could effectively explain the professional issues that the survey aimed to research, i.e. the factors and actual practices that could influence the quality of subtitling output. To this end, in order to ensure that the questions would adequately address the issues under discussion and that they could easily be understood by respondents, the questionnaire was scrutinised by various professionals and scholars, and underwent revisions before its final design was

adopted. Pilot testing was also conducted, not only to assure the comprehensibility of the questions and the Mandarin translations of the questionnaire, but also to verify the practicality of questionnaire length and to reveal any technical problems associated with the online survey tool. Through the process stated above, internal validity was assessed, enhanced, and subsequently established. More details concerning pre-testing and piloting are discussed in section 4.6.1.

The external validity of this study depends on the extent to which the results of the survey could be generalised to the target population represented by the survey sample, i.e. subtitlers in general for the first survey round and subtitlers whose working languages involve Mandarin for the second survey round. The generalisability of this study, to which Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998: 710) refer as 'inference transferability', is thereby a crucial criterion to measure its validity. One aspect should be noted, however. The first round survey was undertaken in order to explore a profession that is relatively unknown and to gain a glimpse of the working conditions under which subtitlers perform their activities in different countries. Hence, it was anticipated that the findings would be limited to providing an overall insight into the industry in general, with the possibility of acquiring a more detailed picture of those regions and countries where the samples were more representative. Thus, despite the arguable limitation to the generalisability of the survey results, the findings could, to some extent, be transferable to other populations on a region-by-region or country-by-country basis. The second survey round is subject to similar constraints, whereby the generalisability of its findings will only be viable under certain premises. These limitations are further discussed in Chapter Seven (section 7.3).

In contrast with validity, the parameter of reliability, as defined by Creswell (2003: 195), is "the benchmark for evaluating the stability or consistency of responses in the research". In the context of this study, consistency relates to the questionnaires

being clear and well-defined, without being confusing or misleading the respondents, so that if the survey was to be repeated, the same or similar results could be expected. As mentioned when discussing the validity of the study, pre-testing was conducted to enhance the precision and consistency of the survey (see section 4.6.4). The reliability of the translated questionnaires, from English into Mandarin, used in the second round was also assessed and improved with the input of several informants based in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, who proofread the translations and ensured that the most appropriate wording was used (see section 4.5).

As LeCompte and Goetz (1982: 32) state, validity is concerned with "the accuracy of scientific findings" while reliability is concerned with "the replicability of scientific findings". Although different, validity presupposes reliability. As Wiersman (2012: 2-3) argues, if the sets of questions or the instruments are not reliable indicators of what they attempt to measure, they simply "cannot guarantee that one measures what one thinks one does". In line with this, validity and reliability are thereby the central criteria in establishing the value and trustworthiness of a design enquiry, as well as the quality of a research project. Great efforts have been made to secure the validity and reliability of this study, of which more details are discussed in the following section.

4.6 Questionnaire Design

Building upon the consideration of validity and reliability presented in section 4.5, the questionnaire survey was designed with reference to a number of related survey reports previously conducted on the translation industry, including the *Comparative Income of Literary Translators in Europe* published in 2008 by the Conseil Européen

des Associations de Traducteurs Littéraires, and the unpublished MA dissertation entitled *A Quantitative Study on Subtitling Rates*, produced by Reyntjens in 2005.

This section begins with an introduction to the questionnaire structure and question content, followed by discussions on the necessity of providing respondents from the second round of the survey with the option to fill in the questionnaires in Mandarin, and the decision on the format of the various questions included in the questionnaire. With regard to how the questions were enhanced, refined and verified through pre-testing and piloting, details are discussed in the last subsection 4.6.4.

4.6.1 Questionnaire Structure and Question Content

Despite knowing that the response rates could not be gauged in this study, it was still hoped that a keen participatory interest would be aroused through a well-designed questionnaire and a well orchestrated dissemination campaign. As Sapsford (1999) asserts, many empirical studies show that low response rates are constantly due to participants being unable to understand the questionnaire. This foregrounds the impersonal nature of this method and reflects one of the disadvantages of Internet-based research, i.e. the difficulty of ensuring remote participants' comprehension of the instructions and materials (Reips, 2002). Many scholars also discuss how online surveys can be plagued by usability, display, sampling or technology problems (Dillman and Bowker, 2001; Smyth et al., 2007). Each small design element can cumulatively have a large negative effect on a respondent's willingness to complete a survey, so every effort has been taken to ensure that this Internet-based study is designed appropriately to reach as many respondents as possible.

Several design factors are often placed at the beginning of an online survey to help the target respondents stay motivated and engaged in the process. Reips (2000) proposes a package of procedures, with 'the high entrance barrier technique' used to provoke early dropout and ensure continued participation if a respondent decides to take part in the survey. Drawing from Reips (ibid.: 110-111), the techniques that have been applied to this study are listed below:

- tell participants that participation is serious, and that science needs good data;
- personalise – ask for e-mail address and/or phone numbers […];
- be credible: tell them who you are, and your institutional affiliation;
- tell them how long the web experiment will take; and
- prepare them for any sensitive aspects of your experiment (e.g. you will be asked about your financial situation).

Tuten (2010: 186) also provides the following guidelines for the type of information that should be included in the invitation for an online survey, all of which have been used in this study:

- address the invitation to the prospective respondent;
- identify the organisation(s) conducting the study to establish credibility;
- state the purpose of the study and its importance;
- give assurances of confidentiality or anonymity;
- explain how the prospective respondent was chosen;
- emphasise the importance of the response to the study's success;
- if an incentive will be offered, explain the terms of the offer;
- explain the study's time frame, including details on the closing date of the survey and incentive awards;
- note the approximate time commitment required to complete the survey;
- acknowledge likely reasons for nonparticipation to defuse them;
- embed a link to the survey URL;
- provide contact information for respondents who wish to enquire about the study, the researcher's qualifications, Institutional Review Board (IRB), or any other issues related to the study; and
- include an advance 'thank you' statement that assumes participant cooperation.

As discussed previously, the questionnaire survey has been formally conducted twice in this study, and the same questionnaire was used in both rounds, with the only difference being in the sampling. The first round was open to any subtitler in the world, whose working languages could be any language pair, whilst the second

round was focused on those whose working languages (or at least one, if there were more than two) included Mandarin (see section 4.7). The above techniques and guidelines were adhered to in both rounds, although there were slight differences in the information presented in the introductions. Both began by stating the purpose of the study and the importance of the research, followed by a statement indicating that the survey was supported by a number of translators and subtitlers associations. An assurance of anonymity and appreciation for participation were also included. The names of the nine associations (see section 4.7) that lend their support to the survey were listed in the first round, along with the names of their chairpersons (with their consent), all of which were itemised at the bottom of the introduction. The healthy number of the total responses received reflects that this modus operandi substantially helped to establish the credibility of the survey.

When survey links were issued via email or when the information was posted on websites, an invitation message was also included specifying the approximate time needed to complete the questionnaire, the confidentiality of the information provided and the closing date. Furthermore, the explicit title, 'Survey on Subtitling Rates and Working Conditions of Subtitlers', was placed on top of the first page in the first round, so that the potential respondents could immediately comprehend the survey objective and had a rough idea about what kind of information might be requested from them. Despite the fact that the same questionnaire was used for both rounds, the title used in the second round was slightly modified to 'Survey on Subtitling Rates and Working Conditions of Subtitlers Translating From and To Mandarin' in order to provide distinct information on the target population being addressed. As mentioned before, respondents of the second round were offered the opportunity to respond the survey in English or to use the translated questionnaire in Mandarin instead (see section 4.6.2). In addition, brief information regarding the support received in the previous round and its results was added to the introduction of the second round, in an attempt to increase the uptake of the survey.

Concerning the body of the questionnaire,[13] the questions were grouped into six broad sections:

(1) personal information: questions 1-6;

(2) general information: questions 7-18;

(3) rates: questions 19-27;

(4) clients and deadlines: questions 28-46;

(5) software and support material: questions 47-54; and

(6) quality: questions 55-68.

Grouping related questions together can make it easier for respondents to answer, and also raises the likelihood of their answers being well thought-out. As Dillman et al. (2009: 157) assert, switching between topics is more likely to "evoke top-of-the-head responses". Ordering the questions in a logical manner and sequence is thus a critical part of questionnaire design. Hence, the survey commences with a set of broad questions, ranging from question 1 to 18, gathering personal and general information about the respondents, and becomes progressively narrower in scope, which is what Oppenheim (1992: 110) dubs the 'funnel approach'.

Through the questions, personal information was gathered in relation to the respondent's gender, age, nationality, level of studies, acquisition of qualification in translation and subtitling, alongside general information such as the respondent's main SL and TL, whether they mainly work into their mother tongue, experience of working out of mother tongue, the country in which they are based, the country where their typical client/commissioner is based, number of years of working

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[13] The English version of the full questionnaire can be found in Appendix 3, the traditional Chinese version in Appendix 4, and the simplified Chinese version in Appendix 5.

experience in subtitling, whether they only work in subtitling (if not, what percentage subtitling work accounts for in terms of total output), whether their subtitling output has changed in the past five years prior to the time they completed the survey, and their main fields of subtitling work. In terms of questions regarding rates, respondents were asked to provide information on their main currency for invoices, who decides the rates and the terms and conditions of payment, ranges paid for different unit rates (e.g. rate per subtitle, rate per programme minute, etc.) in accordance with types of task (e.g. translating, spotting, proofreading, etc.), the typical terms and conditions of payment, and the punctuality of the payment.

With reference to the information concerning clients and deadlines, questions include the percentage of time spent working directly with a client or via a translation agency, the approximate number of regular clients, work location, notice given prior to receiving an assignment, time allowed for an assignment according to types of task, whether there are situations when a job has not materialised after contact, whether different rates are paid according to the genre of programme (e.g. TV, films, documentaries, etc.) and which genre paid highest and lowest, whether any changes in the interaction with clients was noted after the economic downturn, and practices in relation to signing a contract, acknowledgement credits and royalties.

With regard to the software and support materials section, questions seek to gather information on the availability of subtitling equipment and other support material (e.g. language guidelines, video clips, consistency sheets, etc.). At the end of the survey, the focus shifts to quality issues, encapsulating the essence of the questionnaire, with the questions designed to explore potential factors that can influence the quality of subtitling output such as the quality of provided support materials and the subtitlers' intention to attain high quality when considering the level of paid rates and the urgency of deadlines, and whether they are granted

access to the final version of their work. Question 68, the last question, also allows the respondent to state any comments they would like to add, in relation to the survey or to the profession.

Despite the same questionnaire being used for both rounds of the survey, due to the differing target populations, respondents from the second round were provided with three language options for the survey questionnaire; details are discussed in the following section.

4.6.2 Translation of the Questionnaire

Translation of the survey questionnaire was not a consideration in the first round and it was only distributed in English, since, as Pedersen (2011: 2) highlights, this is "by far the most common source language for interlingual subtitling in non-Anglophone Europe", and thus the target populations were very likely to be proficient in English. However, in the second round of the survey, the decision was taken to translate the questionnaire into Mandarin Chinese, both Traditional and Simplified. Despite many Chinese-speaking countries in Asia being heavily influenced by the US and Europe, particularly via the mass media and popular culture, the growing influence of Japan and South Korea on these countries cannot be neglected. With the burgeoning popularity of Japanese, Korean and even Thai TV dramas, it is expected that some subtitlers may only work in Mandarin Chinese and another Asian language, without using English as one of their working languages. Thus, it was considered that willingness to complete the survey might decrease if solely a English version of the survey was provided. Accordingly, three versions of the questionnaire were available: English, Traditional Chinese and Simplified Chinese.

The translated questionnaires used the same questions and offered the same response options as the English source text. As Acquadro et al. (1996: 575) stress, a common interpretation and analysis of the results is only possible if new data comes from the same instrument. In this sense, a close rendering of the source questionnaire is expected to elicit further information from a different group of people, but address the same issues, allowing for a richer data comparison. However, even though a 'close rendering' is possible, the communicative functions may not be well retained (Hambleton, 1993; Hulin, 1987; Van de Vijver and Leung, 1997). In some contexts, the need to find new culture-specific equivalents can be evident, as Harkness and Schoua-Glusberg (1998: 104) indicate. The decision was then taken to resort to covert translations, i.e. indirect translations, allowing the converted versions to read more naturally.

Meanwhile, an explanatory note was used on occasion to ensure that a certain meaning would be correctly perceived when a direct rendering seemed necessary or when the covert rendering could still lead to confusion. For example, one of the options included in question 4 concerning the education level of participants is 'further education level,' which could be somewhat vague no matter whether translated overtly or covertly, due to the differences in educational systems. Therefore, through discussions with several informants based in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, two translations were adopted in Traditional and Simplified Chinese respectively: 進修推廣教育文憑 [further education diploma] and 延续教育文凭 [continuing education diploma]. A note providing a definition of 'further education' was also inserted below the question in order to enhance the clarity of the potential answers and to avoid collecting invalid or incorrect data.

After having discussed the questionnaire structure, with reference to content as well as the translation of the questionnaire, the following section will further elaborate

on the format used to present those questions stated in section 4.6.1 and the reasons behind the choice.

4.6.3 Question Format

As briefly mentioned in section 4.4, use of an appropriate format for the questions can help reduce the drawback of an online survey being perceived as too impersonal or detached. The pros and cons of different question formats and the rationale for the choices made in this survey are discussed below.

There are two main types of question format: open-ended and closed-ended. The former "provide a blank space or box where respondents type or write in their response using their own words (or numbers)" (Dillman et al., 2009:72), whereas the latter allow respondents to choose from a list of provided answer choices. The main strength of open-ended questions, according to Frazer and Lawley (2000), is that they can cater to those who like to answer in their own words and they also allow the respondent to express themselves freely, without limiting their response. Accordingly, this format is eminently suitable when the goal is to measure the attitudes of respondents, to collect rich, detailed information, and to explore a topic for which little information is known ahead of time (Dillman et al., 2009; Geer, 2001). Nevertheless, there are some limitations to open-ended questions too. According to Harrison (2010: 510), many respondents tend to skip over open-ended questions in self-administered surveys, presumably because they find them tedious or too time onerous. And even when the questions are answered, the responses are often short and may yield little value for the researcher. Despite the possibility of questions being made mandatory in online surveys, an excessive number of open-ended questions can still lead to an increase in the dropout rates (Crawford et al., 2001:

187). Hence, notwithstanding their advantages, open-ended questions must be used with discretion.

Regarding closed-ended questions, their main strength lies in the fact that they enable the researcher to produce aggregated data within a short time, as well as facilitating the ulterior data analysis process (Boynton and Greenhalgh, 2004). This question format comes in a multitude of forms, with the most common types being multiple choice, check-all-that-apply, ranking, etc. Closed-ended questions, being conclusive in nature, are advisable when the researcher intends to generate data that is easily quantifiable, when a set of possible answer choices is known beforehand, and when there is a substantial number of questions to ask in a limited time frame (Dillman et al., 2009; Waltz et al., 2010). One major concern with closed-ended questions is that the range of possible answers is decided by the researcher and not the respondent, with potential responses less likely to be as rich as those obtained from open-ended questions (Boynton and Greenhalgh, 2004). Therefore, the validity of the answers relies on whether the researcher has an adequate understanding of the research topic and on how the questions relate to the overall research problem.

As already mentioned, the present survey aims to gain an insight into the working environment of subtitlers and the realities of the subtitling industry, particularly those related to quality issues. In order to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the potential factors closely linked to the quality of subtitling output and to gain qualitative information that could help probe the potential reasons for the current state of affairs, 68 questions were included in the survey, as stated in section 4.6.1. Furthermore, as discussed, given the length of the questionnaire, the closed-ended question format has been deemed to be more applicable, particularly in terms of engaging the respondents and preventing them from quitting the survey before finishing it. Closed-ended questions also facilitate the process of categorising

respondents into groups according to the answers they selected during the initial data analysis phase. However, as highlighted by some authors, this question format can limit the scope of the information provided by the respondents, thus making it impossible to elicit more information from them, especially regarding their feelings and attitudes towards the questions. Hence, an 'other' response was added where appropriate in the questionnaire to allow those respondents whose answers would not fit into any of the provided response categories to specify one that applied to them. This question format is what Dillman et al. (2009: 75) call "partially closed", a hybrid of the open- and closed-ended formats. Three quarters of the questionnaire consisted of partially closed questions, with comment boxes also used moderately to elicit additional information and add richness to the quantitative data. An open-ended question, "Please feel free to provide any comments" (Question 68), was also placed at the end of the questionnaire so that the respondents could remark further on the survey, as well as give supplementary details to their answers to previous questions.

4.6.4 Pre-testing and Piloting

As Boynton (2004: 1372) reasons, "[q]uestionnaires tend to fail because participants don't understand them, can't complete them, get bored or offended by them, or dislike how they look". Feedback for enhancing and refining questions obtained via pre-testing and piloting of the questionnaire can be of valuable assistance in inviting richer responses. It is therefore suggested that before a survey is launched, it should be pre-tested and piloted on participants who are representative of the definitive sample.

In the present study, the survey underwent various pre-tests, with the questions being revisited, developed and further enhanced through meetings and

correspondence with a dozen scholars and experienced subtitlers from the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation (ESIST) and the Subtitlers' Association (SUBTLE), ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the questionnaire. Drafted questions were reworded, reshuffled and reorganised at this stage, with the number of questions reduced to 68 from 71. Based on the feedback from the informants at a later stage of pre-testing, the time needed to complete the survey was estimated to be around 15 minutes, depending on whether further comments were added to the questions. Pilot testing was later conducted on a small sample of five freelance subtitlers to ensure applicability. This phase mainly tested whether the questionnaire was easy to complete, verified that the questions could be understood and checked whether the identified time frame for completion was realistic, as recommended by Ballinger and Davey (1998: 549).

Robson (2011: 239) also emphasises that the reliability and validity of survey data depends, to a substantial extent, on the technical proficiency of those conducting the survey. That is to say, not only are incomprehensible or ambiguous questions an issue, but experiencing technical difficulties when interacting with an online survey can also result in internal validity problems. As a consequence, the obtained information may not be fruitful enough to reveal the genuine opinions and feelings of the respondents, invalidating the findings to some extent. A couple of technical issues were detected during pilot testing. The main problem was that all the questions had initially been set as compulsory, leading one informant to point out that such a setting would lead to respondents who answered Question 47 with 'never' being forced to answer Questions 48 to 51, which did not apply to them. Hence, filter settings were added to trigger the logical action that would allow the respondents to skip certain questions and directly take them to those that did apply.

After completing the process of pre-testing and piloting, the survey was then launched on the online survey site, SurveyGizmo. The rationale for this choice is discussed in the next section.

4.7 Survey Distribution and Data Collection

The rationale for choosing an online questionnaire as the main research method and for using online survey tool as the instrument has been discussed in section 4.4. This section will begin by stating the reason for launching the survey on SurveyGizmo, one among many other providers of this service, and later focus on the distribution of the survey and on data collection.

There are many popular online survey sites such as SurveyMonkey, SurveyGizmo, and Zoomerang. One of the main reasons for choosing SurveyGizmo is that the free service option it provides does not limit the number of questions, which was an overwhelming advantage due to the size of this survey questionnaire. SurveyMonkey has a limit of 10 and Zoomerang allows only 30 questions. In addition, SurveyGizmo allows 250 responses per month without charge, while the basic service for the other two providers has a response limit of 100. No matter which survey site is chosen, one must pay to enjoy the advanced features and support they all offer. Another advantage exclusive to SurveyGizmo is that data is never deleted, which is important when the scope of a research project is relatively vast and more time than anticipated may be required for a thorough data analysis. Hence, based on the above reasons, SurveyGizmo was chosen for this study.

As mentioned, this survey has received significant support from members of the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation (ESIST) and the Subtitlers'

Association (SUBTLE) during the stages of revising the questionnaire structure and refining the questions. A significant number of translators' and subtitlers' associations joined later in and provided substantial assistance by recommending the survey and distributing the questionnaire to other professionals in the industry. These associations include the Spanish Asociación de Traducción y Adaptación Audiovisual de España (ATRAE, www.atrae.org), the Italian Associazione Italiana Dialoghisti Adattatori Cinetelevisivi (AIDAC, www.aidac.it), the French Association des Traducteurs et Adaptateurs de l'Audiovisuel (ATAA, www.traducteurs-av.org), the Danish Union of Journalists, the Dutch association of subtitlers Beroepsvereniging van Zelfstandige Ondertitelaars (BZO, http://bzo-ondertitelaars.nl), the Forum for Finnish Subtitlers (www.av-kaantajat.fi), and the Polish association of audiovisual translators Stowarzyszenie Tłumaczy Audiowizualnych (STAW, www.staw.org.pl). The announcement for the first survey round was posted on the official websites of these associations and on other professional forums and bulletin boards such as TRAducciones de Guiones (TRAG, http://xcastro.com/trag), the Spanish Lista de traductores audiovisuales, and the professional forum of the Arabic Translation and Intercultural Dialogue Association (ATIDA, www.atida.org). In addition, email invitations featuring the survey link were sent through the mailing lists of the Translation Studies Unit at Imperial College London – TransInter (https://mailman.ic.ac.uk/mailman/admin/transinter) and TransGroup (https://mailman.ic.ac.uk/mailman/admin/transgroup) – to the faculty, students, alumni, contacts in other academic organisations and relevant professional bodies.

There were slight differences in the survey distribution channels between the first and the second round due to the distinctions between the targeted populations. Compared to Western countries, the subtitling industry in Mandarin-speaking communities is relatively immature, with subtitling far from being an established profession, despite receiving increased attention. There are some related associations, such as the Taiwan Association of Translation and Interpretation (TATI,

www.taiwantati.org) and the Translators Association of China (TAC, www.tac-online.org.cn/en), among others, but most are limited to the domestic level and they also place more emphasis on traditional language transfer forms, such as literary translation and interpreting.

With growing attention being paid to the development of the translation industry, the very first international translation association focusing on Asia – Association of Asian Translation Industry (AATI, http://aati.asia) – was established in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2012. This association comprises 13 member countries and regions (as of the date of writing in 2013): Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. Concerning Taiwan, there are significant difficulties still associated with joining international associations because of the intervention of China and the various political sensitivities in diplomatic relationships. Hence, due to the limited support that could be expected from strong professional networks in the region, a greater effort was made when distributing the questionnaire for the second round of the survey, as discussed in the following paragraph.

In the second round, tailored email invitations were sent out individually to course leaders of subtitling and translation programmes at universities attended by students who mainly translate to and from Mandarin, including those based in the UK, Taiwan, China, Macau, Hong Kong, Canada, the US, and Australia. These channels, however, were later identified as less effective than others, with the main reason being, as pointed out by a couple of respondents, that most of their students had little working experience in subtitling despite taking the module, and with teachers only offering the course and not (or no longer) working for the industry. In addition to email invitations, contact was also made with some freelance translators via their own professional blogs. Two of these contacts offered substantial help by posting information on their blogs or fan pages to further raise the visibility of the

survey. One of them is 'An interpreter, going SOHO' (www.facebook.com/goingsoho?fref=ts), a fan page on Facebook created by a blogger who mainly provides interpreting services on a freelance basis, but who also works with other forms of translation. Information about the survey was not only posted on the fan page, but also on the blogger's personal Facebook page, which is also followed by many of her colleagues. The other site is 'tPro' (www.tpro.ebiz.tw), a well-established web platform for translators of all kinds, run by a group of passionate professionals with the ultimate aim of raising the profile of translators, interpreters and language professionals in Taiwan. The survey information was posted on the website under the 'latest news' section (www.tpro.ebiz.tw/news_detial.php?news_id=382), where a summary of the results from the first round of the survey was also available for visitors to download in PDF format. It was hoped that by sharing some of the previous survey results, not only the trustworthiness of the survey could be established but also concerns about privacy issues among potential respondents would be mitigated. As Cho and LaRose (1999) suggest, if a survey message and summaries of previous survey results can be provided through online community leaders, it is more likely that the credibility of the survey will be promptly established. tPro also helped boost the exposure of the survey message by posting the information on its Facebook fan page (www.facebook.com/transpro) at regular intervals.

Concerning data collection periods, the first survey round was launched on 11th May 2010 with an initial deadline set on 30th June 2010, allowing respondents ample time to complete the questionnaire. However, the actual closing date for the survey was eventually extended until 31st October 2010 because several respondents missed the initial deadline but made contact with the researcher and expressed a strong wish to participate in the survey. Their keen attitude towards the survey implied that they were more likely to provide valid responses and additional information in the free text boxes. The second survey round was launched on 26th March 2013 with an extended deadline to 5th June 2013; the extension was implemented because the

Easter break fell between March and April, when many people do not read or forward emails. A couple of respondents replied to the survey invitation after the first deadline had passed, but still expressed willingness to help forward the email invitation if the deadline could be extended. Hence, despite having resorted to a web-based data collection instrument which was in theory able to significantly shorten the field research period when information was gathered, more time was actually allowed in order to collect as many responses as possible.

Details concerning the participation of respondents and the number of replies received are accommodated in Chapter Five (section 5.2). In the following section, data analysis procedures are elaborated, before moving to the findings chapter.

4.8 Data Analysis Procedures

As mentioned in section 4.4, ease of data analysis is one of the key strengths of a web-based survey. The online survey platform used for this study, SurveyGizmo, offers built-in data analysis tools for basic evaluation and reporting options, including exporting data to Excel/CSV, generating a summary report and using filters to show a subset of the survey responses, which greatly facilitated the data analysis process. A filter was created during the initial stage to separate incomplete and complete responses so that the completed questionnaires could be retained for validity checking, with the responses further examined individually. A couple of responses were later screened out due to the unusual quality of some of the answers. For example, one respondent's answer to Question 23, regarding subtitling rates when time-cueing and translating into one's main language, was an hourly rate of €800 as the lowest rate ever paid, with the original script provided; most of the other respondents' responses in the same currency fell between €20 and €25. This

could be a typo or be a result of misunderstanding or misreading the question. In any case, extreme answers as this one were excluded from the discussion because their validity was highly questionable.

A computerised summary report was then generated from the valid responses to provide a complete picture of the survey results. Further analyses were conducted in accordance with the different sections of the questionnaire, with the aid of statistical tools such as Excel and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Some statistical techniques, such as cross-tabulation, were used to cross-examine the data and identify causal relationships. For example, in order to examine the relationship between rate negotiation power and the subtitling experience of the respondents, a crosstab was first constructed and, based on this, an exponential graph was drawn with Excel to show relationships (see Chapter Five, Figure 23). This process was also repeated for the second survey round.

After the exploratory data analyses were conducted, based on the data sets, qualitative data were used to supplement and illustrate the quantitative results, providing more detailed information on the addressed issues. For instance, for Question 42, 19% of the respondents from the first survey round indicated that their preference for acknowledgement credits would vary depending on the situation. The quantitative data for this preference, however, were unable to provide explanations for such an answer. Hence, descriptive data were examined to probe their concerns surrounding those times when they would prefer not to the credited. Comparisons between the two survey rounds have also been drawn when appropriate in order to examine and further explain discrepancies in the results. Based on these, potential implications for the industry and for the training of future subtitlers are discussed. Further details are provided in section 6.2 and section 6.3.

With regard to both the exploratory and descriptive information, the data collected via the questionnaire survey paved the way towards determining the crux of the quality issues that concern professionals, providing a very solid base for the analysis carried out in Chapters Six and Seven. The survey results from the two rounds of questionnaires are presented in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five

Findings

5.1 Introduction

The findings of the questionnaire survey are presented in this chapter, beginning with an introduction to the survey and followed by discussions on rates, negotiation power, royalties, acknowledgement credits, notices and deadlines, contracts and the materialisation of jobs, available software, and support material. Further analysis concerning subtitling quality from these perspectives will be included in Chapter 6.

5.2 Participation

As stated in Chapter 4, the survey was conducted twice, with the first round open to all subtitlers around the world. The second focused on those whose working languages include Chinese, i.e. Mandarin, whether as a source language (SL) or as a target language (TL). The final population of respondents in the first round comprised 429 valid replies, with 758 responses being discarded. In the second round, 49 valid replies were received while 189 responses were abandoned. The responses were deleted mostly because they were incomplete or were futile attempts before final submission; in some cases, random and inapplicable answers were filled in, albeit the questionnaires were completed.

General information from participants from the two rounds of surveys, such as their nationalities, ages, working language pairs, education levels, qualifications and so on, will be discussed in the following sections.

5.2.1 First Round of Surveys

As outlined in Chapter Four, the first round of surveys was open to all subtitlers, irrespective of their country of operation or language combination(s). The final population of respondents comprised 429 valid replies submitted by professionals dwelling in the following 39 countries[14]: Argentina (1.9%), Australia (0.9%), Austria (1.2%), Belgium (2.6%), Brazil (2.6%), Canada (2.3%), Chile (0.2%), China (including Hong Kong) (0.9%), Croatia (0.7%), Czech Republic (1.2%), Denmark (6.3%), Estonia (0.2%), Finland (9.8%), France (6.5%), Germany (5.8%), Greece (2.8%), Hungary (0.2%), Iran (0.5%), Israel (0.2%), Italy (4.0%), Netherlands (12.3%), New Zealand (0.2%), Norway (5.6%), Poland (1.4%), Portugal (1.6%), Republic of Ireland (0.2%), Romania(1.4%), Serbia (0.5%), Slovakia (1.9%), Slovenia (0.5%), Spain (6.3%), Sweden (1.9%), Switzerland (0.2%), Taiwan (0.5%), Thailand (0.2%), Turkey (0.9%), United Kingdom (11.9%), United States (1.4%) and Venezuela (0.5%). The overwhelming majority of subtitlers (87.7%) were from the European continent, and the rest were distributed all over the world, except Africa. The Figure 19 shows the distribution map of respondents from the first round.

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[14] Concerning the question regarding countries where respondents were based, the total count is 430 instead of 429 because one respondent was based in two countries.

Figure 19: Response distribution map of the first round

The clients or commissioners identified by the respondents also came from numerous geographical areas, which were approximately the same as the sample distribution for subtitlers, as shown in Figure 19. The results also reveal that in the case of 17.5% of the respondents, their main clients/commissioners were based in more than one country, in line with the globalisation trend found in many other professions nowadays.

The respondents translated from 20 SLs; 83% mainly translated from English, foregrounding the predominant position of this language in the audiovisual industry. A total of 36 respondents worked from more than one main SL, i.e. they usually translated from a couple of languages; thus the total count is 465 instead of 429. Details concerning the SLs are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Main SLs of the first round

Language	Count
English	357
French	31
German	22
Spanish	13
Italian	9
Dutch	6

continued

Swedish	5
Danish	3
Norwegian	3
Arabic	2
Chinese	2
Finnish	2
Portuguese	2
Russian	2
Czech	1
Frisian	1
Hindi	1
Japanese	1
Persian	1
Turkish	1

As to the TL, respondents primarily translated into 30 languages in total. Ten respondents used two main working languages; therefore, the total count is 437. Details concerning the TLs are shown in the table below.

Table 3: Main TLs of the first round

Language	Count
Dutch	66
English	57
Finnish	41
French	35
Spanish	35
Danish	28
German	27
Norwegian	25
Italian	21
Portuguese	20
Swedish	15
Greek	14
Romanian	8
Slovak	7
Polish	6
Czech	5
Chinese	4
Catalan	3
Croatian	3
Turkish	3
Arabic	2
Persian	2

continued

Serbian	2
Slovenian	2
Estonian	1
Flemish	1
Galician	1
Hebrew	1
Hungarian	1
Russian	1

Translation into their mother tongues or main languages seemed to be the norm, with 418 (97.4%) of the 429 respondents subtitling routinely in this linguistic direction. This result supports the traditional view that translators should translate only into their mother tongues, as the essence and flavour of the target language is more likely to be attained by native speakers. Translation into non-mother tongues is an activity that is frowned upon and considered to be doomed to failure by many scholars (Dickins et al., 2002; Duff, 1981). As Newmark (1988: 3) argues, translating into one's language of habitual use is "the only way [one can] translate naturally, accurately and with maximum effectiveness"; a mantra that has been traditionally embraced by numerous scholars and professionals. However, the situation may be changing in the audiovisual industry according to the survey results, as a substantive 37.8% of the respondents highlighted the fact that they were asked to work outside of their mother tongues or main languages to a varying degree (from 'sometimes' to 'always'), as shown in Figure 20.
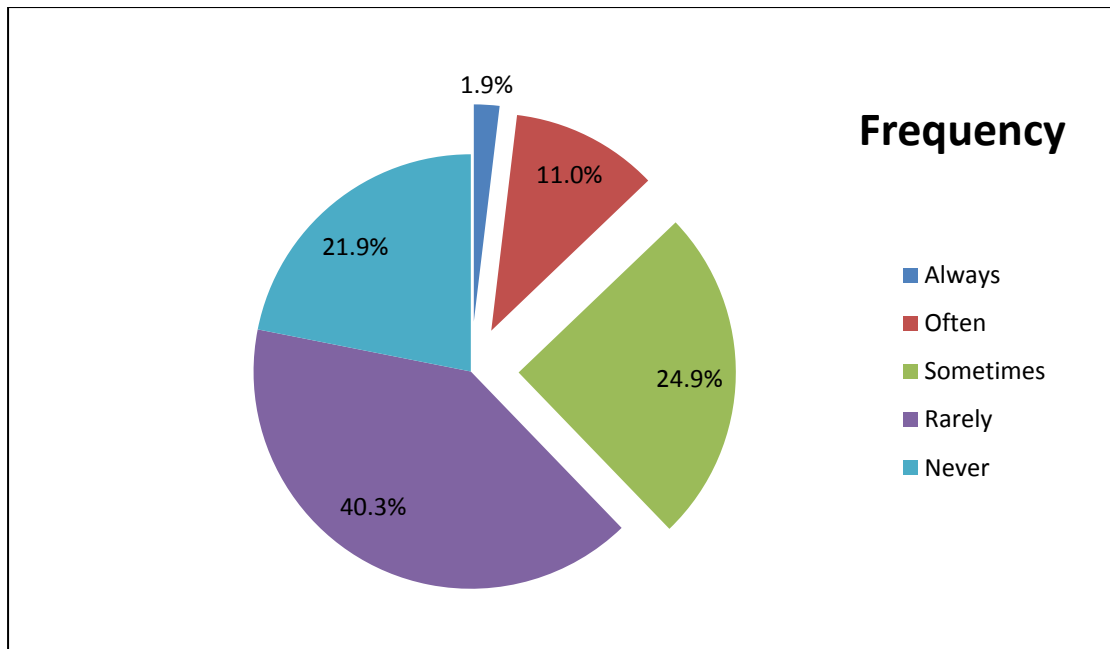
Figure 20: Frequency of working out of mother tongues in the first round

The gender ratio of the respondents was close to 25% male and 75% female. Among participants, 55.7% were aged 25-40, 34.5% were aged 41-55, and the remaining 10% were either younger than 25 (2.6%) or older than 55 (7.2%) years old. Over 50% of respondents held a university degree, 35.4% a postgraduate degree, 5.8% a high school degree; only one participant's level of study was lower than high school, and the remaining 5.3% mostly either held a diploma or had studied, but did not gain a degree. As for qualifications and specialisation, 72.3% of respondents indicated that they possessed a qualification in translation and only 32.9% stated that they had achieved a specialised qualification in subtitling, which tallies with the fact that AVT training is a relatively new area in most educational institutions throughout the world.

In terms of subtitling experience, 85.1% of the respondents had been working in subtitling for at least two years, of whom 27.7% had done so for 2-5 years, 25.2% for 6-10 years, 18.4% for 11-15 years, and 13.8% for more than 15 years. A low 22.4% of the participants had specialised and worked exclusively in subtitling, while 77.6% did it as part of their portfolio and also accepted other forms of translation assignments.

With regard to the respondents' main fields of work in subtitling, the top three were, in decreasing order, 'TV series and sitcoms', 'films', and 'documentaries'.

5.2.2 Second Round of Surveys

The second round of surveys targeted subtitlers whose working languages included Mandarin, either as SL or TL. The final population of respondents comprised 49 valid replies from professionals dwelling in numerous countries around the world, with the majority (69.4%) from Taiwan and others from Canada (2%), China (including Hong Kong and Macau) (12.2%), Singapore (2%), Sweden (2%), the United Kingdom (8.2%) and the United States (4.1%). The geographical areas where the respondents' main clients or commissioners were based also corresponded with the sample distribution of subtitlers; yet, with the significant addition of India, a country which in recent years has become a prominent nerve centre in AVT, thanks to the fact that numerous companies in the field have set up offices in Bangalore. The results further indicate that six respondents from Taiwan not only worked with clients/commissioners based in Taiwan, but also in Hong Kong, where traditional Chinese characters are also used for subtitles. Furthermore, among the six, there was one respondent who worked with clients/commissioners across multiple Chinese-speaking countries. The finding may imply that the nature of the Mandarin market is more intricate, with subtitlers working with the same language, yet tackling the subtle nuances that differ from country to country and region to region.

The SLs from which the respondents mainly translated included Simplified Chinese,[15] Traditional Chinese (8.1%), English (77.6%), French (4.1%), Japanese (8.2%), and

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[15] A respondent based in Sweden indicated her second main SL is Simplified Chinese in the comment box, thus the answer was not included in the count.

Spanish (2%). The results, along with those from the first round, affirm the predominant position of the English language as the SL in the audiovisual industry. The main TLs included Simplified Chinese (18.4%), Traditional Chinese (71.4%), English (8.2%), and Swedish (2%). In this sense, the results were, to some degree, more representative of the English-to-Traditional Chinese subtitling market, and mainly exemplified the situation in Taiwan. Concerning the convention of translators working into their mother tongues, the related practice in the Chinese-speaking countries seemed to comply with the traditional view, with 91.8% of the respondents usually working into their mother tongues or main languages.

The respondents were composed of 11 males and 38 females, a similar gender ratio to that of the first round, clearly pointing to the feminisation of the profession around the globe. Concerning the respondents' ages, 77.6% were aged 25-40, 12.2% were younger than 25 years old, 8.2% were aged 41-55, and 2% were older than 55. When compared with the first round, the sample was relatively younger in the second round. Of these, 75.5% of the respondents possessed a postgraduate degree,[16] and the remaining 24.5% had achieved a university degree.

Regarding qualifications, fewer than half (40.8%) of the respondents held a qualification in translation, and only 8.1% had acquired a qualification in subtitling. Compared with the first round, the percentages of respondents with qualifications in the second round were significantly lower (72.3% vs 40.8% and 32.9% vs 8.1%), as shown in Figure 21. This may be seen as an indication of the relatively immature state of the development in translation and particularly subtitling, both as a discipline and a profession, in Chinese-speaking communities.

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[16] This includes one respondent who at the time of the questionnaire was studying a postgraduate degree and taking a subtitling course.
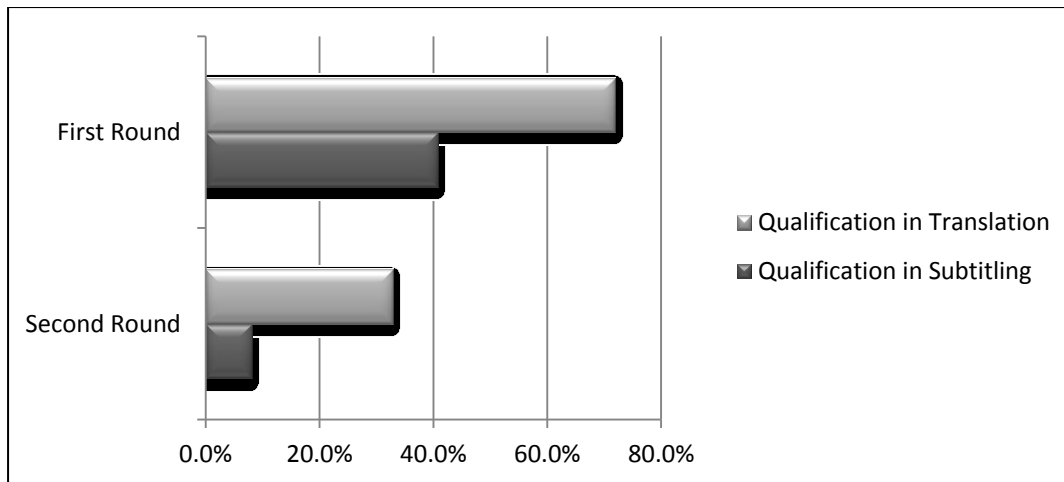
Figure 21: Respondents' qualification in translation and subtitling

Concerning subtitling experience, 55.1% of respondents had been working in subtitling for at least two years, of whom 34.7% had done so for 2-5 years, 14.3% for 6-10 years, and 6.1% for 11-15 years; a substantial 44.9% had fewer than two years of experience. The sample from the first round was comparatively more experienced in subtitling than that from the second round, which may be another indication of the difference in the maturity of the subtitling industry when comparing European and Chinese-speaking communities.

Regarding the output ratio in the types of translation jobs, merely 4.1% of the respondents only worked in subtitling; the majority (95.9%) also accepted other forms of translation assignments. On this topic, the disparity is even larger when compared with the previous round (i.e. 22.4% vs 77.6%). With reference to the respondents' main fields of work in subtitling, the results from the second round were similar to the previous round, as the top three types of audiovisual programme were, again in decreasing order, 'TV series and sitcoms', 'documentaries', and 'films'. The notable difference is that films moves to the third position.

5.3 Findings

In order to process the material obtained, the presentation of the findings from the two survey rounds has been divided into seven categories: rates, negotiation power, royalties, acknowledgement credits, notices and deadlines, contracts and materialisation of jobs, and software and support materials. Detailed discussions on these topics are included in the following sections.

5.3.1 Subtitling Rates

Pay rate is perhaps the fundamental criterion for accepting or declining a job offer and is therefore a crucial component of working conditions. Questions concerning remuneration were included in the survey, with the results indicating that rate levels not only varied greatly from country to country, but also from person to person. In the first round, the respondents were paid in 24 currencies in total, the main forms of legal tender being Euros (EUR: 54%), US Dollars (USD: 14%), and Pound Sterling (GBP: 9%). The Euro was the currency in which more than half of the respondents were regularly paid, and displayed the widest range of rates. Hence, the following analysis will be mainly based on the data reported in Euros, supplemented by information collected in other currencies, where relevant.

According to the various types of task performed, respondents were asked to provide their average rates, as well as the highest and lowest rates they had ever been paid based on one of the per unit prices normally applied in the industry, i.e. per programme minute, per hour, per subtitle, per 1,000 SL words, and per 1,000 TL words. Other variables have also been taken into account to reflect the complexity of the industry in this field, such as whether the script has been provided by the commissioner, or whether the subtitles are originated and require the spotting to be

done by the subtitler, or whether a template with the master subtitles has been provided by the client and the technical dimension is not required.

A summary of the subtitling rate ranges elicited in the first round is shown in the following tables. The results are displayed according to the type of task in the following order: (1) only translating from a template – Table 4; (2) only time-cueing – Table 5; and (3) time-cueing and translating – Table 6.

Table 4: Subtitling rate ranges in first round – only translating from a template

Only Translating from a Template into a Main Language					
Per Programme Minute (PPM)					
Average Rate[17]		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 15	€ 0.12	€ 22	€ 0.14	€ 10	€ 0.11
Per Hour					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 100	€ 15	€ 300	€ 21	€ 90	€ 10
Per Subtitle					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 3	€ 0.02	€ 3.90	€ 0.15	€ 2	€ 0.01
Per 1,000 SL Words					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 120	€ 15	€ 140	€ 31	€ 100	€ 12
Per 1,000 TL Words					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 280	€ 50	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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[17] Please be noted that the rates under the column titled Average Rate are not the calculated average result of the highest and lowest rates ever paid, i.e., they are from the answers directly filled in by respondents. For example, among those who provided answers to the question concerning the average subtitling rate when they were paid based on a ppm basis, the highest number included in the replies received was 15 euros and the lowest was 12 cents.

Table 4 shows the ranges of subtitling rates that respondents had received when they translated subtitles from a template into their main languages; that is, the task does not include time-cueing or spotting and the subtitler focuses solely on the linguistic transfer. If attention is paid to the range of per-programme-minute rates (ppm) it can be seen, for example, that the highest average rate reported was 15 euros and 12 cents was the lowest. As to the highest rate that clients had ever paid, the maximum amount was 22 euros while the least was 14 cents ppm. With reference to the lowest rate ever paid, the greatest amount answered was 10 euros while the minimum was down to 11 cents.

The respondent who was paid the highest average rate (known hereafter as respondent F) in the above example and her typical client were both located in France, while the respondent who received the lowest average rate (known hereafter as respondent P) was based in Portugal, the same country as her client. Both of the respondents fell into the same age category, i.e. 25-40 years, and TV series and sitcoms was the main genre in which they had been working. The major differences between them are stated as follows.

Firstly, in terms of their level of education, respondent F had achieved a doctoral degree in subtitling while respondent P held a qualification in subtitling at degree level. Secondly, regarding work experience, respondent F had more than 10 years of work experience in subtitling, while respondent P reported less than two years. Thirdly, when looking at the ratio of subtitling to other translation work, the questionnaires show that respondent F worked exclusively in subtitling, while the percentage of respondent P's total output in subtitling was in the 21-40 percent range, with a tendency to increase. Fourthly, in terms of the typical deadlines given by the clients, for a subtitling assignment requiring translation from template, the typical client of respondent F usually allowed five days for a 60-minute programme;

however, respondent P usually worked with very tight deadlines and was given only 12 hours for the subtitling of a 40-minute programme.

Considering the level of acquired qualification in subtitling, and when comparing the number of years of subtitling experience, as well as the ratio of subtitling work to total translation output, a higher level of pay rate would naturally be anticipated for respondent F. In addition, the income level of France is also generally higher than that of Portugal.[18] The survey result also confirms this logical deduction.

In this case, however, the average rate that respondent F regularly received is some 125 times more than the typical rate paid to respondent P. The difference is staggering, even when taking into account not only their work experience and qualifications, but also the economic status of the two countries where the respondents and their typical clients were located. From the perspective of economic status, France is the world's 5th largest national economy by nominal GDP as of 2010.[19] Portugal, on the other hand, is in 37th place. As of the same year, the GDP per capita of France was 39,186 U.S. dollars, whereas that of Portugal was 21,382 U.S. dollars.[20] Despite the fact that France has 1.8 times the GDP of Portugal, both countries are still categorised by the World Bank as high-income economies.[21]

Among respondents who were located in France and paid in Euros, the average per-programme-minute rates fell in the range of 2.3 to 15 euros. As to the responses in

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[18] For further details, please refer to the Income section under OECD's Better Life Index: www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/income.

[19] For further details, please see the report published by the World Bank: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GDP.pdf.

[20] For further details, please refer to the database of the World Bank: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?order=wbapi_data_value_2010+wbapi_data_value&sort=asc.

[21] For more details regarding Income Levels, please refer to the world development report by the World Bank: http://wdronline.worldbank.org/worldbank/a/incomelevel.

Euros from Portuguese subtitlers, the range was 12 cents to 2.8 euros per-programme-minute; one aspect to be noted is that the second lowest average rate in Portugal was 1.2 euros, which is 10 times higher than the lowest of 12 cents. These ranges covering the maximal and minimal rates imply the existence of extreme rates, which may be symptomatic of a somewhat dysfunctional business, even though some of these discrepancies might be seen as rare cases.

The reason for including the responses from respondents F and P in the discussion is because they serve to highlight some of the most acute issues in this industry, and also because the case of respondent P is not isolated, as there were other respondents from Portugal being paid at a similar rate level for other types of assignments. The extreme discrepancies shown by comparing the answers provided by respondent F and respondent P are just some of the many that were revealed in the survey results. It is undeniable that the country in which the subtitler works and where the typical client is located, together with the work experience and qualifications of the subtitler, the type of programme genres being subtitled, the level of difficulty of the task at hand, and the urgency of the delivery, among other variables, all contribute to the level of pay. However, the enormous differences observed, not only among, but also within countries, still indicate that the turmoil of rates in the subtitling industry is a prevalent global phenomenon.

The case of respondent P and respondent F may also suggest a potential connection between pay level and the support of unions and/or related professional bodies. In France, subtitlers are supported by Association des Traducteurs et Adaptateurs de l'Audiovisuel (www.traducteurs-av.org), a rather active and visible AVT association, whilst in Portugal no such support exists for subtitlers. This could also contribute to the fact that the range of paid rates in France is much smaller than that in Portugal. The relationship between the support of professional bodies and the negotiation power of the subtitler will be further discussed in section 5.3.2.

There are different types of tasks involved in subtitling. Sometimes the assigned duty does not necessarily include translation. The rates displayed in Table 5 are for the task of time-cueing only, which means the subtitler only needs to perform spotting without translation.

Table 5: Subtitling rate ranges in first round – only time-cueing

Only Time-Cueing					
With Script, PPM					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 12	€ 0.30	€ 8	€ 1	€ 4.20	€ 0.20
With Script, Per Hour					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 400	€ 20	€ 400	€ 55	€ 400	€ 20
With Script, Per Subtitle					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 2	€ 0.05	€ 2	€ 0.15	€ 2	€ 0.05
Without Script, PPM					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 16	€ 0.27	€ 16	€ 0.35	€ 6	€ 0.20
Without Script, Per Hour					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 240	€ 15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Without Script, Per Subtitle					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 3	€ 0.05	€ 3	€ 0.05	€ 2	€ 0.05

There are also times when subtitlers are asked to do both, i.e. time-cueing and translation; the results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Subtitling rate ranges in first round – time-cueing and translation

Time-Cueing and Translation into Main Language					
With Script, PPM					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 28.50	€ 1	€ 31	€ 1.20	€ 12	€ 0.50
With Script, Per Hour					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 400	€ 20	€ 400	€ 20	€ 200	€ 20
With Script, Per Subtitle					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 15.37	€ 0.20	€ 15.37	€ 0.26	€ 6.50	€ 0.15
With Script, Per 1,000 SL Words					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 130	N/A	€ 150	N/A	€ 100	N/A
With Script, Per 1,000 TL Words					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 130	N/A	€ 150	N/A	€ 70	N/A
Without Script, PPM					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 28.50	€ 0.18	€ 30	€ 0.18	€ 12	€ 0.12
Without Script, Per Hour					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 800	€ 28.60	€ 800	€ 28.60	€ 200	€ 22.04
Without Script, Per Subtitle					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 1.90	€ 0.21	€ 3	€ 0.21	€ 1.90	€ 0.21

Without Script, Per 1,000 SL Words					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 130	€ 15	€ 150	€ 15	€ 70	€ 15
Without Script, Per 1,000 TL Words					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 130	€ 50	€ 150	€ 50	€ 70	€ 50

In the second round, the respondents were paid in a total of six different currencies, with the most frequent being the New Taiwan Dollar (TWD: 65%), US Dollar (USD: 10%) and Chinese Yuan Renminbi (CNY: 10%). The other three currencies were Pound Sterling (GBP), Swedish Krona (SEK), and Singapore Dollar (SGD). The absence of Euros, one of the major currencies, from the survey responses may indicate the prevalence of local rates, i.e., the tendency of subtitling companies to recruit local subtitlers, especially those located in countries where the pay rate is relatively lower, in order to take advantage of the lower local rates. On the other hand, this may also hint that Europe might be lagging behind in this field in terms of extending business to the Far East; moreover, it could signify that the US has long dominated international trade in audiovisual programmes and this circumstance has not changed. Although the New Taiwan Dollar was the currency in which the majority of respondents were regularly paid, it did not cover the widest range of rates. Hence, the following analysis will not only include data encompassing New Taiwan Dollars, but also statistics in the other currencies, as shown in Table 7, 8 and 9.

Table 7: Subtitling rate ranges in second round – only translating from template

Only Translating from Template into Main Language[22]					
Per Programme Minute (PPM)					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
SEK 34	N/A	SEK 36	N/A	SEK 30	N/A
TWD 200	TWD 60	TWD 500	N/A	TWD 10	N/A
USD 8	USD 1	USD 20	USD 3.6	USD 3	USD 2
Per Hour					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
GBP 35	GBP 15	GBP 50	GBP 40	GBP 20	GBP 10
SEK 226	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SGD 20	N/A	SGD 25	N/A	SGD 15	N/A
Per Subtitle					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
TWD 8.5	TWD 7	TWD 14	N/A	TWD 7	N/A
Per 1000 SL Words					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
GBP 45	N/A	GBP 100	N/A	GBP 30	N/A
TWD 1,300	TWD 1,200	TWD 1,500	N/A	TWD 1,000	N/A
Per 1000 TL Words					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
CNY 260	N/A	CNY 300	N/A	CNY 180	N/A
TWD 2,000	N/A	TWD 2,000	N/A	TWD 800	N/A

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[22] As of 12th January 2014, the exchange rates were as follows: GBP/CNY: 9.9740; GBP/EUR: 1.2064; GBP/SEK: 10.7038; GBP/SGD: 2.0835; GBP/TWD: 49.7947; GBP/USD: 1.6487.
Source: www.xe.com/currency/gbp-british-pound

Compared with Table 4, the rate ranges in the second round shown in Table 7, on the whole, are much narrower. For example, the highest average ppm rate reported in the second round is 8 US dollars while the corresponding rate in the first round is 15 euros; the latter is nearly two and a half times higher than the former. As to the lowest value in the same category, it is one US dollar in the second round and 12 euro cents in the first round; the former is about six times higher than the latter. This may imply that the rate levels are somewhat more homogeneous in Chinese-speaking countries than in the European continent despite the fact that those highest rates in the former may only fall in the medium range of the latter.

Table 8: Subtitling rate ranges in second round – only time-cueing

Only Time-Cueing					
With Script, PPM					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
GBP 2	N/A	GBP 2.5	N/A	GBP 1.25	N/A
USD 3	N/A	USD 4	N/A	USD 2	N/A
With Script, Per Hour					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
SGD 18	N/A	SGD 20	N/A	SGD 18	N/A
Without Script, Per Hour					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
SGD 22	N/A	SGD 25	N/A	SGD 22	N/A

Table 9: Subtitling rate ranges in second round – time-cueing and translating

When Time-Cueing and Translating into Main Language					
With Script, PPM					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
GBP 0.8	N/A	GBP 1.25	N/A	GBP 0.6	N/A
TWD 40	TWD 30	TWD 40	TWD 30	TWD 30	N/A
USD 3	N/A	USD 5	N/A	USD 2	N/A
With Script, Per Hour					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
SEK 226	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SGD 18	N/A	SGD 20	N/A	SGD 18	N/A
With Script, Per Subtitle					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
TWD 7	N/A	TWD 9	TWD 8	TWD 7	N/A
Without Script, PPM					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
SEK 71	N/A	SEK 75	N/A	SEK 59	N/A
SGD 22	N/A	SGD 25	N/A	SGD 22	N/A
TWD 180	TWD 12.5	TWD 200	TWD 12.5	TWD 120	TWD 12.5
GBP 15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Without Script, Per Hour					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
SEK 226	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Without Script, Per Subtitle					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
TWD 14	N/A	TWD 20	N/A	TWD 14	N/A

In addition to translating and spotting, proofreading is also part of the subtitling process. The rates for performing proofreading are usually much lower than for translating subtitles. The results of both rounds concerning proofreading rates are demonstrated in Table 10 and Table 11 respectively.

Table 10: Subtitling rate ranges in first round – only proofreading

Only Proofreading					
PPM					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 4	€ 0.03	€ 5	€ 0.25	€ 3	€ 0.03
Per Hour					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 56	€ 10	€ 84	€ 17.79	€ 42	€ 5
Per Subtitle					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 0.30	€ 0.15	€ 0.45	€ 0.04	€ 0.25	€ 0.10
Per 1,000 SL Words					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 40	€ 10	€ 40	€ 15	€ 30	€ 10
Per 1,000 TL Words					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
€ 40	N/A	€ 40	N/A	€ 40	N/A

Table 11: Subtitling rate ranges in second round – only proofreading

Only Proofreading					
PPM					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
GBP 0.8	N/A	GBP 1.25	N/A	GBP 0.6	N/A
TWD 35	TWD 17	TWD 40	TWD 30	TWD 30	N/A
USD 3	N/A	USD 5	N/A	USD 2	N/A
Per Hour					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
GBP 25	N/A	GBP 25	N/A	GBP 15	N/A
TWD 100	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Per Subtitle					
Average Rate		**Highest Rate Ever Paid**		**Lowest Rate Ever Paid**	
Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
TWD 5	TWD 2	TWD 5	TWD 3	TWD 5	TWD 2
USD 0.03	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Not every subtitler is involved with proofreading and proofreading is seldom the focus of the subtitling process; however, this activity might become more frequent with increasing interest in the application of machine translation to subtitling. In line with the trend, reduced rates for the post-editing of machine-translated output may become a reality very soon in the subtitling industry, thus posing a new challenge to subtitlers.

As mentioned before, the second round survey, with a smaller sample size compared to the first round, targeted only those working either into or out of Mandarin; hence, the ranges of rates were not as wide as those noted in the first round. Nevertheless, even within the same currency, the differences in rates could still be almost as much as 15 times. There are various potential reasons that could be assumed to be the trigger for such differences, which will be discussed below.

As indicated in the previous discussion, since the education level and qualifications of the subtitlers may, to some extent, influence their level of pay, a cross-examination of the information provided by the respondents in this respect can be of interest. Responses from participants from both survey rounds who were paid the highest average rates in each category have been further analysed in order to ascertain any possible correlations in the information provided and to establish if there were any similarities in their background characteristics. The results, however, indicate a lack of homogeneous features among the respondents. The education level covered a wide span and ranged from college to doctoral degrees; 57.7% of the respondents declared a qualification in general translation, while only 23.1% possessed a qualification in subtitling. This means that almost 40% of the highly paid respondents had entered the industry without relevant qualifications, signifying that education level/qualifications and pay level do not seem to share a proportional relationship when it comes to the market.

The number of years working in the industry also occupied a wide range, from subtitlers who were new to the industry (with fewer than two years' experience) to those who had more than 16 years, yet again showing no clear relationship between work experience and pay level. Once more, this points to a worrying state of affairs in the subtitling industry in terms of market pay rates and recognition of professionals' backgrounds and expertise.

Apart from qualifications and work experience, the type of product subtitled is another factor that may contribute to differences in rates. In the first round, only 11.2% of the respondents indicated that they were always paid different rates according to the programme genre, and 50.1% declared that they were paid disparately at different frequency levels; however, there were still 38.7% whose pay never differed according to the type of programme. The situation was similar in the second round, with 14.3% who were always paid differently according to the type of programme, 44.9% who were paid disparately at different frequency levels, and 40.8% whose rates never differed.

Among those whose rates differed depending on the product subtitled in the first round, the highest paid genre was 'documentaries', and then in descending order were 'films', 'corporate videos', 'TV series and sitcoms' and 'DVD bonus material'. Identical results were also revealed in the second round. It would seem to be a logical deduction that, in general, tasks with a more urgent deadline should be better paid than those with generous time allowed. And yet, according to the information provided by the subtitlers, no correlation was identified between the urgency of delivery of a task and the level of pay awarded, although some respondents did acknowledge that they received a bonus for working with urgent deadlines. In a rather ironic twist, many respondents who often worked with tight deadlines were paid a relatively low rate when compared to those who were usually given more generous deadlines.

In addition to the level of remuneration paid, the terms and conditions that regulate the payments also play a crucial role in cash flow and are very important to subtitlers, particularly to those working as freelancers. In the first round, 46.2% received payment within 30 days of submitting work, 45.2% within 60 days, 6.5% within 90 days, and the remaining 2.1% usually received payments only after 90 days. Payments, however, were sometimes delayed. Only 43.1%, or less than half of the respondents, 'always' received punctual payments; 40.6% 'often' received payments on time, whilst 11.4% stated they 'sometimes' received payments on time. 3.5% of the participants commented that their clients 'rarely' made timely payments, and 1.4% claimed that their clients 'never' paid on time. In the second round, 28.6% of respondents usually received payments within 30 days, over half (i.e. 55.1%) within 60 days, 14.3% within 90 days, and the remaining 2% usually needed to wait for longer than 90 days to receive payments. Similar to the first round, delays in payments are not uncommon, with 42.9% 'not always' receiving timely payments and 2% whose clients 'never' made payments on time; albeit there were still 55.1% who 'always' received punctual payments. On the whole, late payment seems to be less of an issue among the Chinese-speaking communities, as shown in Figure 22.

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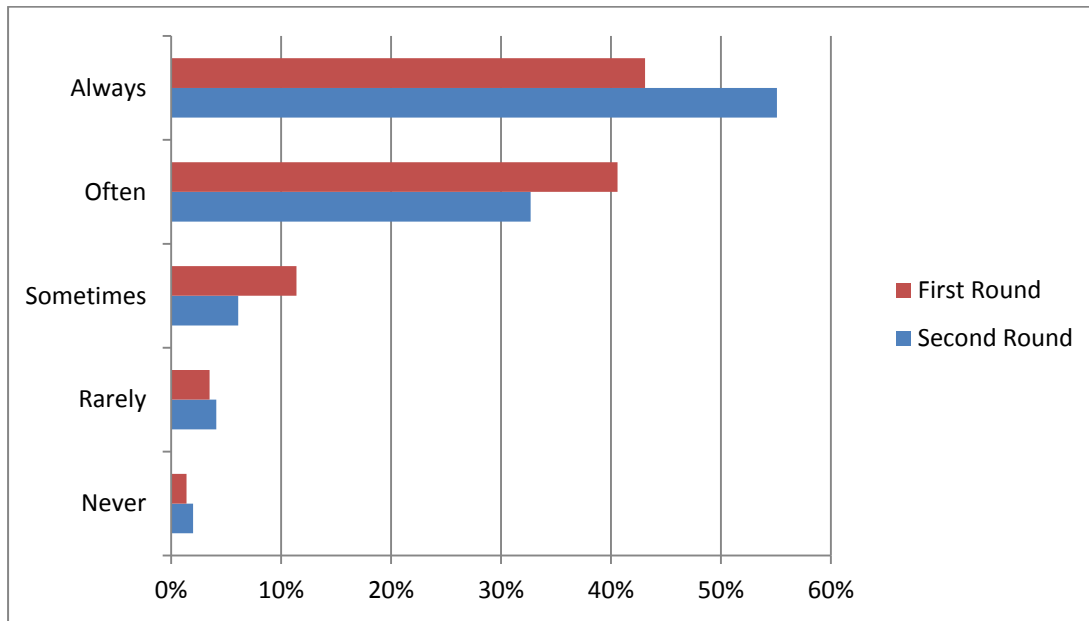
Figure 22: The frequency of timely payments from clients

5.3.2 Negotiation Power

Following from the above discussion on rates, this section will delve into the survey results regarding who set the rates. Only 4.9% of respondents from the first round set their own rates, 8.9% mentioned that they had their unions negotiate on their behalf, 17.3% negotiated the rates with their clients, and 69% usually accepted the rates offered by their clients without further negotiation. In the second round, a tiny percentage of the respondents (2%) set their own rates, 8.2% had their unions negotiate for them, 16.3% negotiated the rates, and for 73.5% of them, the only option available was to accept the rates set by their clients.

In some countries, notably those where the (audiovisual) translation sector is relatively more mature, subtitlers may be able to ask their unions to negotiate rates on their behalf. This was the case for respondents from Canada, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Venezuela in the first round, and from Taiwan and China (including Macau) in the second round. The results regarding

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terms and conditions of payment echo the findings from rate negotiation: 69.5% of the respondents from the first round accepted the conditions of payment set by their clients, 15.2% negotiated with clients, 8.6% asked their unions to negotiate on their behalf, and only 6.8% set conditions of payment themselves. As for the second round, 71.4% stated that they could neither set nor negotiate conditions of payments, 20.4% confirmed that they had tried to negotiate, 6.1% claimed that their unions negotiated on their behalf, and only a very small minority (2%) were able to set the conditions themselves. Further analysis regarding the negotiation power of respondents will be provided in the following paragraphs.

The relationship between negotiation power and the respondents' age, level of education, qualifications and subtitling experience have been examined in further detail, and the results show that there are no apparent correlations among the variables studied. However, information provided by subtitlers from the first round did highlight a trend among 'those who negotiated with their clients', which may be seen in Figure 23 below; the ratio did increase with subtitling experience in an exponential arc. Meanwhile, the ratio of 'those whose clients set the rates' also exponentially decreased with an increase in subtitling experience. This tendency suggests that more experienced subtitlers are more likely to negotiate with their clients. Nevertheless, this can only reveal an inclination to negotiate and not necessarily an increase in negotiation power. A similar inclination was also perceived in the second round.
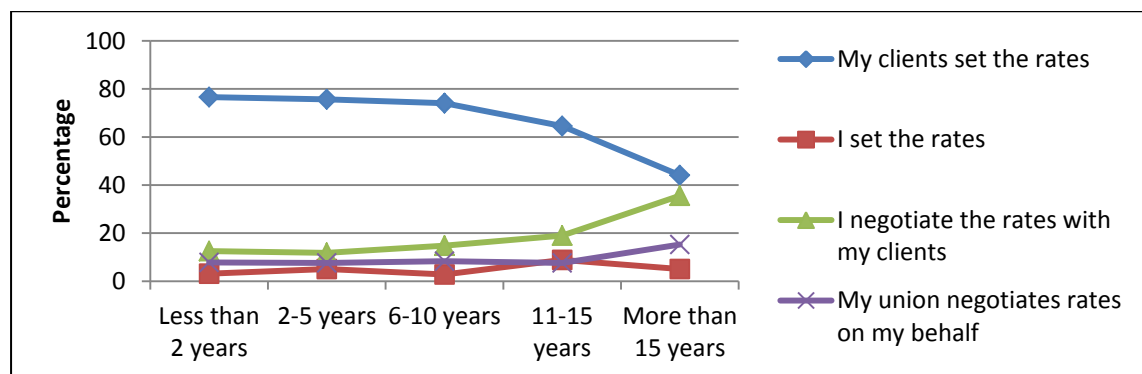
Figure 23: Rate negotiation power vs. subtitling experience

The different ways in which the respondents engage professionally with their clients may shed some light on the reasons behind the weak negotiation power shown by subtitlers, particularly when it comes to setting rates and conditions of payment (see section 5.3.1). Firstly, working via translation agencies may decrease the possibilities for negotiation. According to the survey results from the first round, a meagre 20% of the respondents only worked directly with clients, while more than double that figure (46%) took assignments solely via translation agencies. Although the results were reversed in the second round, with 47% only working directly with clients and 27% only via translation companies, over half of the respondents still worked with translation companies or agencies, albeit at different levels of dependency. Some of these agencies tended to operate globally and have fixed policies for rates and terms and conditions of payment, thus leaving no room for negotiation for the translators, who could only take it or leave it. Even if the companies were willing to negotiate with translators who were more experienced and competent, the margin for manoeuvre was normally very limited as the intermediaries also needed to retain profits.

Secondly, 'client concentration' may also contribute to the decrease in the negotiating power of some translators, as they relied heavily on a limited source for their work assignments and may have risked losing clients if they were perceived to be belligerent. In this respect, the results of the first round of surveys indicate that 30.8% of the respondents only worked with a single client on a regular basis, 47.3% with two-three clients, 10.3% with four-five clients, 5.1% with more than five clients, and a final 6.5% stated that they did not work with any clients on a regular basis. In the second round, an identical 30.6% only worked with a single client on a regular basis, whereas 40.8% had two-three clients, 10.2% relied on four-five clients, and the remaining 18.4% did not work with any clients on a regular basis. Although working with only a couple of clients may not necessarily lead to an unstable income stream, depending of course on the volume of work commissioned, the nature of such an attachment could increase respondents' vulnerability in terms of negotiating power.

Thus, translators may sometimes have no choice but to accept unsatisfactory rates and payment terms if they want to continue with their clients. Of course, this dependency can also be observed in the case of novice subtitlers who may not know the market well enough or who are prepared to work for any rate in the hope that they can gain experience and their income will increase in the future.

With reference to working habits, according to the results from the first round, 92.3% of respondents claimed to either 'always' (72.5%) or 'mostly' (19.8%) work from home for their typical clients. In the second round, 79.6% of respondents 'always' worked from home with regular clients, and 14.3% 'mostly' worked form home. The results are summarised in Figure 24.
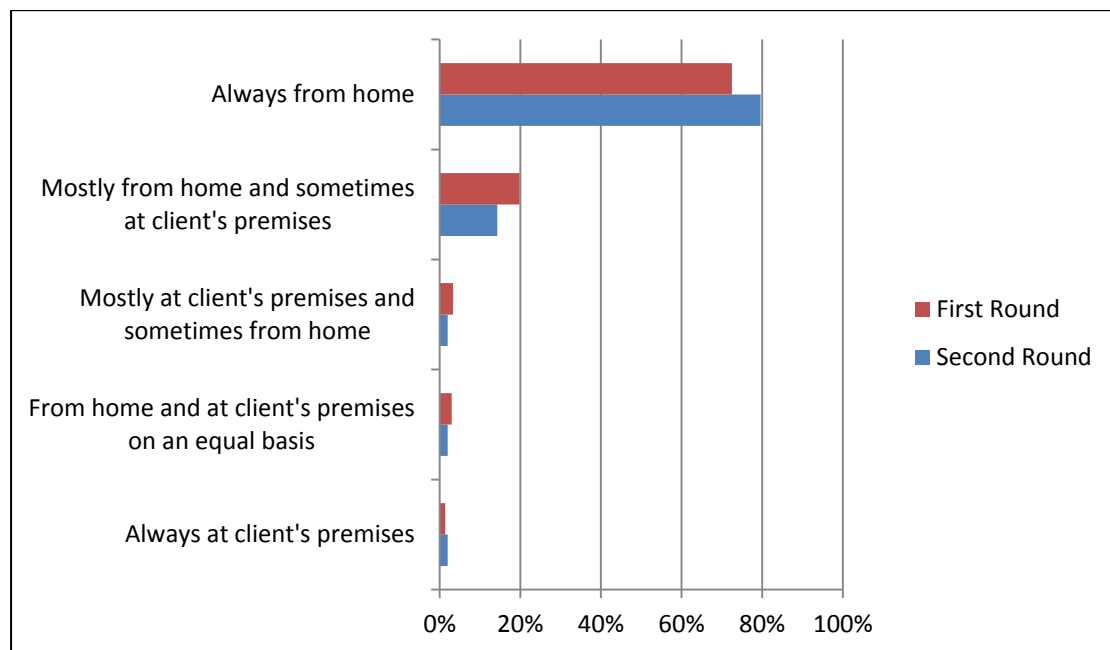
Figure 24: Work premises

Working from home, and in isolation, can be seen as the third factor that can influence subtitlers' negotiation power, as it may be more difficult for them to keep

informed or to find proper information on the rates charged by other colleagues, due to the deliberate opacity of the market on these issues. This can be particularly problematic in the case of inexperienced translators, who may not know the parameters of a reasonable price range, and may therefore risk dumping the market. Additionally, it is also highly unlikely that they would turn down assignments paid at lower than average rates when they do not receive other, better-paid job offers.

5.3.3 Royalties

As Downey (2008: 119) states, "cinematic subtitling is often performed after the fact on a piece[by piece] basis by subcontracted firms or individuals not connected with the initial production process and who do not reap royalties from subsequent distribution". It is, indeed, rather uncommon for subtitlers to share in the royalties generated from the programmes they have subtitled, or to own copyright over the work. The situation seems to be different in the case of literary translators, who are more likely to sign contracts in which their right to receive royalties is acknowledged. However, even in Europe, where the translation industry in general is relatively more mature, the practice does not seem to be commonplace and only exists "in the major countries where publishers sell large numbers of books (10,000 copies and over)" (Fock et al., 2007/2008: 30).

Returning to the field of subtitling, when asked about receiving royalties in the first round, only 2.8% of the sample stated that this was 'normal', and their typical clients/commissioners were from countries such as Australia, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Thailand, and the United States. An additional 2.6% of respondents claimed to have received royalties 'often', and their typical clients/commissioners were based in countries such as Denmark, France, Finland, Norway, Slovenia, and the United States. A much higher percentage (84.2%) of the respondents indicated that

they had 'never' received royalties from the re-selling of a programme they had subtitled from one client to another. The results are summarised in Figure 25.
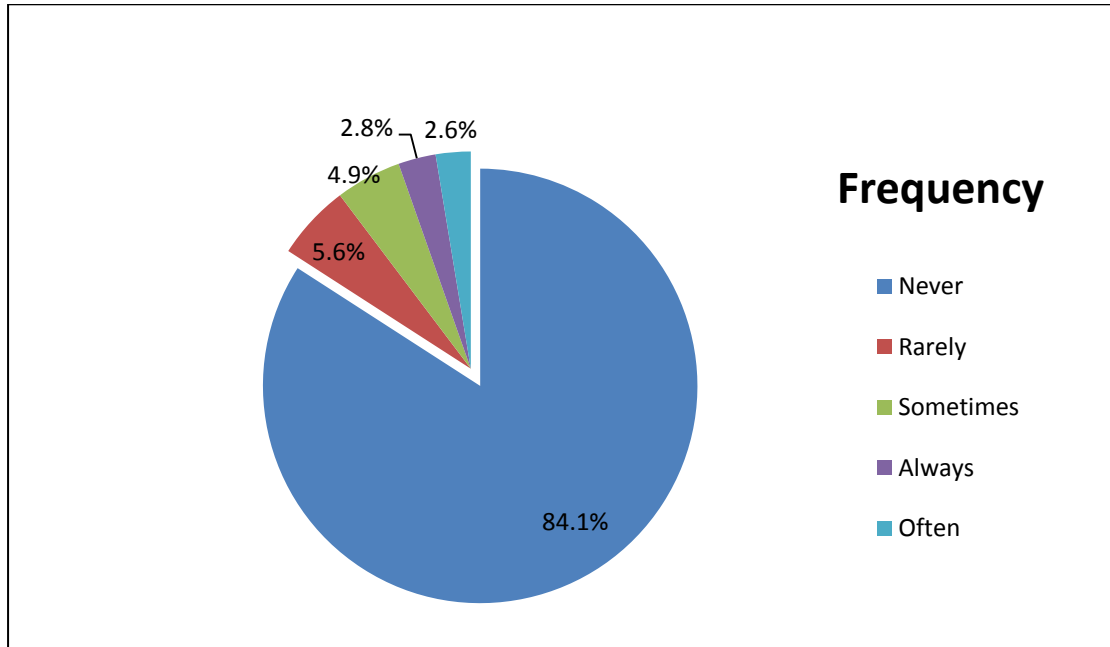
Figure 25: Practice of royalty payments in the first round

Among those who stated that they had received royalties at different levels, 15% admitted to receiving a 50% royalty rate,[23] and the countries in which their typical clients/commissioners were based were Denmark, Finland, Germany, and Sweden; however, one respondent received a 30% royalty rate, with typical clients/commissioners from Greece. A royalty rate of 11-15% was received by 12.2%, who worked with clients/commissioners who were based in Australia, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Norway, Thailand, and the United States; 9.5%

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[23] Some of the sample further indicated that, despite the fact that they are entitled to a royalty rate of 50% of the original translation fee by law (e.g. Finnish copyright law), not all of the translation agencies follow the law. Sometimes they only receive royalties under certain premises such as if they are the owners of the copyright themselves. In addition, the gross royalty to which they are entitled is still subject to some expense deductions.

received a 6-10% royalty rate, and their clients/commissioners were found in Finland, Norway and the United States. Finally, 24.3% received a 5%-or-below royalty rate, and their typical clients/commissioners came from Belgium, Finland, France, Greece, Iran, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the United States. The situation of the remaining participants varied greatly, with some stating that they received the rate on a negotiation basis, others mentioning that different rates were applied depending on the type of programme, and yet others who were not sure, as they rarely received royalties, or never knew the rates because they had always received lump-sum payments.

Only 6.5% of the sample indicated that they had 'always' received royalties from secondary use through joint collective societies such as Copydan, Copyswede, and Norwaco; 3.7% claimed that they had done so 'often', 7% 'sometimes', 3.5% 'rarely', and the remaining 79.3% confirmed that they had never had such an experience. Among those who had received royalties through societies, 44.4% received a 5%-or-below royalty rate, 13.3% a 6-10% rate, 3.3% an 11-15% rate, and 16.9% did not know the amounts or the rates they had received. As for the remaining 22%, most had received a lump sum payment on an annual basis, and the amounts varied according to the different societies.

In the second round, with the exception of one, no respondents had ever received any royalties. The only respondent to ever receive royalties dwelt in Macau, China, with main client(s) also based in China. The frequency with which they received royalties was 'rare'; the royalty rate was 5%-or-below when the work was re-sold from one client to another and 6-10% from secondary use through joint collective societies.

According to these results, the situation regarding royalties appeared to be considerably worse for respondents in the second round than for those who took

part in the first round, reflecting the somewhat precarious status of the industry in the various Chinese-speaking countries. In the case of Taiwan, it is still very uncommon for translators to receive royalties, even in the case of literary translation. According to Sun (2002), literary translators were not paid royalties until as recently as 2002, with the first person to receive them being Lucifer Chu, the translator of *The Lord of the Rings* into Mandarin.

Despite existing Taiwanese copyright law protecting the rights of the translator as the owner of the translation, publishers usually bypass their obligations by requiring translators to sign a contract in which they usually agree to transfer the ownership of the translation to the publishers in exchange for a one-off payment. In 2002, Chu took the initiative to change the convention by approaching Linking Publishing Company and offered to re-translate Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings trilogy*. Linking, a Taiwan-based publisher, acquired the copyright of the Mandarin edition of this trilogy in 1997 and published the first Mandarin edition translated by Mainland Chinese translators, which was deemed a failure as only 3,000 copies were sold within three years. Chu, a Taiwanese translator specialising in fantasy literature made then a bold offer to the publisher and promised to re-translate *The Lord of the Rings* free of charge if the sales of his translations did not exceed 10,000 copies of the complete set of the books. On the other hand, if the goal was achieved, the publisher would have to pay Chu based on an agreed royalty rate rather than a lump-sum as a one-off payment. The new translation turned out to be a great success, making Chu a legendary figure in the field of literary translation and probably the very first translator to have ever received royalties for a translation into Mandarin. However, in these kind of exceptional cases, the translator is usually also involved in other tasks in addition to the translation; for example, Chu also designed and attended a series of marketing events for the launch of *The Lord of the Rings* (Wang, 2009).

Despite these occasional successes, the situation regarding royalties and copyright is notably underdeveloped in the Far East. For instance, Taiwan's National Academy of Education Research (NAER) recently published a report on Taiwan's translation and interpretation industry in 2012, which failed to address the topic of royalties or any other relevant issues in this arena. The lack of information on royalties may also be an indication of the fact that there are neither established practices regarding royalties, nor relevant regulations in the industry.

The results obtained from the two survey rounds demonstrate that the industry is far from the application of standard practices and, on this front, the royalty rights of subtitlers seem to depend more on the willingness shown by some companies operating from certain countries than on any legislation in place.

5.3.4 Acknowledgement Credits

Despite the campaign led by some translators and subtitling associations to raise the visibility of the professional subtitler, the fact remains that, for many companies and viewers, the best subtitles are those that are not noticed. In this respect, the reality is that subtitlers are more often perceived when they make mistakes than when they produce successful translational solutions. On the part of the professionals themselves, the survey results, as demonstrated in Figure 26, reveal that there was a strong desire among the respondents to raise their visibility, both socially and professionally, as attested by 74.4% of respondents in the first round and 59.2% in the second round who claimed that they 'always' preferred to have their names appear on the credits of the translated programmes.
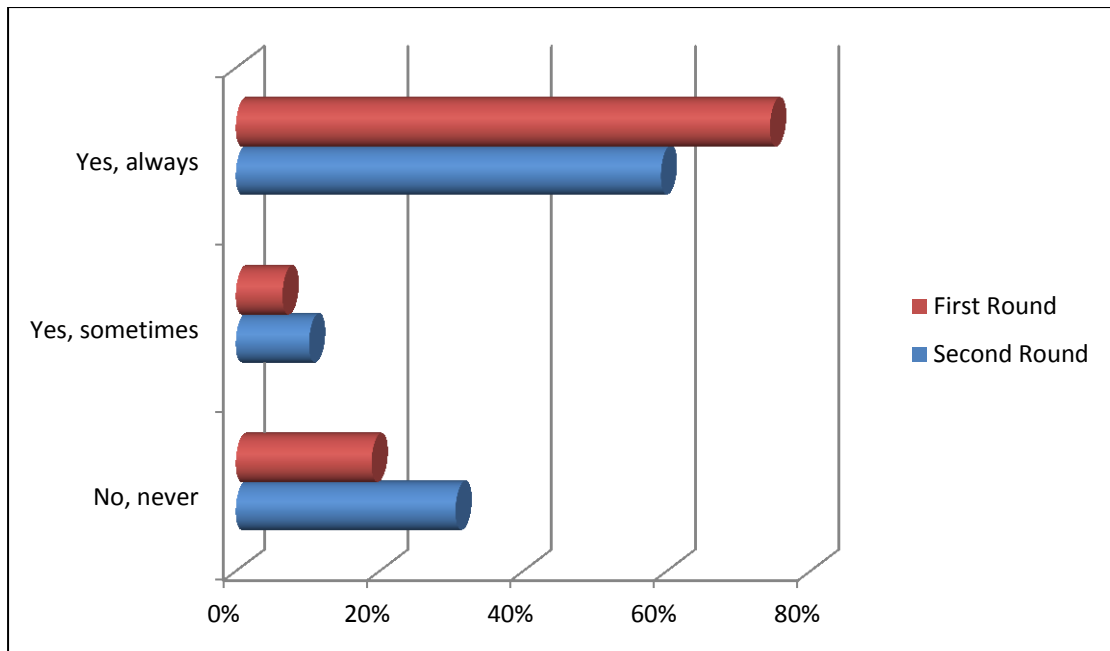
Figure 26: Preference for being acknowledged

However, professional practice seems to point in a different direction. Results from the first round divulge that only 25% had 'always' been credited for their work, whereas 22% had 'never' been given credit for their contributions; the remaining 53% had been credited at different frequency levels from 'rarely' to 'often'. As to the second round, only 14.3% had 'always' been credited for their work, 32.7% at different frequency levels, and the remaining 38.8% had 'never' been given credit for their contributions; however, there were also 14.3% who did not know whether their names had ever appeared on the credits. The results, as demonstrated in Figure 27, denote that the practice of acknowledging subtitlers by displaying their names at the end of the programmes they subtitled, to some extent, is less common in Chinese-speaking countries than the European continent where the subtitling industry is more established.
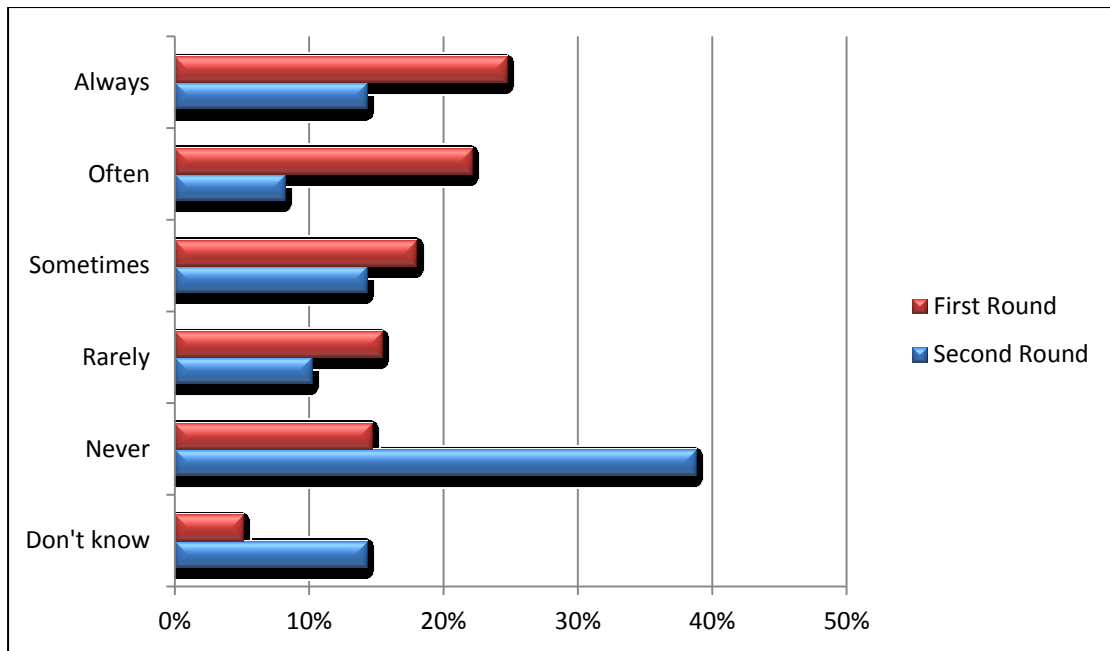
Figure 27: Practice of acknowledgement credits in professional reality

Despite the preference of the majority, not all subtitlers were equally vocal or enthusiastic about their visibility. In fact, 6.5% from the first round and 10.2% from the second round did not want to be credited, with 19.1% and 30.2% from the two rounds respectively preferring to be credited 'only under certain conditions' (see Figure 26). The reasons for such a preference varied from respondent to respondent, yet on the whole, they wanted to be credited only when they had been given enough time to work on the assignments, had been given the chance to agree with the proofread version, personally liked the programme, and when they had worked directly with clients instead of working through agencies.

In other words, the confidence level that the respondents had in their own work strongly influenced their attitudes toward being (in)visible. Once again, this approach seems to be distant from the routines observed in the world of literary translation, where most works publish the name of the person who has carried out the translation.

5.3.5 Notices and Deadlines

Short notices and tight deadlines to deliver work were a common reality for the respondents. In the first round, 17.5% of participants were usually given assignments with notice of fewer than 24 hours, 24.5% had 1-2 days, 32.4% received 3-7 days, and 11.9% were given 7-10 days. In the second round, and rather similarly to the first round, 28.6% usually received notice of fewer than 24 hours, 24.5% had 1-2 days, 24.5% received 3-7 days, and 16.3% were given 7-10 days. The situation varied among the remainder of the sample, with some stating that they worked on a monthly plan, some declaring that they proactively asked their clients for assignments when they had the time, and some mentioning that they were simply given a different length of notice every time they were offered jobs.

Concerning the time given to complete an assignment, the answers from both rounds showed a vast variation, primarily based on the type of work and the duration of the programme to be subtitled, as shown in Table 12 below:

Table 12: Deadline range

Type of Work	Most Urgent		Least Urgent	
	Programme Length	Time Given	Programme Length	Time Given
Subtitling	20 mins	3-4 hours	Varies	As much as needed
Origination	20-35 mins	8 hours	Varies	As much as needed
Proofreading	25 mins	1 hour	Varies	As much as needed

The tightest deadline, as illustrated in the above table, was reported by a Turkish respondent from the first round, with a typical client/commissioner also based in Turkey. The answers from both survey rounds not only covered a wide range of programme lengths and given times, but also varied greatly from person to person. Tellingly, only one Swiss respondent from the first survey round, with a typical

client/commissioner dwelling in Switzerland, was able to decide her own deadlines, usually allowing more than two weeks to subtitle a 60-minute programme. One respondent from the second round mainly worked with film festivals in Taiwan, and was usually given five to 10 days to subtitle a full-length feature film. The fact that many respondents have been forced to work with tight deadlines justifies to some extent their attitudes towards their visibility, as discussed in section 5.3.4. The tension between tight deadlines and output quality is also proven to be an issue for the majority of respondents, which will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

5.3.6 Contract and Materialisation of Jobs

Rules and regulations governing freelance practice vary from company to company, and from professional to professional, with some requiring clients, or being asked by clients, to sign contracts and purchase orders; others may perform the work on the basis of verbal agreements. Among the respondents in the first round, 20.3% stated that they had 'always' signed a contract with their clients before proceeding to translate the programme, while 24% had 'never' signed one; the remaining 55.7% signed at different frequency levels: 16.3% 'often', 21.4% 'sometimes', and 18% 'rarely'. In the second round, 16.3% 'always' signed a contract with clients, while 36.7% had 'never' signed one, and the remaining 47% also signed at different frequency levels: 6.1% 'often', 10.3% 'sometimes', and 30.6% 'rarely'. The results indicate that signing a contract with clients is not yet a routine practice in the industry, and this custom is relatively more established in territories where European languages are spoken than in Chinese-speaking regions.

One of the risks inherent in the profession is an assignment failing to materialise even if a contract has been signed between the parties. Of the participants in the first round, 1.9% declared they have 'often' encountered such a situation, with their

typical client/commissioner based in Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom; 19.3% had failed to receive assignments 'sometimes', whilst 50.6% confirmed that the situation had happened to them 'rarely'. On the flip side, 28.2% of the respondents affirmed that their assignments always materialised following a contract.

As to the second round, 8.2% had 'sometimes' experienced the situation of not receiving the work despite having signed a contract, with their typical client/commissioner based in China, Singapore, Taiwan, and the United States; 59.1% 'rarely' had the problem and 32.7% had 'never' had an assignment fail to materialise. In this respect, compared with the second round, the issue of work failing to arrive seemed to be somewhat more prevalent in the first round, with the European continent being more representative.

5.3.7 Software and Support Materials

In practice, support that a subtitler may receive in terms of dedicated software and working files such as scripts and consistency sheets is very likely to increase in direct proportion to the professionalism and established level of their clients. In the first round, a substantial 73.7% of participants declared they had 'always' worked with subtitling equipment, whilst 6.1% had 'never' worked with it, and the remaining 20.2% had worked with subtitling equipment at different frequency levels, from 'rarely' to 'often'. A total of 85.5% used professional subtitling programs and only 6.3% declared they mainly used freeware; the remaining 8.2% only worked with templates.

According to the results, working with subtitling equipment seems to be much more common in Europe than in Chinese-speaking countries, as demonstrated in Figure 28. Indeed, in the second round, over half (57.1%) of the respondents had 'never'

worked with subtitling equipment, whereas only 26.5% 'always' worked with this equipment, and the remaining 16.4% used it at different frequency levels, though they worked with templates more often than not. Among those who always worked with subtitling equipment, their typical clients/commissioners were found in China, Hong Kong, India, Sweden, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. 22.5% of respondents mainly worked with professional subtitling programs whilst 20.4% primarily used freeware, and the remaining worked with templates only. The above results are summarised in the following Figures 28 and 29.
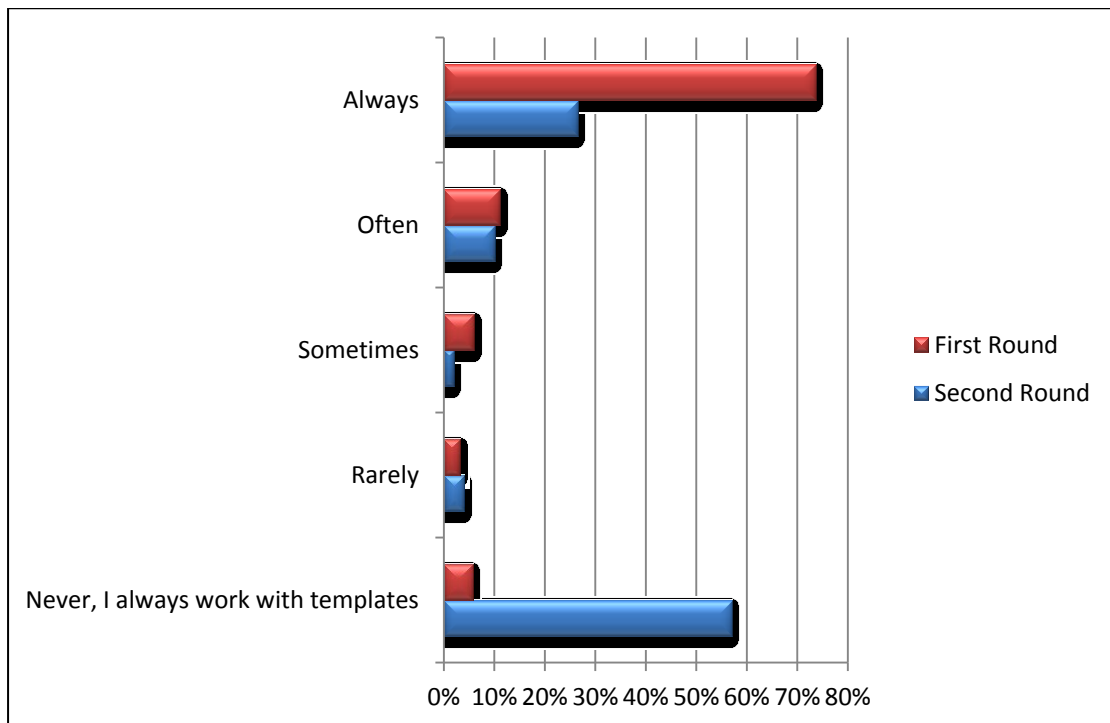
Figure 28: Frequency of working with subtitling equipment
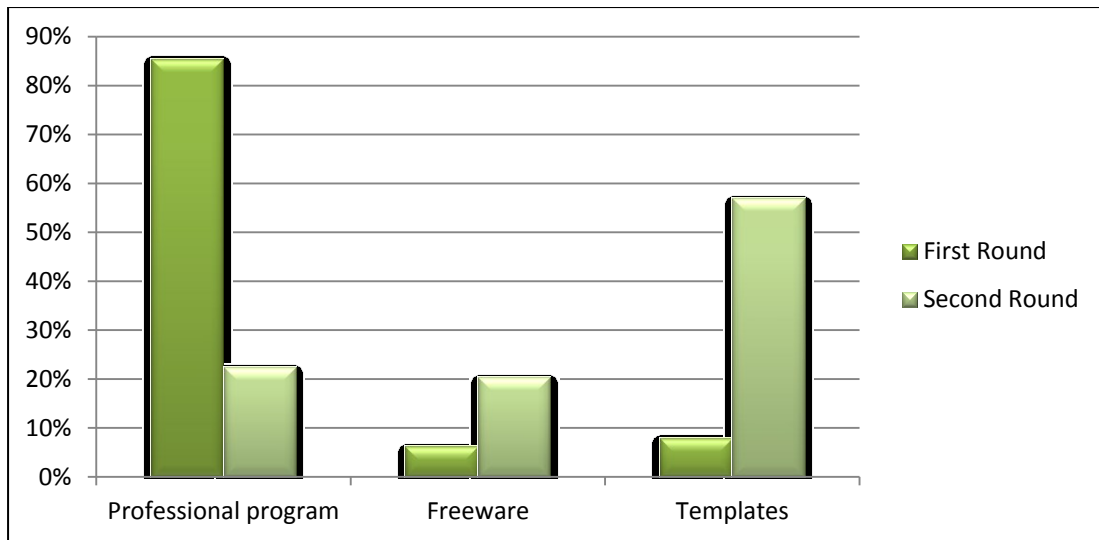
Figure 29: The use of subtitling program

Among the subtitling program users from the first round, 61% only used a single subtitling program, 30% made use of two, 5% used three, 2% used four, and the remaining 2% used more than four programs. As for the second round, 76% only used a single subtitling program, 19% used two, and 5% used three, with no participants using four or more programs. The discrepancies between the two rounds clearly indicate a common practice among the subtitlers who work with Mandarin, namely the use of templates instead of subtitling equipment. Even when they carry out their assignments with subtitling equipment, the diversification in terms of software programs is also relatively limited, which could be another indication of the under-developed status of the subtitling industry in Chinese-speaking countries.

The various professional subtitling programs that were mentioned by the survey participants include Ayato, Eddie, EZTitles, FAB, GTS, Monal, Polyscript, Screen, Spot, Swift, Tempo, TextYle, Titlevision, and WinCAPS. As for freeware, the most popular programs were Aegisub, Popsub, Subtitle Workshop, Time Machine, VisualSubSync, VobSub, and off-line versions of some commercial programs such as Belle Nuit. Among those who used professional subtitling programs in the first round, 53% paid to use a freelance version with reduced functionality provided by the clients, 34%

used fully-fledged professional subtitling software provided for free by the clients, 11% used a freelancer version with reduced functionality also provided for free by the clients, 1% paid to use a fully-fledged version provided by the clients, and 1% bought their own subtitling software. Of those using professional subtitling programs in the second round, 53% used a fully-fledged version provided for free by the clients, 23% used a freelance version with reduced functionality also provided for free by the clients, 6% paid to use a fully-fledged version provided by the clients, and 18% had bought their own version.

Concerning technical support, among the respondents who used subtitling programs in the first round, 64% received support paid for by the clients, 25% paid for it themselves, and 11% did not receive any technical support. Six respondents who paid for their own technical support indicated that they did not pay extra for the service as it was already included in the price of the software program. The fees that respondents paid for technical support varied greatly from €60 per hour to €1,000 per year. Among those using professional subtitling programs in the second round, 57% received technical support paid for by the clients, 5% paid themselves (which was included in the price of the software programme), and 38% did not receive any technical support. With reference to the frequency of support provided by the clients, the details are shown in Table 13:

Table 13: Support material provision

First round of surveys					
	Always	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Rarely**	**Never**
Guidelines	26%	27%	18%	16%	13%
Dialogue lists/Scripts	31%	47%	11%	6%	5%
AV material	72%	9%	4%	4%	11%
Templates	20%	22%	20%	15%	23%
Consistency/Terminology sheet	7%	13%	21%	27%	32%
Second round of surveys					
	Always	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Rarely**	**Never**
Guidelines	47%	16%	10%	8%	19%
Dialogue lists/Scripts	49%	10%	12%	10%	19%
AV material	72%	14%	6%	2%	6%
Templates	39%	14%	12%	6%	29%
Consistency/Terminology sheet	16%	14%	18%	25%	27%

Based on the above results, it seems to be more common for respondents working with the Chinese language to receive guidelines, dialogue lists and templates, which to some extent justifies the smaller number of respondents in the second round using subtitling programs, and foregrounds the relatively common practice of only working with templates. Very few respondents from the second round experienced work involving time-cueing or spotting, and they usually tended to concentrate their efforts on tasks only requiring translation. Incidentally, it should be noted that some respondents from both rounds mentioned that they had had to translate subtitles without access to audiovisual materials, i.e. video clips. Needless to say, this approach could easily endanger the quality of the subtitling output, as screen images are a crucial part of the audiovisual programme and must be taken into consideration when producing subtitles that are coherent and cohesive with the overall semiotic complex. Finally, the quality of the support materials provided to the subtitlers can also influence the quality of the subtitling output substantially. Discussions related to quality will be included in the next chapter.

Chapter Six

Implications of the Findings

6.1 Factors Determining Subtitling Quality in Practice

Following the presentation of the research findings in Chapter Five, this chapter explores the implications that can be derived from the findings on subtitling quality. The various factors that, from a theoretical point of view, play a determining role in the quality of subtitling have been discussed in section 3.4, with special emphasis on the parameters of time, space and style. These, however, are only the theoretical variables that are usually discussed by authors looking into subtitling quality. The reality is that there are many other practical elements that can also impinge on the quality level of a subtitler's output.

As Fawcett (1983: 189) asserts, translation, and here dubbing and subtitling can certainly be included, is subject to practical constraints of various kinds and "the most important are: poor wages […]; absurd deadlines […]; poor originals […]; and finally, poor training of translators". Ascertaining the exact impact that these variables may have on the quality of a translation is certainly a hazardous task, but, based on the findings from the survey, the objective of this chapter is to probe the importance of these practical factors when it comes to subtitling quality.

As mentioned, the working conditions under which subtitlers operate can have a significant repercussion on the quality of their professional output. In accordance with the survey findings, this section begins with a discussion on the remuneration

and deadlines given to subtitlers and examines how these can ultimately affect subtitling quality. It is followed by an analysis of the impact that the quality of the support materials provided and the use of subtitling programs, as well as the quality control procedures in place, can exert on the quality of the production. Finally, the discussion will move on to consider the social invisibility of the subtitler and its relationship with the quality of subtitlers' output, before gauging the implications that the current situation may have for the future development of the profession and for the training of the next generation of subtitlers.

6.1.1 Remuneration

The remuneration paid to the subtitler can determine, to some extent, the quality of the end product. Professionals who can produce subtitles of a high standard usually demand and also deserve high rates. Needless to say, it takes years of experience for subtitlers to perform their work to the best of their ability, as is the case with many other professionals. In the absence of appropriate rates, subtitlers may lose interest in the task at hand and thus be unlikely to spend long hours weighing translation solutions, looking for the right terminology or meticulously revising their work.

The first round of survey results indicates that 38.9% of respondents believed that the quality of their output was 'very much' negatively affected when the paid rate was low; however, 24% considered that such a situation would have only a 'moderate' level of influence on their work. In the second round, 32.7% of participants acknowledged the adverse effect of low rates on the quality of their output was 'very much' an issue and an equal 32.7% were of the opinion that the influence was 'moderate'. A substantial 30.3% from the first round and 22.5% from the second round admitted to having no intention of spending more time or effort

than that for which they were paid in order to achieve a high quality level; as shown in Figure 30.
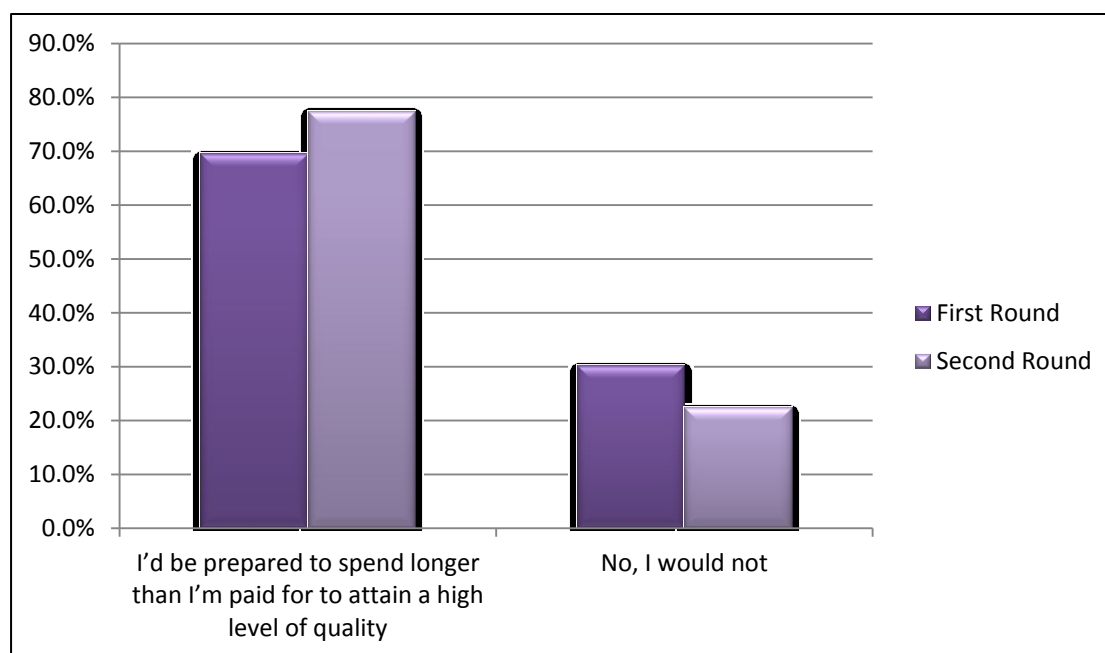
Figure 30: Respondents' willingness to attain a higher level of quality

In the real world, some clients prefer to recruit inexperienced subtitlers so that they can pay them lower rates in an attempt to reduce their running costs. On occasions, the reason for this choice is not that the clients are unaware of the difference between good and poor quality, but rather that for a particular project, if not all, the quality of production is not their first priority. In October 2012, a news article published on the Forum for Finnish Subtitlers (Av-kaantajat, 2012) reported that the online video rental service Netflix had followed a rather unethical pathway by using fan subtitles downloaded from the Internet, without the consent of the authors. Caught red-handed, Netflix quickly apologised for the mistake, although "in a conversation with a subtitling blogger, a Netflix representative admitted that quality does not concern Netflix and that the company is considering using crowdsourcing to produce subtitles in the future" (ibid.: online). Aulavuori (2008: 21) also points to a trend that agencies nowadays seek to hire students of translation; on the one hand, the output quality of the students tends to be relatively reliable and, on the other

hand, subtitlers with ample experience are more likely to be reluctant to work under the conditions these agencies offer, i.e. hectic deadlines and low rates. Evidently, subtitling costs can be reduced in such a dubious manner, but the trade-off could be the lowering of production quality. Although Netflix can be considered an exception and the requirement for high quality, to a certain degree, still seems to be one of the main priorities in the industry, this incident does reveal the shaky environment in which subtitlers strain to make their voices heard and foregrounds some of the thorniest ethical issues arising in today's globalised market.

6.1.2 Assignment Deadlines

As discussed in section 5.3.5, the survey results show that subtitle assignment deadlines vary significantly. In one of the examples mentioned, the time allocated for the subtitler to translate a 20-minute programme from the format of a genesis[24] file was as short as three to four hours. Only a small fraction of subtitlers are given a generous time allowance in which to do their work, with several respondents commenting that they usually had "ample time" to complete an assignment, though none of them provided a definition of this, and one respondent reported that she could always have "as much time as needed". Despite the wide range of deadlines, and as Sánchez (2004: 16) indicates, "deadlines are often unreasonably short" in the world of subtitling, especially in the case of subtitling DVDs, and are one of the most crucial issues for subtitlers in relation to their output quality. Gambier (2008: 28) also considers deadlines to be part of the "threefold constraint" that poses challenges to the quality of subtitling, in addition to costs and volume of translations.

One of the main developments in recent decades has seen film distributors

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[24] For a definition of genesis file, please see section 6.1.3.

accelerate production and distribution processes in order to release DVDs promptly after the cinema release, mirroring to some extent the simship approach adopted in the localisation industry. This is the release of international, localised versions of software at the same time, or within a short period of time of the original release; other fields can be even more stressful. According to Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 39), "film festivals are notoriously frantic" and the subtitler can be asked to translate a film in just a few hours overnight.

When working under very tight deadlines, "it is not uncommon to divide a film or programme into several sections and give them to different translators" (ibid.). Collaborative fan-subbing is particularly well-known for its hierarchical division of labour (Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz-Sánchez, 2006; Massida, 2012). Indeed, the primal reason for the creation of fan-sub groups is to provide almost immediate access to newly released shows for those fans who do not understand the SL. However, the potential lack of cohesion and coherence in joint work, particularly when working under temporal restrictions, is bound to impinge negatively upon the quality of the subtitles.

In this sense, the survey results clearly highlight the tension that exists between tight deadlines and output quality, as it appears to be an issue for the majority of respondents. In the first round, a total of 67.6% of participants considered that tight deadlines would affect the overall quality of what they deliver, with 28.7% admitting that it would be to a 'strong' degree and 38.9% to a 'moderate' degree. In the second round, the overall percentage was even higher at 83.7%, of which 38.8% considered the degree of influence to be 'strong', and 44.9% acknowledged that in their case it was 'moderate'; the results are summarised in Figure 31. Nearly identical percentages, 38.5% from the first round and 38.8% from the second round, were convinced that generous deadlines would 'very much' help increase the quality of the results they deliver, as more time can be devoted not only to documenting

and finding appropriate translational solutions, but also to conducting a final quality check and revision.
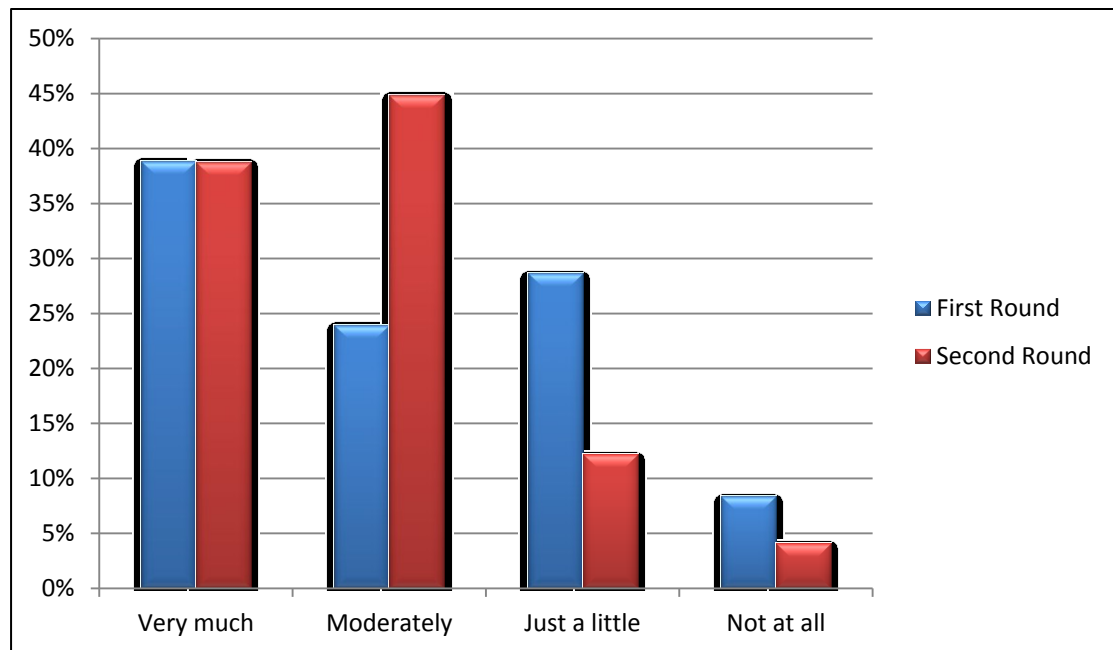
Figure 31: The influence of tight deadlines on the quality of respondents' output

While more attention seems to gradually have been paid to the debate on the quality of subtitles, although sadly far from enough, it is high time for the industry to start considering the negative impact that current working conditions can have on subtitling quality and to try to find a remedy. In other words, a more sensible approach may be needed if the ultimate objective is to reconcile the trade-off between revenue and quality in the long term.

6.1.3 Quality of Support Materials

The survey results concerning the provision of support materials to subtitlers are presented and discussed in section 5.3.7. This section begins with an introduction to the function of key support materials and their relationship with subtitling quality,

then moves on to focus on the actual quality of these materials that are normally provided to respondents by their typical clients, as well as the influence they can have on the final translation. Special emphasis is placed on the following documents: dialogue lists, templates, actual audiovisual programmes and other supplementary materials (see Table 14).

A dialogue list, in Díaz-Cintas and Remael's (2007: 74) words, is "essentially the compilation of all the dialogue exchanges uttered in the film". This verbatim record of all spoken dialogue exchanges varies greatly in nature, depending on the amount of detail that is provided and the format in which that information is presented (Díaz-Cintas, 2001). In addition to the original exchanges between the various characters, some dialogue lists are rudimentary and come unprocessed, such as that contained in Appendix 6, whilst others can be more informative (even including brief descriptions of the scenes in a film, as well as the camera movements) and are already broken up by spotting, such as the example in Appendix 7; this variant is known in the industry as a 'combined and continuity & spotting list'. According to Díaz-Cintas (ibid.: 200), in an ideal situation, apart from all the dialogue, dialogue lists would:

a) offer metatextual information on the implicit socio-cultural connotations,
b) explain the meaning of colloquialisms and dialectalisms,
c) elucidate the origin and the usage in-context of certain terms that may be obscure at first sight,
d) give the correct spelling of all proper names,
e) advise on the convenience of using a particular font type for some words in the subtitled version,
f) clarify implicit as well as explicit allusions to geographical realities, etc.

Needless to say, the opportunity of having access to such a detailed dialogue list will facilitate the task of subtitlers and contribute to boosting the quality of the final product. The more informative a dialogue list, the more promptly the subtitler can grasp the original meaning of the ST and produce an accurate TT solution.

The quality of interlingual subtitling relies, to a large degree, on the subtitler's ability to identify linguistic and cultural nuances and to transfer them to the target text, while respecting the technical requirements. As mentioned, detailed dialogue lists, especially those including linguistic and extralinguistic information of the utterances, can facilitate the task of the subtitler, increasing translation efficiency and reducing potential comprehension mistakes. However, even when provided with a good quality list, the subtitler should not completely rely on it as some texts that appear on the image, especially those that are not part of the conversation such as dates, time and locations, might have been omitted. Song lyrics also tend to be ignored in dialogue lists. Minchinton (1986: 13), consequently, holds a sceptical view on the validity of dialogue lists and advises subtitlers to be aware of such omissions "because dialogue list compilers usually forget that there are other texts in a picture besides the actors' dialogue".

When subtitling commercial DVDs, it is common to provide subtitlers with a 'genesis file', also known as 'master template' or 'master list'. A genesis file, in Pedersen's (2011: 16) terms, "is basically an intralingual subtitle file of the ST", in which the segmentation and spotting have already been done, usually by native speakers of the source language (see Appendix 8). Genesis files came into being in an attempt to simplify the technical process of subtitling and reduce the costs involved. To put it in financial terms, as Georgakopoulou (2009: 31) states, "what the template has introduced into the subtitling industry is an economy of scale, whereby the greater the number of languages involved in a project, the larger the cost-savings to be made". While the cost of production is reduced, the client's perceived quality of the subtitling service would be increased in a relative sense. This is because clients tend to assess the quality and attractiveness of a product or service by its cost-performance ratio. In this sense, when the performances of two products are identical, the appeal of the one with a lower cost would be greater than the one with a higher cost.

However, in some not-so-ideal situations, efficiency and convenience may be enjoyed at the expense of subtitling quality. Particularly in the DVD industry, genesis files are usually produced in English, even when the SL of the film is not English, so that they can be sent to a number of subtitlers who work into different languages and may not know the original language of the programme. For instance, it is possible for a Croatian subtitler who does not know any Persian to subtitle an Iranian film because the SL of the provided template is English instead of Persian. On occasions, this means that genesis files in English have been generated by non-English native speakers and thus may contain serious comprehension errors. In addition, working in English as the pivot language also means that the resulting subtitles in the different target languages are 'translations of translations' (Nornes, 2007: 235), rather than translations of the original text. The probability of meaning being lost in this chain of translations, hence, is heightened. Likewise, errors included in the English translation, or difficulties when dealing with sensitive cases like sexual references or vulgar jargon, may also be passed on to other languages without much debate.

While the genesis file, on the one hand, saves subtitlers time on performing their own cueing, it may, on the other hand, deprive them of the 'decision power' when it comes to segmenting the dialogue in accordance with the syntax of the target language. This negative effect is particularly obvious when the translation is between two languages which have very different grammatical and syntactic natures. As far as English-Chinese subtitling is concerned, the subtitler would often have to face the challenge of rearranging the order of information. The following example may illustrate the issue at hand:

Example 7

Source text (English)

The kids	played	poker games	happily	in the park	last night.
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Who	**Do**	**What**	**How**	**Where**	**When**
孩子們	玩	撲克牌	開心地	在公園	昨晚

Target text (Chinese)

昨晚	孩子們	在公園	開心地	玩	撲克牌。
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
When	**Who**	**Where**	**How**	**Do**	**What**
Last night	the kids	in the park	Happily	played	poker games.

Despite the fact that there is some flexibility to arrange the sentence slightly differently in both languages, the above example still demonstrates the acute difference between the word order of English and that of Chinese. When a long sentence is divided into several consecutive subtitles, such a difference would be particularly difficult to tackle, as the coordination of subtitle, image and sound must also be taken into consideration. Therefore, without the power to make decisions regarding spotting, the subtitler will be affected by another constraint which would hinder the way the information is segmented and conveyed. The quality of the target text would thus be less likely to reach the highest standard.

In line with the above discussion, Nikolić (2011: 70) also identifies several causes for complaints by subtitlers, including "having to use templates in languages other than the language used in the video, the impossibility of changing time codes, and the interference in the target language conventions as subtitling rules used in the template are different than the subtitling country norms among others". However,

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he (ibid.: 69) still considers templates to be "a necessary evil", arguing that subtitlers have become used to working with templates, with their increasing prevalence in the industry.

In most cases, in addition to a detailed dialogue list, a copy of the film would also be provided to the subtitler, although it is not uncommon for them to only receive a Word document with the dialogue exchanges and/or the soundtrack of the programme. When there is enough time, watching the film in its entirety before beginning work can maximise the translation benefits, allowing the subtitler to gain a solid grasp of the story context and, hence, to develop more appropriate translation solutions. Torregrosa (1996) proposes that the first viewing of the film may help the subtitler clarify the uncertainties and ambiguities in three areas, to which Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 31) add another two:

a) Words and phrases that lend themselves to a polysemous reading in the original.
b) The gender and number of some nouns, pronouns and adjectives that are not marked in English.
c) The degree of familiarity shown among the characters, to decide whether a formal or informal form of address is required, and their identity when being referred to by pronoun.
d) Deictic units as 'this/these', 'that/those', 'here/there', etc. may have referents that appear on screen and do not need to be translated. Alternatively, obscure or long terms that are difficult to translate may refer to objects that appear on screen and can be rendered by means of a deictic.
e) Exclamations with no fixed meaning that can only be appreciated in a given context, such as 'oh, my', 'fuck', 'geez', 'Christ', 'blimey', and the like.

With access to audiovisual materials, subtitlers have a better chance of ensuring the quality of their translation. Sadly, there are times when such access proves impossible. For distribution companies, the major concern over providing a working copy of the film is that it might be leaked or that illegal copies might be made and distributed before the actual official launch. In the profession, therefore, the audiovisual material, if provided, very often reaches the subtitler in low resolution, even in black and white, or with inserts and spoilers reminding the viewer that the copy belongs to a certain distribution company and highlighting the consequences of

any potential breach of copyright. The overwhelming fear of films being leaked results in fuzzy, jagged and blurry images, sometimes to the degree that the picture is unable to provide the subtitler with any useful information. When the resolution is too low, the detrimental effect is that the subtitler may have difficulty appreciating some details or identifying the gender of an actor on screen, particularly when they do not speak a line, but are referred to by the speaker in a scene, thus resulting in potential inaccuracy. As a Taiwanese respondent from the second round commented, there were times when the images of the video clips provided by clients were "so blurred that [she had] to repetitively replay the scenes so as to identify the gender of the [person]" to whom the speaker was referring in the dialogue. This can be particularly tricky when translating into Traditional Chinese, a language that has masculine and feminine forms for the singular second person pronoun 'you': '你' (nî) and '妳' (nî) respectively; this also applies to the plural forms of 'you', that is, '你們'(nîmen) and '妳們' (nîmen). Given that the quality of translation in subtitling is partially dependent on accessibility to audiovisual materials, it goes without saying that their quality has to be good to facilitate the task of the subtitler and contribute to achieving the desired overall quality.

In addition to templates, dialogue lists and audiovisual programmes, the provision of supplementary materials such as consistency and terminology sheets and style guidelines can also be of great help to subtitlers in achieving homogeneity in matters of presentation, both from a linguistic and technical perspective, especially those who work as part of a group on the same programme series. It is common practice in the industry for different episodes of the same TV series to be assigned to several subtitlers. On occasion, subtitlers will receive a consistency sheet from the client or language service provider, while at other times they may be asked to produce such a document themselves if the agencies do not have enough manpower to do it in-house. Different versions of consistency sheets (Appendix 9 and 10) for the same television series can be generated at different stages, especially during the first season when the series is becoming established in the new country. In such a

working context, if subtitlers are not given the most up-to-date version of the consistency sheet when they start translating, it will make their task more onerous in terms of time and the whole exercise may end up costing more time and money if the subtitles need to be revised at a later stage in order to homogenise the jargon used throughout the various episodes and series. A couple of respondents mentioned their experience of receiving the wrong version of the consistency sheet from coordinators. Unaware of the fact, they submitted their subtitles only to be asked to correct the translations all over again in accordance with another updated consistency sheet. In many cases, the time wasted will not be financially compensated. Therefore, not only the quality of the supplementary documents provided to the subtitlers, but also the prompt delivery of the correct versions are of capital importance during the subtitling production process.

Needless to say, consistency in translation has a strong influence on the perception of quality. The quality of these supplementary materials thus plays a key role in the final output and is no less important than that of the dialogue list. If the supplementary materials are of poor quality, then the output quality is doomed to failure.

Following the above discussion, the survey results concerning the perception of respondents regarding the quality of the main support materials they had received from their typical clients are presented below. On the whole, the majority of respondents from both rounds found the quality of the received materials either satisfactory or acceptable, albeit to various degrees. The details are shown in Table 14.

Table 14: Quality of the provided support material

First Round						
	Very good	**Good**	**Average**	**Fair**	**Poor**	**N/A**
Dialogue lists/scripts	16.30%	36.4%	29.1%	9.1%	2.6%	6.5%
Templates	12.6%	23.1%	21.7%	6.1%	7.7%	28.9%
Audiovisual programmes	21.4%	42.4%	23.3%	3.5%	2.3%	7.0%
Supplementary materials (e.g. consistency sheets, glossaries, etc.)	4.2%	19.1%	19.8%	7.9%	8.2%	40.8%
Second Round						
	Very good	**Good**	**Average**	**Fair**	**Poor**	**N/A**
Dialogue lists/scripts	16.3%	40.8%	20.4%	4.1%	2.0%	16.3%
Templates	16.3%	30.6%	12.2%	8.2%	0%	32.7%
Audiovisual programmes	26.5%	38.8%	24.5%	6.1%	2.0%	2.0%
Supplementary materials (e.g. consistency sheets, glossaries, etc.)	8.2%	22.4%	18.4%	12.2%	2.0%	36.7%

Concerning questions regarding the quality of the support materials provided by typical clients, the option 'not applicable' was included in the survey to allow participants to highlight the fact that not all subtitlers have access to support materials or that the frequency of such provision is so low and erratic that they themselves could not even form a general impression of the quality. Compared with the statistics for the first round, the percentage of respondents considering the question not applicable to them when it comes to the quality of templates (28.9%) and/or dialogue lists (6.5%) is considerably higher in the second round, at 32.7% and 16.3% respectively. This finding implies that, as a whole, professional practice in the Chinese market is prone to be laggard and less rigorous and efficient. A Taiwanese respondent from the second round indicated that she had been working with a world-leading science and medicine publisher, producing subtitles for medical conference recordings. With only video clips at hand and no other material, she had to create the subtitles from the original soundtrack in both the source (English) and the target (Chinese) languages, as well as having to carry out the technical spotting without using subtitling software by simply "typing manually timecodes in hours, minutes and seconds (i.e. HH:MM:SS) on [a Word document]". When a subtitler has to translate everything from the soundtrack with no other support such as a dialogue

list, the time needed is significantly prolonged and efficiency and accuracy can be substantially reduced. The chances of the translator mishearing some words or expressions from the original, in their non-native language, increases considerably, leading to mistranslations on certain occasions.

As mentioned, a correlation seems to exist between the quality of the subtitling output and the quality of the provided support materials. Accordingly, the survey was set up to explore the extent to which this relationship could be established. Although the appreciations can only be subjective, the results obtained attest to such a concern, with many professionals considering that the quality of support materials are influential to some extent on the quality of the final translation, particularly in terms of 'templates', 'dialogue lists', and 'audiovisual programmes'. The level of influence of different support materials on output quality are shown in Table 15 below:

Table 15: Level of influence of low quality materials on the final translation

First Round				
Type of Material	**Very Much**	**Moderate**	**Just a little**	**Not at all**
Dialogue lists/scripts	23.3%	36.4%	28%	12.3%
Templates	24.7%	31.7%	19.1%	24.5%
Audiovisual programmes	35.7%	36.8%	15.6%	11.9%
Supplementary materials (e.g. consistency sheet, glossary, etc.)	11.2%	27.7%	25.9%	35.2%
Second Round				
Type of Material	Very Much	Moderate	Just a little	Not at all
Dialogue lists/scripts	36.7%	40.8%	4.1%	18.4%
Templates	30.6%	34.7%	16.3%	18.4%
Audiovisual programmes	32.7%	36.7%	22.4%	8.2%
Supplementary materials (e.g. consistency sheet, glossary, etc.)	18.4%	30.7%	22.4%	28.5%

The importance that most respondents attached to the quality of dialogue lists/scripts, templates and audiovisual programmes affirms the significance of their functions during the subtitling process, as well as their influence on subtitling quality.

Yet, some concerns about the quality of the received support materials were revealed in the survey results. A couple of respondents from the first round indicated that sometimes there were discrepancies between the actual conversations heard in the soundtrack and the text provided in the written dialogue lists, increasing the chance of mistranslation, particularly when tight deadlines hinder the attention given by the subtitler to the various communicative channels of the video clip.

As mentioned, a spotted template is used to facilitate the technical side of subtitling and to speed the translation process. Yet, when working with templates, the information included on them also has the potential to affect the linguistic quality of a subtitler's output, or at least, of their translation efficiency. Due to the limited number of characters available for subtitles on certain occasions within the film, crucial information can be unintentionally omitted at times in the spotted document during the condensation process. In these cases, the information may end up disappearing from the TT unless the subtitler is alert and can recuperate the missing information from the audiovisual programme in the translation.

A Chinese respondent from the first round mentioned that from time to time, when faced with tight deadlines, she would translate "without first watching the whole programme from the beginning to the end", relying therefore on the content included in the template. Under these circumstances, relevant lexical items and information that are important for the development of the plot but have been excluded from the template, can easily be missed during the translation. According

to this respondent's viewpoint, if the number of situations whereby important information were missing or deleted from the templates could be reduced, her working efficiency and output quality would be boosted to a certain extent.

The survey results also reveal the way in which respondents subjectively weighted the level of influence that the quality of the audiovisual material provided by the client or vendor can exert on their final translation: approximately 70% of participants in both rounds acknowledged that the quality of the AV material can affect their translation performance 'very much' or have a 'moderate' impact. The percentage of respondents in the first round who considered the quality of audiovisual materials to have 'nil' influence on their output was slightly higher (11.9%) than in the case of the second round (8.2%). This may be related to the fact that more respondents in the second round were neither provided with transcriptions nor templates, which meant they were unable to rely on this support material during their professional activity. They thus had to depend much more on the quality of the audiovisual materials for their translation process, as this was the only material they received on many occasions.

Having discussed the importance of the quality of the support materials given to the translators, and having seen how subtitlers consider them to have a direct impact on the final quality of their subtitles, the next section investigates how the use of subtitling programs can help assure the quality of the subtitling output.

6.1.4 Subtitling Programs

In addition to the quality of support materials, the use of subtitling programs may contribute to the technical and linguistic excellence of the final output. Many professional software programs (e.g. Swift by Softel, WinCAPS by Screen Systems,

EZTitles, FAB, etc.) have been designed exclusively for subtitling work. The technological advances facilitate every step of the subtitling process, primarily concentrating on its technical dimension although this, of course, irremediably has a knock-on effect on the linguistic dimension, including accurate spotting and synchronisation, control of reading speeds, verification of the maximum number of characters per line, duration checks, spell checkers, and so on. Nonetheless, the contribution of programs to the actual linguistic transfer is far less noticeable than in the case of the technical dimension, although some functions such as spell checkers can easily prevent typos and thus ensure basic linguistic correctness. The automation of error detection guarantees, to a certain degree, the quality of subtitling both in terms of technical and linguistic accuracy.

Examples of WinCAPS (www.screensystems.tv),[25] one of the leading professional subtitling programs, are illustrated in section 3.4.3 (Figure 2 and Figure 3), where the function of configuring the safe area of the screen are discussed. WinCAPS, as shown in Figure 32 below, allows users to watch the video and simulate the subtitles while performing all sorts of other tasks, such as creating timecodes, controlling the reading speed (e.g. wpm and cps), adjusting font type and colour, noting shot changes, etc. As the drop-down menu shows, the program also help users to check spelling, constraints regarding language and the number of characters per line, and other technical specifications such as row length, number of lines, minimum gap between subtitles, potential blank spaces in the lines, and so on. However, the spell check function does not work with non-alphabetic languages such as Mandarin or Japanese.

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[25] WinCAPS was originally developed by SysMedia, which became part of Screen Systems in 2011.
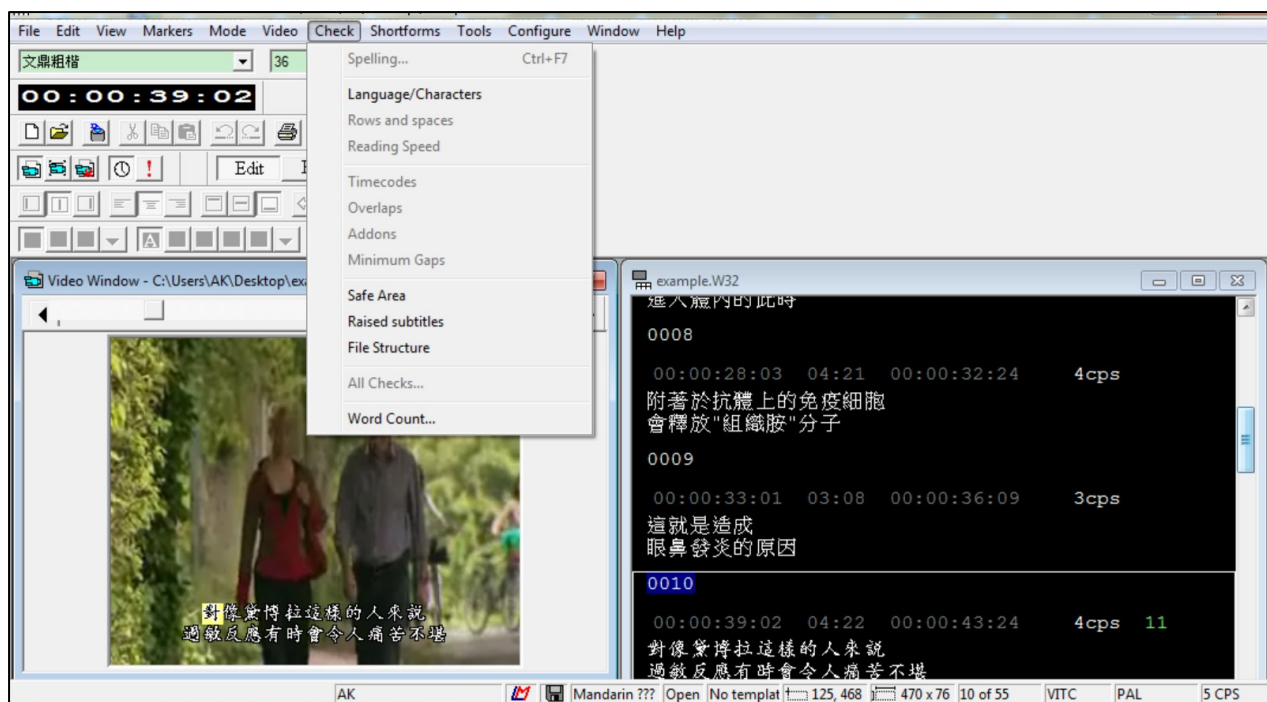
Figure 32: Interface of the professional subtitling program WinCAPS

In addition to WinCAPS, there are also many other professional subtitling programs commonly used among subtitlers, which are listed in Table 16:

Table 16: Examples of professional subtitling software

EZTitles	www.eztitles.com
FAB	www.fab-online.com
Screen Subtitling	www.screen.subtitling.com
Swift	www.softel.co.uk
Spot	www.spotsoftware.nl

In line with the need to boost turnaround within the industry, professional subtitling programs are being constantly updated and equipped with functions that aim to maximise subtitlers' productivity. As Díaz-Cintas (2013b) argues, in the subtitling industry, as in any other industry, time equates to money, and technological developments can help to reduce costs while raising the subtitler's productivity. Recently, some companies have started to pay attention to developing automatic

functions. For instance, the most recent version of WinCAPS launched by Screen Systems (www.screensystems.tv), WinCAPS Qu4ntum, claims to offer powerful tools such as automated media transcription, automatic timing for same language subtitling, assisted translation, adaptive extraction of dialogue from scripts, automated colouring when identifying characters in SDH, and speech-to-text alignment to deal with live subtitling. The improved interface of WinCAPS Qu4ntum also seems to be more user friendly, with enhanced functions neatly displayed, as shown in Figure 33:
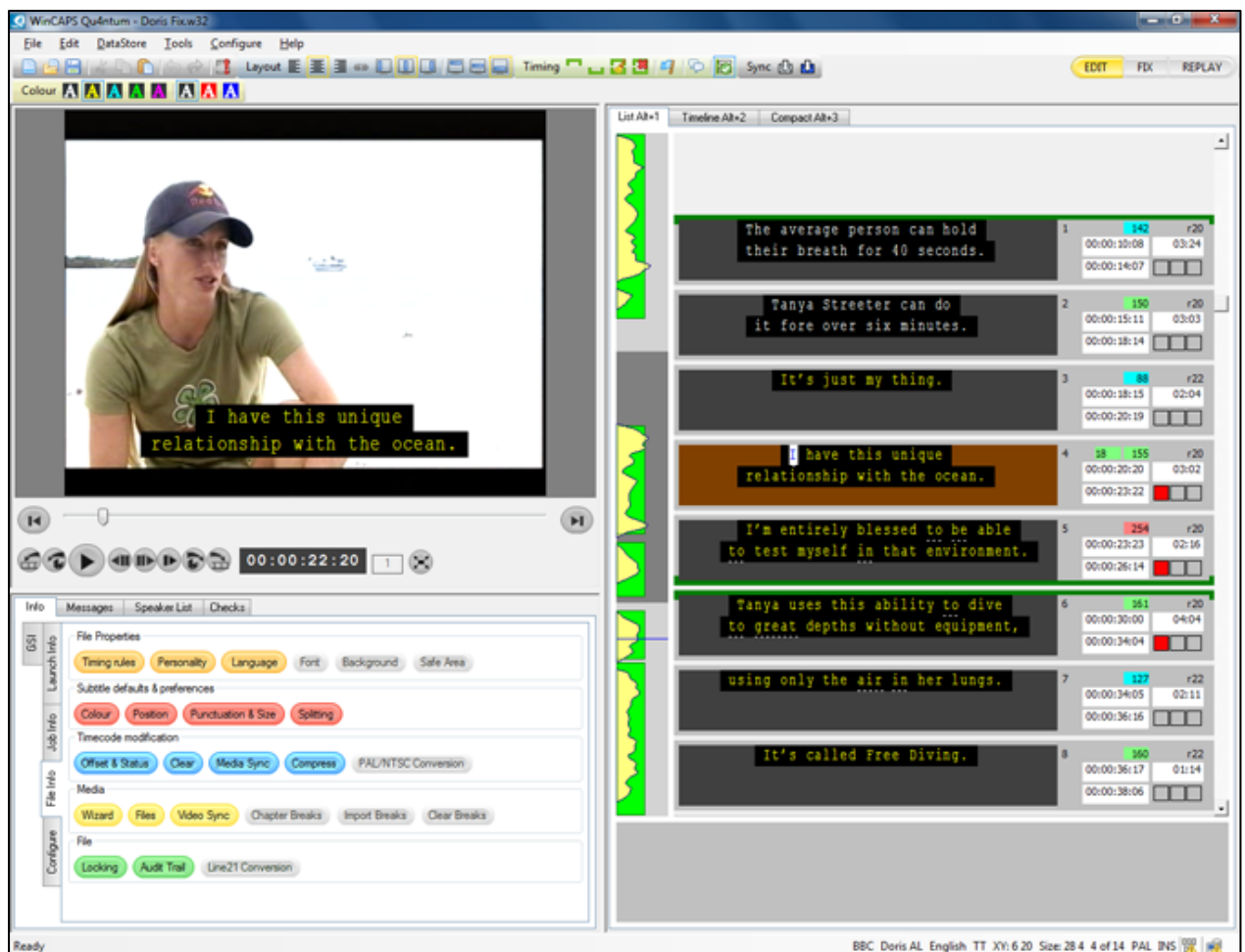
Figure 33: Interface of WinCAPS Qu4ntum[26]

[26] For further details, please refer to www.screensystems.tv/products/wincaps-subtitling-software.

Automation of different subtitling tasks has always been at the forefront of research and development from the industry perspective as, if productivity increases, overall costs can be reduced while turnovers and outputs are increased. Projects such as Subtitling via Machine Translation (SUMAT, www.sumat-project.eu) and Sharing Audio Visual Language Resources for Automatic Subtitling (SAVAS, www.fp7-savas.eu) were launched with the aim of developing innovative tools that could facilitate the subtitling process and greatly enhance the efficiency of human input. More details are included in section 7.1.

Some leading subtitling companies have also developed their own subtitling software programs that they provide to their recruited freelance subtitlers. For example, Deluxe Digital Studios (www.bydeluxe.com) offers subtitling software such as Eddie and UNSTools (the former for translating subtitles and the latter for quality control) to the subtitlers with whom they work. Some small and medium-sized companies only recruit subtitlers who already have a subtitling program; moreover, as previously indicated in section 5.3.7, some clients do not provide subtitling programs to subtitlers they hire and, in this case, subtitlers have to either purchase their own version (traditionally rather expensive) or use freeware if that is acceptable to the client.

With the proliferation of fansubbing and the development of technology from all quarters, subtitlers nowadays can choose from a vast variety of freeware, of which some of the best known examples are listed in Table 17:

Table 17: Examples of subtitling freeware

Aegisub	www.aegisub.org
DivXland Media Subtitler	www.divxland.org/subtitler.php
Subtitle Edit	www.subtitle-edit.en.softonic.com
Subtitle Workshop	www.urnsoft.net/home.php?lang=1
VisualSubSync	www.visualsubsync.org
VobSub	www.vobsub.en.softonic.com

Although subtitling freeware provides free access to users, allowing professionals and non-professionals to create subtitles from scratch and enjoy the fun of fansubbing, the functions of the program are usually very basic and are particularly limited in performing quality control tasks such as syntax checks, monitoring reading speeds and row length breaches, and so on. Figure 34 below is an interface example of a piece of amateur subtitling software, called Subtitle Workshop, in which the user can view the video, add subtitles and adjust the technical settings, thus carrying out essential tasks.
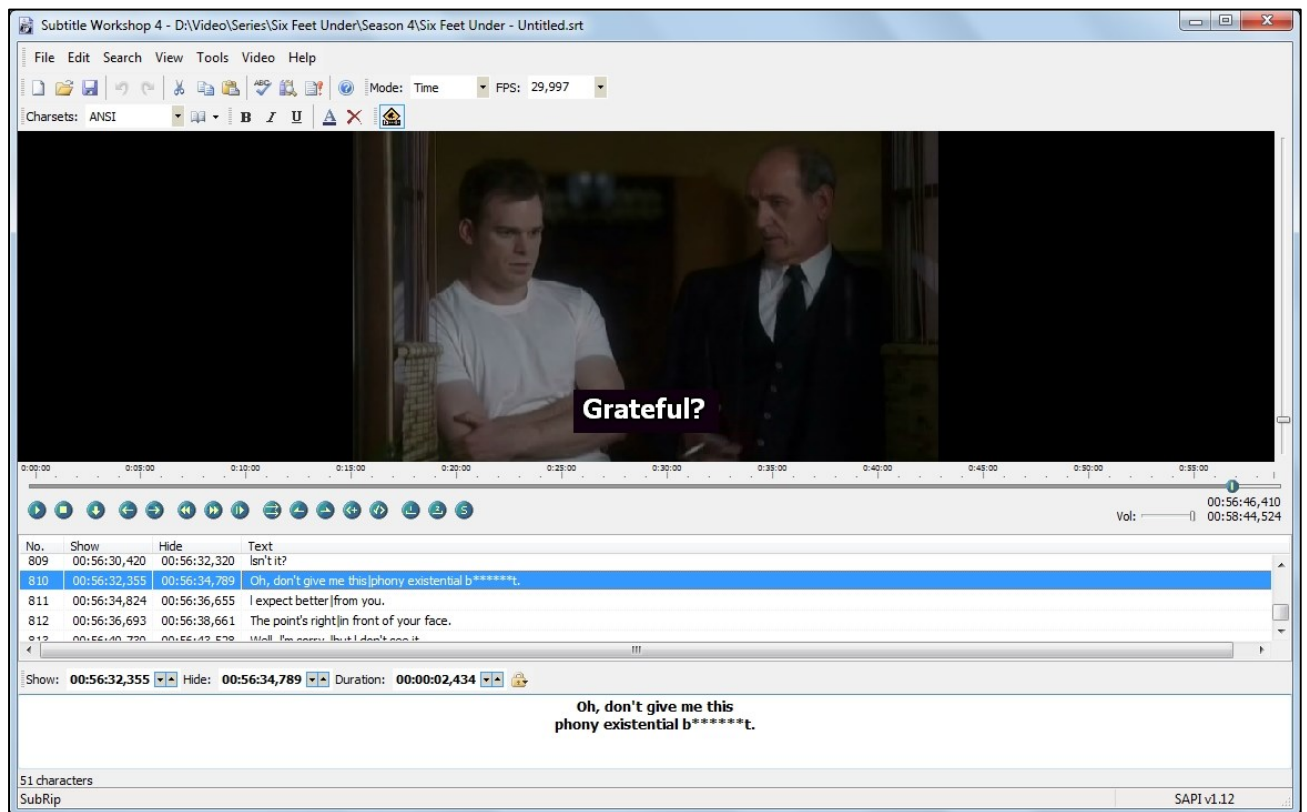

Figure 34: Subtitle Workshop 4 Interface

(source: http://img.ptf.com/screenshots/3647/3647773_2.jpg)

Compared with the interface of WinCAPS Qu4atum (see Figure 33), the simplicity of the functions provided through freeware may also denote its inability to meet the

professional standards of subtitling. An English-to-Italian subtitler, Dianna Battaglio,[27] commented on the subtitling forum of Proz.com regarding the use of Subtitle WorkShop under a discussion on the topic of 'translation efficiency for subtitling':

> Very time-consuming and imprecise (how do you calculate reading speed? Number of words/character per minute? Frames before/after shot changes? Min/max duration of subtitles?). […]

> Subtitle Workshop is not a professional subtitling tool. I wonder what the subtitling companies I work for would say, if I begin submitting files executed with a (sic) freeware software. […]

> There is no way one can produce a high quality subtitled file using one of these things. Industry standards impose a much higher quality.

With the drawbacks clearly pointed out in Battaglio's comments (despite them being subjective), it appears that the use of subtitling freeware can also be strongly associated with (poor) output quality, or, at very least, work efficiency. Such inefficiency may result in inevitable breaches of technical specifications and linguistic errors whilst professional subtitling software can be used for error detection and avoid endangering the quality of subtitling output.

As previously mentioned, there are also times when subtitlers are not required to work with a subtitling program and are only provided with plain templates in .txt, .rtf, or word files (see Appendix 6), as discussed in sections 5.3.7 and 6.1.3. In these cases, subtitlers would need to count, in a primitive way, the number of characters contained in each line and they also need to work out the value of the timecodes and to keep an eye on the time that the subtitle remains on screen, thus making the subtitling process lengthier and, usually, more prone to mistakes and less accurate. When working with templates, the technical quality of subtitling will mostly depend on the task carried out by the technician in charge of the spotting, the experience of

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[27] For further details, please refer to the website: www.proz.com/forum/subtitling/201722-translation_efficiency_for_subtitling.html.

the subtitler with this type of documents and the final revision carried out by the quality control reviewer, if any.

6.1.5 Quality Control Procedures

With reference to good practice, apart from preventive measures such as providing adequate guidelines and support materials of good quality, there are also remedial procedures involved in the subtitling production process; for example, performing lexical and syntactic checks with software, verifying the maximum reading speeds and number of characters per line (as discussed in the previous section), proofreading by experienced subtitlers and so on, in order to assure the quality of the final output. During the final procedures, some clients may alter some of the translation solutions to suit their requirements without necessarily requesting the consent of the subtitler, while others provide detailed feedback and may also establish communication with the subtitler before finalising the translation. In this respect, offering feedback to subtitlers is a proactive way to foster cooperation between the parties involved, helping subtitlers to establish a better idea of what a particular client requires in order to achieve the desired quality in future work.

Depending on budget and manpower, different clients adopt different policies towards giving feedback. Thus, certain clients provide feedback on each translation and others only do so when a need has been identified, whilst some prefer to offer this support at the initial stage of collaboration and yet others carry out sample checks on a regular basis.

According to the survey results, in the first round 14.5% of respondents 'always' received feedback about their translation, 19.4% 'often', 32.2% 'sometimes', 25.4%

'rarely' and 8.5% had received 'none' so far. In the second round, the figures varied slightly and only 10.2% 'always' received feedback, 12.2% 'often', nearly half (44.9%) 'sometimes', whereas 22.5% mentioned 'rarely' and 10.2% had 'never' received any feedback on their translations.

After the subtitler has completed an assignment, it is common and good practice for the file to then be inspected and if necessary, also to be edited and altered to ensure that it meets the client's required quality criteria. However, not every subtitler is given the chance to view the final version of their subtitled programme with all the corrections. The survey results reveal that a high 46% of respondents from the first round were unable to obtain feedback on their work, with 28% mentioning 'never' and 18% 'rarely', while a total of 54% had benefited from this practice, with 19.3% stating that they 'sometimes' had access to the finished version of their work, 17% 'often' and 17.7% 'always'. As for the second round, the results are slightly more positive and a lower 28.5% (as opposed to the previous 46%) had not benefited from this practice (12.2% had 'never' viewed the final version of their work and 16.3% had 'rarely' had the chance). On the positive side, a total of 71.4% acknowledged having been given the opportunity to see the final version before it was dispatched to the client, with 36.7% mentioning that this occurred 'sometimes', 18.4% 'often' and 16.3% 'always'. On this front, the findings may indicate a more engaged relationship existed between subtitlers and their clients in the second round, compared with the first round. This could be due to the fact that a much higher percentage (57%) of respondents from the second round than from the first round (6%) worked with templates only. Accordingly, since the subtitling quality heavily relies on experienced proof readers in the second round, more communication and correspondence is required during the process.

As discussed in section 5.3.4, some of the respondents who were not given the opportunity to view the final version of their translation, or whom did not agree with it, preferred to decline being credited because they did not trust the quality of the

released subtitles or disapproved of some of the renderings. The following section discusses the acknowledgement of the subtitlers' name at the end of the subtitled programme and their attitude towards this practice.

6.1.6 The Invisibility of Subtitlers

The survey findings regarding the frequency of respondents being credited for their work, along with their personal preferences to be credited or otherwise, have been discussed in section 5.3.4. For various reasons, receiving credit was not always the preferred choice of the majority of respondents, suggesting that a relationship exists between the visibility of the subtitler and the perceived quality of their output. As some respondents indicated, they preferred for their names not to appear on the end credits of the programmes they had subtitled when (1) they had no control over the final translation, for example, a respondent from Hong Kong commented that he preferred to be credited only "if the translation is entirely done by me", and preferred not to be "if there are other people involved in working on the subtitles, like proofreaders and QCers", and a Swedish respondent also added "[n]ot if the client make changes without my permission/knowledge"; (2) they were not given enough time to work on the task; in fact, an Italian respondent refused to be credited unless "[she is] given the right amount of time to translate/subtitle" to ensure that she is satisfied with her output; (3) they were clearly dissatisfied with the quality of the time-cueing; a Finnish respondent explained her preference not to be credited, arguing that "[s]ometimes the template is so terribly time-cued, that I would not want people to think I timed it"; (4) they did not personally like the programme, as revealed by a Dutch respondent: "[d]epending on the type of programme. [I am] less keen on adding my name to the credits for e.g. *America's Funniest Home*"; or (5) they were not certain of the authorship of the subtitles, evidence by a Greek respondent who replied: "only if I am the only author of subtitles", otherwise, "I tend not be credited". The inclination to not be credited

betokens the potential awareness of a defective translation, possibly as a result of having to compromise on some solutions due to tight deadlines or unreasonably low rates. Under these conditions, some subtitlers may be unwilling to spend more time weighing up words or settling disagreements with editors or proof-readers. While some respondents mentioned that there were occasions when external circumstances forced them to compromise on quality, others claimed that there were also times when it was due to their own reluctance to attain quality because of what they perceived as poor working conditions. Although the preference to be invisible can be the result of dissatisfaction with translation quality, on the other hand, being invisible can also be seen as a symptom that some subtitlers are not willing to strive to do their utmost to pursue high quality when forced to work under certain conditions.

As mentioned previously when discussing tight deadlines (see section 6.1.2), some respondents stated that they might neglect to watch the video and work instead directly from the template, thus endangering the quality of their translation. From an industry perspective, the negative impact of this kind of situation could be minimised if the subtitlers' names were associated with a given audiovisual production, as their sense of responsibility and self-esteem would encourage them to be more careful and zealous in their work. When insufficient time is allowed for subtitlers to carry out a decent job, they may wish to consider refusing the task in the first place, or encouraging the client to reconsider the possibility of allowing more time for the assignment; this is also in line with the second point mentioned in the previous paragraph. As the issue of tight deadlines is not going to disappear, professionals should look into developing new strategies that could help them maximise their efforts in the shortest time possible.

Based on the above discussion, it may be a logical deduction that, if subtitlers know that their names would be included at the end of a programme, in the same way as

the names of literary translators are included in the books they have translated, their motivation to produce quality work could be boosted. Such social visibility could empower professionals and prompt them to be more proactive when striving for better rates and to reject work for which the suggested remuneration would not be worth the energy and time required for the task. To a certain degree, visibility may act as a catalyst that could help to progressively improve subtitling quality and rates and become a necessary trigger to raise the visibility of the profession altogether.

Accordingly, as the findings also seem to indicate that being visible would encourage subtitlers to exert themselves more in order to achieve the best possible quality because their names would be associated with a given production, this in turn has the potential to help them to gain professional credibility in the industry and obtain more job opportunities. In this sense, the visibility of the subtitlers via their acknowledgement in the credits of the audiovisual programme that they have subtitled can be seen as a means for both subtitlers and their clients to ensure subtitling quality.

6.2 Implications for the Development of the Profession

After examining the factors that, in the opinion of the participants, determine subtitling quality in practice, this section first revisits the Code of Good Subtitling Practice (see section 3.3), then moves on to explore the possible reasons why these aspects are highlighted. Low subtitling rates and very tight deadlines are discussed as the two most prominent issues raised by the respondents, followed by a debate on the changes that the respondents have experienced since the economic downturn. The final section suggests directions for future improvements to help develop the profession.

6.2.1 Code of Good Subtitling Practice Revisited

The Code of Good Subtitling practice proposed by Ivarsson and Carroll (1998: 157-159), as shown in section 3.3, serves as a representative example of industry and academic guidelines, providing a broad overview of the larger context before entering the detailed discussion in section 3.4. After the empirical study conducted on the working conditions of subtitlers, some discrepancies have been identified between the Code and the real practice in the professional world. Further details are elaborated upon below.

In an ideal situation, as stated at the beginning of the Code, subtitlers should always work with a complete copy of the actual production (i.e. video, DVD, etc.), a copy of the dialogue list and a glossary of any unusual words and special references. However, in the professional reality, as shown in Table 13 which summarises the results from both survey rounds, about 30% of respondents did not always have access to audiovisual material and over half were not always provided with dialogues lists and consistency/terminology sheets. One of the potential reasons for clients not supplying audiovisual material to subtitlers is to avoid the possibility of audiovisual programmes being leaked out and pirated. Providing subtitlers with low-resolution videos as an alternative on some occasions was regarded with scepticism by some respondents, as discussed in section 6.1.3. Furthermore, another fact revealed from the survey findings, which appears to be in contradiction with the Code's emphasis on subtitlers to spot the production themselves, is that not every respondent was involved with the task of spotting the subtitles, especially those from the second round (see section 5.3.7). Despite the obvious advantage of subtitlers being able to adjust the duration of certain subtitles in accordance with their preferred translations, real practice seems to point in the direction that this task of spotting is somehow disappearing from the portfolio of activities carried out by some subtitlers, a development that can be related to the growing trend of standardised division of labour in audiovisual translation.

The fact that a considerable number of respondents did not always prefer to be credited at the end of the programmes they subtitle (see sections 5.3.4), seems to be counter to the Code's assertion about the necessity of subtitlers being acknowledged for their work. The reasons for the reluctance of some respondents to be credited have been elaborated in section 6.1.6 and indicate that a solution is not as straightforward as it may seem. This contradiction clearly highlights the fact that the best practice may not always satisfy all parties involved in real-life scenarios, including the actual subtitlers.

With respect to the formal presentation of the subtitles, there does not seem to exist an absolute standard either, although this realisation does not come as a surprise. For instance, the Code specifies that a dash should always be inserted at the beginning of each line to indicate different speakers; however, as illustrated in Example 5 (see section 3.4.2), there seems to be a trend of using only one dash at the beginning of the second line, i.e. no dash is inserted in the first line.

These discrepancies suggest not only that guidelines cannot be of an absolute nature but also that subtitling rules can age and evolve rather quickly. The practice of subtitling varies from country to country and from company to company, and is constantly changing with the development of audiovisual technology (Díaz-Cintas, 2013b). Of course, this is not to say that guidelines would thus be useless because they suffer from some limitations when applied to real situations. Rather, what it means is that, particularly as far as translation agencies and subtitling studios are concerned, guidelines should be revisited and updated on a regular basis and the latest versions should be used and provided to subtitlers in order to achieve desired outcomes and increase efficiency. However, according to the survey findings (see Table 13), only 26% of respondents from the first round and 47% from the second round were always given some guidelines, a fact that signals the erratic use of subtitling guidelines in the industry.

6.2.2 Causes of the Turmoil

As demonstrated by the survey findings, there are significant variations in remuneration rates throughout the subtitling field. This could be due to various causes including the inferior position of the subtitler in the negotiation relationship. With relatively low entry barriers, subtitlers, like translators, can enter the profession from all sorts of backgrounds. Some practicing subtitlers may thus have entered the field without much prior knowledge, increasing competition within the profession. On the one hand, intense competition can put subtitlers in a weak bargaining position because they can be easily replaced prior to establishing their professional credibility. On the other hand, those who do enter the profession are less likely to be able to gauge the reasonable range of rates they deserve; therefore, their lack of knowledge regarding rates and working conditions, as well as their lack of professional maturity, may make them less motivated to negotiate. In addition, although professionally trained, new graduates may be vulnerable to panic and feel inclined to compromise on rates at the beginning in order to secure more jobs and better rates in the future.

The cumulative impact of fansubbing in the subtitling industry is another factor to be considered. As evidence shows, some people are willing to produce subtitles without making any profit (Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz-Sánchez, 2006), an activity which is mostly common to television series. Subtitlers who are fans of a certain television series may be willing to accept offers of lower rates because their passion for a show and the joy of being part of the programme can override all other factors. In addition, there are situations where certain distributors resort to 'unauthorised' fansubs in order to reduce translation costs, provoking fierce controversy in the sector. As mentioned in section 6.1.1, Netflix, a major provider of Internet streaming media, was caught red-handed using subtitles produced by the fansub community 'DivX Finland' (Van der Sar, 2012). In a rather ironic twist, the work of fansubs can be 'pirated' in full or slightly modified, and then be used in official programmes, placing profits before quality.

As mentioned, subtitlers work mostly on a freelance and individual basis; one of the negative outcomes of this situation is the scant flow of information, particularly among those who are not affiliated to any relevant professional associations or unions. Working in isolation not only poses a significant impediment to freelance subtitlers when seeking to obtain accurate information regarding the rates offered in the industry but also proves to be an obstacle to their unification to make their collective voice heard and fight for laws aimed at protecting their rights.

The lack of transparency about subtitling rates also aggravates the situation, as some employers or clients of subtitlers may not be fully conversant with the reasonable range of rates in any particular country, and thus make impractical offers. This could be one of the reasons behind the extreme fluctuations in rates indicated by the survey results. Incidentally, the rates applying to work for certain genres such as films, TV series and sitcoms were likely to be somewhat more homogeneous, possibly because the subtitling work of these mainstream productions is dominated by a few leading multinational subtitling studios such as SDI Media (www.sdimedia.com) and Deluxe Entertainment (www.bydeluxe.com). Companies of this kind tend to site their main offices in (a) given country(s), but work with subtitlers in overseas territories so as to take advantage of the lower, local rates and reduce costs.

Tight deadlines for subtitling seem to have become the norm across the globe, putting unrelenting pressure on subtitlers. Despite this is a shared phenomenon among the entire translation industry, deadlines can be even tighter in the subtitling sector due to several reasons. Firstly, commercial films and DVDs are usually released according to a tight production schedule that is closely related to financial imperatives, and any delay could result in investors bearing huge losses. Subtitling only plays a small part in the whole production process, the importance attached to which is usually considered insignificant. If there is any schedule change, the time allowed for translation is bound to be reduced. Secondly, translation agencies tend to compress the time devoted to assignments in order to boost their turnabout

times and revenues. On the one hand, more income can be generated by maximising business capacity; on the other hand, the more promptly they can deliver the service, the more likely they will win favour from customers. Thirdly, the fear of piracy and the pressure from fansub groups, which compete with one another to publish subtitles as fast as they can (Massida, 2012), often simultaneously with the release of the original, forces distributors to accelerate DVD releases. With the prevalence of video piracy, the later the releases are scheduled, the more financial losses can be incurred. In this context, deadlines are curtailed even further and a tendency towards the simship model can be observed, i.e. the release of international localised versions of programmes at the same time, or within a very short period of time following the original release as a way of "capitalising on the momentum built up by a single international marketing campaign, and minimising the risk of grey imports and piracy" (Bernal-Merino, 2013: 236).

6.2.3 Changes after the Economic Downturn

The financial troubles that started in 2007-2008, affecting countries worldwide, developed rapidly into a profound economic crisis that has had a tremendous impact on demand, investment and growth in many different sectors. The subtitling industry has been no exception. This is why the survey also examined the resulting changes induced by the global economic crisis in the industry, with the results grouped under four categories: (a) rates, (b) volume of work/clients, (c) payment terms and (d) procedures, all of which will be discussed in detail below.[28]

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[28] Please note that the time frames for the changes indicated by respondents from the two survey rounds differ because each round was conducted in a different year: the changes reflected by respondents from the first round occurred between 2005 and 2010, while the second round took place between 2008 and 2013.

a)   Rates

A total of 32.4% of respondents from the first round mentioned having experienced rate cuts, with only 17% from the second round reporting a similar experience; the level of the rate cuts varied from respondent to respondent, ranging from "slightly", "lowered by a third" up to "50% of the original rate". The reasons for the percentage from the second round being nearly half that of the first round could be attributed to the fact that the respondents, on the whole, had relatively less experience in the subtitling field; also, the time frame of the revealed changes was comparatively more recent, when the most critical stage of deep rate cuts had passed. Hence, the fluctuations in rates they observed may be less significant because the rates they were offered when they started in the profession were probably already reduced.

Some respondents from the first round also pointed out that the rate cuts had begun even before the economic downturn in 2008, and that rates had been lowered several times in the years prior to the point at which they filled in the survey and the start of the crisis. Rate cuts were implemented in many ways, with some companies negotiating lower prices with subtitlers, asking for discounts, lowering the price and adopting a take-or-leave-it policy, changing the payment policy from pay-per-subtitle to pay-per-minute. This change probably led to the biggest cut, "almost up to 50%", as a respondent from the first round commented. In addition, some subtitling studios used to offer bonuses for rushed assignments or programmes with high lexical density and a large number of subtitles; however, a couple of respondents from the same round reported that extra bonuses were no longer offered. A Polish respondent commented that "The rates are lower and there is no extra payment for a short notice assignment". At the time of the survey, three respondents from the first round were either in negotiations with clients or had just been informed about potential rate cuts. Despite the fact that a much larger number from the first round (32.4% of the respondents) suffered rate cuts, there were still five respondents (0.1%) whose rates had slightly increased. There was also one respondent who remarked

that her rate was "initially reduced, but through negotiation the agreed final rate was even higher" than the one suggested originally.

b)   Volume of work/clients

The changes in the volume of work varied from respondent to respondent, with some having suffered a decrease in job offers while others have seen an increase in their workload. Overall, the results tend to be rather positive for freelance subtitlers. In the five years prior to the time of the completion of the survey, a total of 35.7% of the respondents in the first round said that the subtitling output had decreased 'considerably' (21.2%) or 'slightly' (14.5%), whilst for a substantial 42.6% it had increased 'slightly' (22.6%) or 'considerably' (20%); for 21.7% it had 'remained the same'. As for the second round, the results seem to lean even more towards the positive, with only 26.5% having seen their output decrease either 'considerably' (14.3%) or 'slightly' (12.2%), while an increase was reported by 42.9% of the respondents, either 'slightly' (22.5%) or 'considerably' (20.4%); for 30.6% the state of affairs had 'remained the same'. In the opinion of some respondents, the augmentation of work was due to their establishment as credible professionals over the passage of time.

It is worth noting that, on occasion, decreased output was due to personal choice to some extent, as respondents had turned down job offers due to their personal unwillingness to compromise on new rates. As a respondent based in Finland from the first round commented: "They lowered the rate paid for programmes of a certain TV channel. I have refused to translate for this channel since then". There were also involuntary job losses and situations where respondents were simply assigned fewer contracts.

The situation looks more gloomy for those who worked as in-house subtitlers, and some were forced to shorten their working hours or days, whilst others lost their jobs altogether because their clients went bankrupt.

All in all, losses and gains in the job market clearly foreground the phenomenon of workload redistribution; those subtitlers who compromised on rates could benefit from a boost in their workload, whereas those who refused to accept lower rates were given fewer assignments.

c)   Payment terms

Payment delays were another issue reported by respondents as a collateral consequence of the cash-flow problems that became more acute with the economic crisis. Nonetheless, the percentages are significantly low. Indeed, only 5.1% of respondents from the first round and 2.1% from the second round mentioned experiencing either delayed payments and/or extended payment terms, e.g. from 30 days to 60 days, or from 60 days to 90 days. Some respondents further indicated that they had even started to request upfront payment because some of their clients had gone bankrupt before making payments, thus incurring a loss. A respondent based in France also added that she had compromised on lower rates, but hereafter "ask[ed] for payment on or before delivery".

d)   Procedures

A small fraction of respondents were also confronted with procedural changes: 2.8% from the first round and 2.1% from the second round pointed out that their typical clients had made procedural changes over the five years prior to the time they replied to the questionnaire. Some companies had chosen to reduce their budgets for procedures such as second proofreading/final editing, as well as requiring subtitlers to perform time-cueing. In relation to the task of originating subtitles, concerns about the declining quality of master files due to budget cuts were also expressed. The reasons put forward were that the clients no longer had enough manpower to take care of all the tasks in a satisfactory manner, or they had started to hire cheap, low-quality labour to reduce costs. As one respondent based in the Czech Republic stated, "[my clients] decreased the rates, started co-operating with

cheaper, less qualified translators". Along these lines, some of the respondents report having been asked to take charge of more research and documentation tasks, such as creating consistency guidelines and compiling vocabulary lists.

The economic crisis has certainly compounded the difficulties regarding the working conditions of many subtitlers and the state of affairs within the industry. The following section explores potential directions for future improvements.

6.2.4 Directions for Improvement

Of course, there is no one-size-fits-all solution, nor is there a shortcut to noticeable improvements. In addition to the enhancement of subtitlers' education (see section 6.3), the development of more prominent subtitler networks could be the seed for a brighter future. Only when the unity of the translator community is reinforced will a real recognition of the profession be attainable. As Reyntjens (2005: 8) points out, "it would be necessary to build up a large translator's network, like the translator's forums which already exist but, then, larger, in order to facilitate the exchange of information about all kinds of translation matters". Such a necessity seems to remain, albeit with the situation having improved to some extent in recent years, when compared with the norm in 2005.

Some professional AVT associations have been operating at national levels for several years, such as those who supported the survey (see section 4.7); their main objectives include raising the visibility and status of subtitlers, as well as securing decent working conditions.

At the international level, ESIST, one of the first international associations to accommodate higher education teachers, practitioners, academics and students in the field of AVT, aims to facilitate the exchange of information and promote

professional standards in the training and practice of screen translation, albeit their slant has perhaps been more towards the academic side. More recently, new platforms at the international level have also been created, such as Audiovisual Translators Europe (AVTE), where professional AVT associations from different countries can exchange views and information, and join forces to improve the existing state of affairs. However, as shown in the survey results, clear differences were still identified between countries with a strong union base and those without. The working conditions of subtitlers in the former are more homogenous and more likely to come out on top, particularly in terms of rates, royalties and being acknowledged on the credits of programmes, while the situation in the latter is much more varied and unsystematic. For instance, the percentages of respondents who were 'always' credited for their work in Scandinavian countries such as Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden were much higher (either close to or above 50%) than the averaged percentage of the total responses (25%). Possible reasons could be that crediting the name of the subtitler is explicitly required by law, that there are relatively strong unions fighting for the rights of subtitlers or that subtitling companies and TV broadcasters show a more 'developed' ethical attitude towards the work and authorship of the subtitlers. Hence, more efforts, at both intra- and inter-country levels, are still needed to enhance good practice within the industry. Building on solid and robust national networks, cooperation at the international level would have the potential to become more effective.

To enhance the working conditions of subtitlers, the scope of collaboration should be further widened, instead of being limited to subtitler unions or associations. Input from filmmakers, producers, subtitling agencies, distributors and audiences all count when it comes to making improvements. While some subtitling agencies are blamed for ignoring quality in order to speed up turnover, the crux of the problem may well lie in the lax attitude of filmmakers, producers, distributors and audiences towards the quality of subtitling. Only when all parties start to squarely face the issues associated with subtitling quality will it be possible to tackle the roots of the problem. If audiences were more demanding about the quality of subtitles and more vocal

about the impact that the quality of subtitles can have on their viewing experience and the potential benefit that good quality subtitles can bring to them in terms of foreign language acquisition, other stakeholders in the industry may start putting more effort into raising the quality of subtitling.

Likewise, if filmmakers, producers and distributors were more aware of the needs of the audience and of how good subtitling can enhance viewing pleasure, perhaps they would be more willing to place greater emphasis on the subtitling of their programmes and allocate a bigger budget to ensure their quality. In fact, greater awareness on the part of filmmakers, producers and distributors about current professional practices and working conditions in the field of subtitling would be a much welcomed development. If effective channels of communication can be implemented among the relevant stakeholders in the industry, including of course practicing subtitlers, the working conditions of the latter would have a better chance of being continually improved over time.

Last, but not least, while many governments such as that of Taiwan are aiming to promote the development of the film industry, along with other cultural and creative industries (usually by means of financial incentives), perhaps more emphasis should be placed on the quality of the subtitles, with the reason being that the export of domestic films tends to increase if they are more likely to be accepted by international audiences.

Subtitling seems to be the preferred translation option for many distributors when exporting films. With the ultimate aim of generating international income and building a solid reputation for national cinema, quality should be placed higher on their agendas as poor subtitling has a significantly negative impact, not only on the perception of the audience of a particular film, but also on the impression that they form of the country of origin. More awareness on the part of relevant cultural brokers would make it more likely for policies to be adapted, and for stakeholders to pay greater attention to developing the subtitling industry, thus accelerating the

maturity of the subtitling profession. In other words, only when the demand for high quality subtitles is created will it be possible for the supplier, i.e. the subtitling industry, to flourish.

In addition to the above, in-house training is another area in which subtitling studios and agencies can contribute to the enhancement of subtitling quality in the marketplace. Some professional subtitling studios provide on-the-job training for those that they have recruited into their employment, as some new recruits may not have received proper training in subtitling or in translation and they need to become familiar with the studios' own house styles and rules for subtitling, taking into consideration the demands of their typical clients. Hence, it is crucial for the recruited novice subtitlers to acquaint themselves with the designated specifications, subtitling software, particular language guidelines, work procedures and the criteria requested by clients. Even when newly recruited subtitlers already have ample experience, without proper training and detailed instructions their outputs will be unlikely to be consistent and may not achieve the desired quality.

The survey highlights some complaints from the respondents concerning the inefficiencies that result from the lack of adequate instructions and guidelines provided by subtitling companies. As one of the subtitlers mentions, "A couple of clients only provided very basic, raw guidelines, and constantly asked me to further adjust the style or format after I submitted the work through email correspondence. It just wastes my time!". This situation is more likely to occur when subtitling is not the client's main business activity, when the subtitling studio operates on a small scale or when budget cuts result in insufficient manpower to provide appropriate training for new recruits. The inadequacy of prior training or experience could significantly increase the need for correspondence between the coordinator and the subtitler, thus greatly decreasing the work efficiency of both parties. Accordingly, in-house training for new recruits at an early stage is indispensable. With respect to the formal education of subtitlers, it will be discussed further in the following section.

6.3 Implications for Subtitlers' Education

As the survey findings reveal, many subtitlers have been professionally struggling with trade-offs in terms of time, earnings and performance quality, with fierce competition from what seems to be unlimited cheap labour on the Internet and the challenge of having to deal with profit-driven clients who endeavour to boost turnover while offering below par rates. The situation in which the subtitling industry finds itself nowadays could further deteriorate if no efforts are made to change the state of affairs. In view of this professional context, some items of considerable importance must be prioritised when it comes to educating and training new subtitlers.

Given that the academic sector aims to provide students with a solid preparation for a successful career in the industry, some improvements can be made to courses in order to enhance the education of the subtitler-to-be. When considered from a manufacturing sector perspective, the source text and all of the support materials provided to the subtitler can be seen as 'raw materials', the translated text can be considered to be the 'product' and the various stages and procedures associated with subtitling can be named the 'production process'. When it comes to translation studies curricula, most formal education programmes are centred on teaching students how to create a good quality 'product' and on acquainting them with the 'production process'. Despite the acknowledged necessity to include more discussion on professional issues in the curriculum, both the survey findings and the status quo within the industry still attest to the inadequacy of current education programmes in boosting employability and preparing students for the real world. As the majority of subtitlers work on a freelance and individual basis, it is important for them to not only have the know-how to produce quality translations, but also the marketing skills to sell their services. In other words, students should also acquire knowledge about how to position their services, how to set their prices and how to increase purchase intent, that is, how to persuade clients of the importance of the subtitling quality and prompt potential clients to 'place an order'.

More often than not, selling a product is more difficult than producing one. Translating takes time and the more difficult the content, the more onerous the task becomes. In this sense, time equates to money and becomes part of the 'variable production cost', with the possibility and flexibility of varying from project to project. If a product is sold below cost or at an unreasonably low price, then losing money is the only outcome. On occasion, this decision may be a tactical loss leader acting as a means to undercut the competition, with the intention of compensating for the losses with other, better paid commissions.

As mentioned before, inexperienced subtitlers tend to be more likely to accept lower rates, regardless of whether this is due to their inferior negotiating position or their ambition to secure more jobs, which arguably leads to the vicious cycle of slumping rates. Hence, the principles for professional ethics should be strengthened in the curriculum; as Gouadec (2007: 238) stresses, they concern all stakeholders since a professional translator should "always expect fair and honest payment for any work completed" and should bear in mind that it is against ethics to accept payment "clearly below the going rate for any job".

The concept of 'fairness' mentioned by Gouadec (ibid.) also alludes to the correlation between price and quality, and the fact that the quality of a product should ideally be in direct relation to the rates paid for it. Outstanding quality is always encouraged in the classroom as a matter of course and is rewarded with the best marks and superlative feedback. However, customers and clients in real life may have different requirements and expectations about translation quality, that will vary depending on the nature of the programmes and the rates paid. For example, some vendors may look for a subtitler who can translate a challenging programme that requires artistic creativity at an excellent level, while others may only expect the subtitler to translate a recording to an acceptable level because the programme will only be used for internal purposes. Accordingly, the payment offer will be determined by the needs and purposes of the customer and the corresponding budget allocated. From the subtitlers' perspective, they need to be able to supply a product that meets the

customer's criteria, pricing the product in accordance with the production cost and the value it creates for the customer. This professional reality should also be instilled in the minds of students, so that they can develop their own benchmarks to provide a quote or evaluate an offer and, ultimately, to maintain fair rates and avoid price wars with their colleagues.

The development of a positioning strategy is also closely related to pricing. Specialist products, as is the case in the manufacturing industry, are positioned at the high end of the market in terms of both quality and price. Specialised translation, in a similar sense, requires more refined skills and a certain level of background knowledge of the field, which results in pay rates that are usually higher than when translating general texts. Therefore, in addition to cultural and linguistic competency, if students can further develop skills and gain knowledge about certain professions with higher barriers to entry, such as jurisprudence and medical science, it would be advantageous to them as they could not only command higher rates, but also stand firm in the market, decreasing their vulnerability to the threat of rate cuts and job relocation. Nonetheless, the market may change over time and there are also hidden risks if one chooses to focus only on a certain type of specialised translation. Targeting high-volume low-margin markets, an activity that implies primarily working on relatively easy tasks with an attempt to boost income by increasing volume, is indubitably a positioning strategy. However, given the competitive nature of the translation/subtitling business, the replaceability of suppliers, i.e. translators and subtitlers, remains high due to the low entry barrier. Adopting this kind of strategy could lead to exposure and vulnerability to rate cuts and job relocation, jeopardising the development of a translator or subtitler.

The importance of the selected method of doing business cannot be overlooked when it comes to promoting a service. While the key players within the industry make the whole world their hunting ground for subtitlers, subtitlers can also take advantage of the opportunities brought about by globalisation, such as seeking job offers from a much wider pool of clients without being limited to geographical

barriers. In this respect, students could benefit from receiving up-to-date training on the various approaches to networking and searching for clients, as well as on the potential strategies that could be employed to build credibility before becoming a recognised subtitler. The Internet has become a very influential channel for sales, marketing, and finding and securing commissions and delivery. Knowing how to establish credibility online is often the key to future success, especially as far as freelancers are concerned. Building a personal website with a professional look that includes information on educational background, work experience and work samples is the first step to establishing credibility and reaching potential customers. Some translators nowadays even make use of blogging as a marketing tool for their established personal brand, discussing up-to-date translation issues, sharing job information, exchanging opinions with other translators and so on.

Participation in selective online translation/subtitling forums with personal signatures linking to professional profiles can also be of benefit for subtitlers to establish credibility. General translation websites such as ProZ (www.proz.com) and Translators Café (www.translatorscafe.com) not only provide a place where linguists can meet their clients, but also where professionals can share information and exchange ideas. LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) is also gaining ground in the social network realm, allowing members to manage their professional identity and engage with their professional network, especially through membership of private groups like Subtitlers (www.linkedin.com/groups/Subtitlers-1672847/about), which have been formed in order to promote high-quality subtitling and to maintain standards of professionalism within the industry and which are populated by clients and subtitlers alike. Virtual communities that are restricted in terms of language are also blossoming, with groups like TRAG (http://xcastro.com/trag) being very active among Spanish-speaking professionals.

Thanks to the various communication channels in operation in the virtual world, a better understanding of the industry and its players can be gained and potential new subtitlers are thus more likely to know (or to be able to find out) the reasonable

range of rates, the competition they face and where they stand (or should stand) in the market. A good knowledge of the industry can in principle increase their chances of working under decent conditions in the future. As the market evolves, and time passes and technology develops, the purpose of training in this aspect should be to inspire students to explore the options that could help them build a personal brand, establish their professional credibility and be able to attract potential clients. Although employability is one of the key terms in current educational trends, time and content pressures on the curriculum make it rather difficult to dedicate much attention to career planning in the classroom; yet, a light touch could make a big difference.

As for building a personal brand, it is of prime importance for students to be fully aware of the consequences that a poorly subtitled programme can bring to the client and themselves. Freelance work is tightly linked to word-of-mouth advertising, which can build one up and be equally powerful in taking one down; both good and bad feedback and comments are speedily accessible on the Internet and have a far-reaching influence. A subtitler's name can be compared to a 'trademark', which is defined by World Intellectual Property Organisation as follows:

> A trademark is a distinctive sign which identifies certain goods or services as those produced or provided by a specific person or enterprise. Its origin dates back to ancient times, when craftsmen reproduced their signatures, or "marks" on their artistic or utilitarian products. Over the years these marks evolved into today's system of trademark registration and protection. The system helps consumers identify and purchase a product or service because its nature and quality, indicated by its unique trademark, meets their needs.[29]

That is to say, a trademark can be used to identify the source of the product, providing a quick reference point for a customer when making a purchasing decision or when gauging the quality level of the product. Despite the fact that the significance and value of a trademark is potentially obscure during the early stages of one's career as a translator or subtitler, it can earn a reputation over many years,

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[29] For further details, please refer to the WIPO website:
www.wipo.int/trademarks/en/trademarks.html

with such a reputation eventually acquiring 'goodwill'. Goodwill is an important term used extensively in business and finance, mostly considered from an accounting viewpoint, referring to an intangible asset that provides added value to the owner's worth, defined as "value imbedded in a company's corporate identity or umbrella brand" (Ahya, 2005: 55). In this sense, acquiring goodwill will certainly enhance a subtitler's position when negotiating prices and expressing views, and of course, subsequent financial benefits could also be expected. This idea, if implemented wisely, would again provide food for thought to producers and distributors when considering whether to include a subtitler's name at the end of a programme because the more a trademark is cherished, the more likely it is that the subtitler will strive for high quality. In addition, working with subtitlers of good repute could also enhance the perceived quality of the production by the audience. A case in point is the subtitling from French into English of Jean-Paul Rappeneau's adaptation of Edmund Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac in 1990, which received ample media coverage because it was done by the acclaimed writer Anthony Burgess (Parkinson, 2008).

The curriculum for subtitler education should also cover the roles and functions of relevant associations where subtitlers can network, acquire further qualifications or accreditation, attend workshops for further training and keep abreast of new technology and other developments in the ever changing audiovisual sector. It is important to build a large translators' network, as mentioned in section 6.2.4; subtitlers must step out to connect with others so that the difficult position of being isolated is improved.

Entering the market should not be seen as the end of education, but rather as the springboard for a new start. As indicated in the survey findings, those respondents affiliated with strong unions were more likely to work under the protection of national laws, be entitled to more rights, and be paid at reasonable, usually higher rates and under better terms than those professionals with no union representation. Joining an association or union may not only entitle subtitlers to benefits and rights,

but also allow them to connect with others so as to unite, share information and good practice, advance their rights and, ultimately, accelerate the development of the profession.

Díaz-Cintas (2008) asserts that professional issues should be introduced to students once their working knowledge of subtitling has achieved a certain level. Approaches to reaching this goal include inviting guest speakers from the profession, and designing activities that can enhance real life experience, as well as promoting synergies and strengthening links between students, academics and the industry. He further proposes that other related professional areas should be incorporated into the curriculum:

- Working conditions and current practice in the industry.
- The impact of globalisation and delocalisation.
- In-house working versus freelancing.
- Expected salaries and pay rates, in order to be informed and, most crucially, to avoid flooding the market with unfair competition practices.
- Potential clients: nationally and internationally, through the Internet.
- Tax responsibilities and copyright ownership.
- The role of associations.
- Further training.

(ibid.: 102)

The survey findings attest that when it comes to subtitler education there seems to be evidence that most of the above areas are not sufficiently addressed in the classroom. Although there is no shortcut to improving the current status quo of subtitlers, changes can be made within the educational system in the hope that, step-by-step, professionals will be able to move to greener pastures where subtitlers working for a reasonable wage under decent working conditions is no longer a dream, but a reality.

Having discussed the influential factors of subtitling quality identified in professional reality and their implications for the development of the profession, as well as for subtitler education, the next chapter begins with the elaboration of coordinated research findings and implications, followed by the elaboration of contributions to

research, limitations and suggestions for future research, finally ending with the conclusion.

Chapter Seven

Discussion and Conclusions

7.1 Findings and their Implications

After presenting the survey findings in Chapter Five and exploring their implications in Chapter Six, this section will coordinate the findings and implications in order to further the discussion.

The growing attention being directed to the quality of subtitles, not only externally from the audience, but also internally from the subtitling industry, has helped to highlight the perceived deteriorating trend in the quality of subtitling output. In this respect, this thesis has aimed to uncover and integrate the various factors that, from both a theoretical and a professional angle, may influence subtitling quality. This study has probed the working conditions of subtitlers and the relationship between the state of affairs within the industry and the quality of professionals' output, with the ultimate objective of investigating the implications that the research findings may have on academia and industry. A strong association between professional practices in the industry and the current quality of subtitling output in the market was identified in the survey findings (see section 5.3), with the discussions centring on aspects such as subtitling rates, the negotiation power of subtitlers, the payment of royalties, the inclusion of acknowledgement credits in the translated programme, the periods for notices and deadlines, the signing of contracts and the materialisation of jobs, and the use and provision of dedicated software and support materials. These discussions, in line with the factors that determine subtitling quality in practice, will be woven together and continued in this chapter.

Unreasonably low rates have been identified as one of the crucial issues that most concern professional subtitlers. One of the roots of this chaotic status quo seems to originate from the immaturity of the subtitling industry in many countries and is almost exclusively caused by individuals working in isolation. The opacity of the industry and the perceived obstruction to facilitating the exchange of information among interested parties further complicates the fact that the industry, to some extent, lacks homogenous standards and attitudes when it comes to subtitling quality and to establishing the rates that should be paid for the various levels of quality.

The turmoil seems to have been aggravated by the global financial crisis that exploded back in 2008, playing a significant role in the downturn in economic activity, the decline in consumer wealth and the failure of key businesses. Nonetheless, and despite the general impression that rate cuts have been a rather common occurrence since the economic downturn, rates being lowered may be, to some extent, more an observed transitional phenomenon than a problem to be concerned about. This is the reading that can be extracted from the survey results and related reports generated by some leading translators' forums; details of which are discussed in the following paragraphs.

In this study, less than a third of the respondents acknowledged to have experienced rate cuts, with the actual percentages being 32.4% in the first round and a much lower 17% in the second round; in fact, there was a small fraction of respondents who were offered higher rates or obtained them through negotiation. A similar trend was also identified in some of the annual reports based on surveys carried out by ProZ.com among translators working in all forms of translation, and not just subtitling. The surveys focused on the state of the translation industry in general and the results shown in the report lean towards the positive side, with more respondents being offered higher rates and fewer respondents experiencing

decreasing rates. In particular, the 2010 report shows that the upward trend of rates had lasted for several years and only started to flatten a couple of years prior to 2010, with 20% of ProZ.com members enjoying increasing rates and only a small number of translators reporting a decrease in their rates. As to the 2012 report, also released by ProZ.com, it indicates that, on the whole, the issue with declining pay rates seemed to have somewhat eased, with a reduction in the number of respondents experiencing a decrease in rates. At the same time, the number of professionals whose rates were raised since 2011 showed a slight increase. In a similar manner, as revealed in this study when the second round of surveys was conducted in 2013, the majority of respondents (71.4%) had not experienced any changes spearheaded by their clients in either subtitling rates or procedural policies. These results, along with those from the first round of the survey and also from the reports conducted by ProZ.com, seem to point to the post-crisis market settling gradually towards a more stable situation.

This, of course, hides the unsettling fact that the economic downturn has brought about a job reshuffle, with some assignments slipping from the hands of more experienced subtitlers who charge higher rates to the new recruits to the industry who are willing to accept lower rates. As a Slovenian respondent with more than 15 years' experience in subtitling remarked, "I no longer work for the local subsidiary of one of the largest foreign companies because of their low rates (they prefer to hire students and other part-timers). The quality of some [programmes] is so bad I no longer even watch them". This trend risks creating an industry with a vast number of young professionals who, once they have acquired expertise and maturity in their field, feel forced to abandon it because the rates do not match their professional experience. The concluding remarks of a Brazilian respondent based in the UK, followed by her complaints about the reduced rates, also reflect such concerns: "I am basically out of the subtitling business, [though I] haven't given up completely yet". However, it remains to be seen whether this situation will persist or whether it

is a temporary phase, which will improve when the effect of the ailing economy fades over time.

In this context, what really matters to the development of the industry is the seemingly unreasonable width of the rate range found within the same country. The growing awareness among practitioners of the need to organise professional networks and to form online forums among translators in general, and subtitlers and audiovisual translators in particular, is progressively leading to more professionals becoming involved in the exchange of ideas and information. Associations and professional groups like those mentioned in Chapter Six, e.g. the Subtitlers group on LinkedIn, AVTA, TRAG, Subtle, and ATAA, are raising the issue of rates and working conditions in a systematic and orchestrated manner at many international events and platforms. It is likely that the working rates of those who proactively participate in professional networks will fall in the middle between the two extremes, so they can at least minimise the risk of being underpaid and exploited. Although the information gathered from the survey does not show clear evidence that the help of professional bodies such as unions guarantees better rates, the income earned by these respondents did fall within a relatively reasonable range, as discussed in section 5.3.1.

Membership of the unions seems to correlate with age. Indeed, those who had their unions negotiate rates on their behalf in the first round belonged to the most experienced group, i.e. those who had been in the industry for more than 15 years represented the highest percentage: 15%. It is contended, however, that joining unions or related professional associations is not only a consideration for the mature subtitler since it can also be of great help, if not greater, to those who are new to the industry, particularly at the phase when they seek to establish themselves and have to face the competitive market with no bargaining power. A reciprocal relationship between subtitlers and the professional bodies to which they are affiliated can bring

substantial benefits to both parties. On the one hand, subtitlers can obtain up-to-date information about the industry and gain crucial access to resources and networks through becoming members; on the other hand, with a larger membership base, the professional bodies will have more clout when it comes to communicating with the authorities and other interested parties, raising their chances of becoming more effective. Additionally, a broader base will help facilitate interaction among subtitlers at both national and international levels.

In addition to the collaboration among professionals, the education and training of newcomers are other areas with the potential to contribute to the advancement of the industry. 'Education' here is understood in a broader sense than just classroom teaching and the following paragraphs concentrate on the efforts that can be made to improve subtitling quality as well as the working conditions of subtitlers.

As discussed in section 6.3, the fact that some practicing subtitlers do not have sufficiently adequate knowledge to gauge the reasonableness of pay rates can be seen as one of the crucial factors behind the current situation. In this sense, it is imperative that professional issues relating to remuneration are properly addressed and further enhanced in the curriculum, so subtitlers-to-be can gain a better understanding of where they should stand in the market, learn how to guard the bottom line when negotiating rates with clients and thus be able to act ethically towards the profession and other colleagues by requesting a 'decent rate'.

While some of the respondents shared the same concern by commenting on their clients' lack of adequate respect for quality, there could well be another reason contributing to this reality; that is, that some of the final clients are not versed enough in the topic to properly differentiate quality levels. However, this challenge is arguably not exclusive to audiovisual translation. As highlighted in the 'Report for

Taiwan's Translation and Interpretation Industry' published by the National Academy for Educational Research (NAER) in 2012, one of the biggest challenges facing translators in general is "clients being incapable of differentiating quality" (Chen and Lin, 2012: 200). In this sense, the necessity and importance of 'educating' clients should also be highlighted on the educational agenda. As Fenwick (2006:76) argues, it is critical for "portfolio workers" such as freelance translators, to be able to successfully manage client relationships, which involves "educating clients [on the value of their expertise], negotiating unrealistic demands, and continuously proving one's credibility". From this perspective, it would also be of great help if professional bodies could regularly collect information on the current rates for different types of subtitling tasks and publish the results for reference. This way, both practicing subtitlers and subtitling service seekers would have a yardstick when evaluating an offer or a quote.

The amount that clients are willing to pay for a particular project is frequently associated with the client's perception of the service they have commissioned and the value attached to that service and its quality. Consequently, the ability of the subtitler to instil in their clients not only the importance of subtitling in cross-cultural communication but also the need to achieve good quality can also have a positive impact on the pay rates offered within the industry. In other words, only when clients are able to distinguish the quality of the subtitling output and realise the importance that subtitle quality can have in the success of their financial operations will they be willing to allocate an adequate budget that corresponds to the quality they require. This, in turn, will hopefully raise the likelihood of subtitlers receiving a decent pay for their work.

Whether subtitling studios or translation agencies have the capacity to offer high rates depends to a large extent on the budget allocated by producers and distributors to their subtitling needs, and setting a given budget is usually closely

linked to attitudes towards the worth and the desired quality of subtitling. Unfortunately, as Ivarsson (1992: 11) bemoans, "film directors and TV producers seldom show any interest in what happens to their work once they are exported to other countries". A similar concern is also raised by Krogstad (1998: 60), who considers that in the case of film distribution language transfer "[s]till, it doesn't seem to be an integral part of the planning of a film that its reception abroad depends on the quality of the verbal transmission", despite the fact that an increasing number of contemporary films aim for international markets and global revenues. The European Commission (1994) is acutely aware of the risks of poor linguistic transfer in the reception of films and has promoted new technical advances in order to remove partitions between national markets with the aim to enable audiovisual programmes to cross borders. To attain these goals in a multicultural and plurilingual EU, "will also mean developing high-quality dubbing and subtitling, the poor quality of dubbed and subtitled versions being the real reason why programmes fail to reach other markets or turn out to be flops, rather than the absence of such versions" (ibid.: 19). To some extent, it can be argued that this lack of awareness of the value of language transfer also denotes the absence of related practical issues in the curriculum of relevant and cognate disciplines such as film and media studies.

Despite the above remarks having been made in the 1990s, attention to the quality of subtitles is not entirely absent from the concerns of all modern film directors. Xiaoxiao Sun (in Lu, 2012: online), a filmmaker from China and the director of the Filming East Festival (FEF) in the UK, expressed her unease over the subtitling quality of current Chinese films, stating that "[t]he quality of subtitles plays a key role in promoting Chinese films overseas, but there is a dearth of good translators, because you don't just have to be proficient in English, but have literary talent too". Her comment not only reveals the increasing importance attached to the quality of subtitling by the film industry, but also affirms the need for good subtitlers, particularly those who can translate from Mandarin into English, and, of course,

better subtitles from a linguistic and technical perspective. The second round of the survey also attests this dearth of professional subtitlers, with only 8.2% of respondents mainly translating from traditional Chinese into English, while the remaining majority usually worked into Mandarin from English or other languages.

The lack of proficient translators, including subtitlers, was also identified in the report published by NAER in Taiwan in 2012, in which it is stated that the need for translators translating from Mandarin into other languages is greater, on the whole, than for those translating into Mandarin (Chen and Lin, 2012: 59). Such need for translators working out of Mandarin also pinpoints an area that must be taken into account when designing a curriculum for related training programmes and courses.

The practice of paying royalties to practitioners payments is rather uncommon in the subtitling industry, where subtitlers seldom receive royalties for the work they subtitle, as indicated in the survey results and discussed in section 5.3.3. Only those practitioners from countries where the (audiovisual) translation industry is relatively more mature, such as Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, confirmed that they receive royalty payments on a regular basis, although the rates varied from country to country and from individual to individual. One of the most developed countries in this area is Finland and a closer look at its copyright landscape may shed light and offer ideas regarding the benefits to which subtitlers in other countries could aspire. Several respondents from Finland pointed out the fact that audiovisual translators are protected by Finnish copyright law and are entitled to a royalty rate as high as 50%, albeit still subject to deductions as stated in section 5.3.3. Copyright legislation in Finland also requires the use of acknowledgement credits in audiovisual programmes as, in the words of a Finnish respondent from the first round, "the moral rights always belong to the subtitler, and therefore the name must always show on the credits". In this sense, input at a governmental level could also be of

some help in assuring adequate protection for the subtitling profession by the enactment and safeguard of related laws.

In fact, despite copyright regulations being still inadequate in some countries, related international agreements are not absent in the history of translation. In this regard, the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, also known as the Berne Convention, was first signed in 1886 and is an international copyright treaty, stipulating, under Article 2, that "[t]ranslations, adaptations, arrangements of music and other alterations of a literary or artistic work shall be protected as original works without prejudice to the copyright in the original work".[30] That is to say, translators, and by extension also subtitlers, are entitled to the same copyright as original authors, and thus have the right to be given credit for their work and to reap the financial benefits that derive from its commercialisation. In addition, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has also discussed the issue of rights for translators and on the 22nd of November 1976 published its 'Recommendation on the Legal Protection of Translators and Translations and the Practical Means to Improve the Status of Translators'.[31] One of its most significant contributions is the suggestion of putting into place "measures to ensure the application in practice of protection afforded translators under international conventions and in national laws relating to copyright". Subsection (h) of Article 5 in Part III specifically advises on increasing the recognition and visibility of translators for the work that they carry out:

> As a general rule, a contract governing relations between a translator and a user, as well as where appropriate any other legal instrument governing such relations, should […] assure the translator and his translation similar publicity, proportionately to that which authors are generally given, in particular, the name of the author of the translation should appear in a prominent place on all published copies of the translation, on theatre bills, in announcements made in connexion with radio or

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[30] Further details can be found on the WIPO website:
www.wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/berne/trtdocs_wo001.htm

[31] Further details can be found on the UNESCO website: www.portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13089&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

television broadcasts, in the credit titles of films and in any other promotional material.

Despite the fact that the document was published in the 1970s, the acknowledgement of the subtitler's name in the credits of the audiovisual programme is not yet a common practice and has not been accommodated by national laws in most countries. On the opposite side, literary translators today gain significantly more recognition for their work and their names tend to be very visible on the books they have translated. As Díaz-Cintas (in Campwala, 2013: online) comments, "if you buy a DVD, you probably will never find out who was the subtitler or the translator of that film, whereas in other areas, for instance, literature, it has improved dramatically and many translators will have their names […] very prominently advertised". The progression of the status of translators in the literary field can be seen as a stepping stone in the right direction and, with the passage of time, it may trigger the promotion and recognition of subtitlers, not only in the industry, but also in the wider society.

The survey results, as discussed in section 6.1.6, attest that the (in)visibility of subtitlers, in terms of their names appearing or otherwise at the end of the programme they have subtitled, is perceived by some as having a direct connection with the quality of their subtitling output. From the perspective of subtitlers, acknowledgement credits are one type of rewards for their hard work. For those proponents of being clearly visible on the programmes they have subtitled, more efforts should be put on pushing for the passing and enactment of related policies. In this context, without input from strong unions with the power to forcefully contribute to collective bargains through motivating the right stakeholders to make changes and providing the authorities with the appropriate information and knowledge, it will be difficult for subtitlers alone to bond together, to draw the necessary attention from society, and to push for the approval of related guidelines or bills during the process. This, again, confirms the importance of establishing

stronger professional bodies. However, there are also cons with respect to the practice of using acknowledgement credits as they could be one of the ways used by certain clients to force subtitlers to perform better, as their names will be released to the public, even in spite of unsatisfying working conditions.

The same situation of lacking adequate attention to copyright issues can also be found in the practice of royalty payments. As of December 2013, according to the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), the number of contracting parties of the Berne Convention is 167,[32] including all European countries. Yet, as of today, the regulations stipulated in its statutes regarding royalties have either not yet been properly implemented, or subtitlers are routinely deprived of their intellectual rights by subtitling agencies or studios who make translators sign draconian contracts. As Nikolić (2010: 104) highlights, the contracts signed by subtitlers very often strip them of their rights as authors under the Berne Convention.

In this context, not only should guidance and regulations concerning subtitlers' copyright be available in more countries, but also the possibility of monitoring and enforcing such legislation by appropriate associations should be considered. In the UK, for instance, associations like *The Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society* (ALCS, www.alcs.co.uk) list their main objectives as: (1) to protect and promote the rights of authors writing in all disciplines and (2) to ensure that authors receive fair payment for the various uses of their work; however, it is not clear whether the work of translators is part of their remit. In Spain, the *Sociedad General de Autores y Editores* (SGAE, www.sgae.es) also fulfils a similar role and openly recovers royalties for some translators.

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[32] Refer to WIPO website for further information:
www.wipo.int/treaties/en/ShowResults.jsp?treaty_id=15%20Title.

Adding to the bleak outlook, the results discussed in section 5.3.6 also show that the signing of contracts is not a common practice in the industry, with only 20.3% of respondents from the first round having entered into a formal arrangement, and only 16.3% from the second round 'always' signing a contract with clients. Generally speaking, this practice is somewhat more established in Europe than in the Chinese-speaking countries. The fact that issues regarding contracts and royalties are entirely absent from the 'Report for Taiwan's Translation and Interpretation Industry' published in 2012 also denotes that these concerns have not yet drawn due attention from either academia or industry in Taiwan. The reasons why subtitlers seem to be indifferent to the content and the stipulations that can be contained in the contracts could be that, on the one hand, working with a contract is not a prevailing routine and, on the other hand, contracts are usually prepared by clients with clauses favouring their own interests and limiting the rights and benefits of the subtitlers. Furthermore, as raised by some respondents, signing a contract does not guarantee that the job will ultimately materialise, and, in many cases, subtitlers would passively accept the cancellation notice, as they seem to view themselves as being in an inferior place to negotiate.

While the survey results also affirm the anxiety of subtitlers concerning irrational tight deadlines, no easy solution seems to exist. Even with the growing awareness of the importance of subtitling quality, the chances for subtitling studios or translation agencies to make immediate changes remain minimal due to factors such as fear of piracy, pressure from budget cuts commanded by clients or the competition, and high profitability goals. Under these circumstances, it would be of some help if professionals could develop new skills to maximise their efficiency in an ever-evolving market. As mentioned in sections 2.4.9 and 6.1.4, both in translation and subtitling, the application of machine translation in increasing the efficiency of human labour has always been one of the focuses among scholars and professionals in the recent year.

As stated in section 6.1.4, substantial efforts have been made to develop subtitling programs with various automated functions that can help minimise human error and maximise productivity, seeking to provide solutions to the challenges faced in the industry today. In 2011, an EU-funded project under the title Subtitling via Machine Translation (SUMAT, www.sumat-project.eu) was launched, with the aim of developing an online service using Statistical Machine Translation (SMT) technology for subtitle translation. Four subtitling companies, including Deluxe (UK), VSI (UK), Titelbild (Germany) and inVision (The Netherlands), are part of the consortium, which attempts to streamline current subtitling workflow processes and reduce costs and turnaround times, whilst improving the consistency of the translation output. The idea is similar to Google Translate (www.translate.google.com), the key difference being that the SMT engines developed for SUMAT are programmed with subtitling data of professional quality, provided by the subtitling partners involved in the project. According to Bywood and Georgakopoulou (2012: 110), the expected outcome of the project is "to optimise the efficiency and productivity of translators and subtitling companies and help them meet increased market demands by semi-automating the subtitle translation process". The evaluation results and online service are estimated to be finalised in the first half of 2014. Although this is not yet a completed project and the application scope is limited to nine European languages and 14 language pairs, it does suggest a very plausible trend along the lines of machine translation, closely knit with the rapid development of technology.

There is also another EU co-funded two year project under the title Sharing Audio Visual Language Resources for Automatic Subtitling (SAVAS, www.fp7-savas.eu), which was launched by the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7, www.ec.europa.eu/research/fp7) in 2012. The primary goal of the SAVAS project is to solve the automated subtitling needs of the media industry by collecting spoken and textual resources in six European languages – i.e. Basque, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish – and building domain-specific Large Vocabulary Continuous Speech Recognizers (LVCSR). With

sprouting projects such as SUMAT and SAVAS, it can easily be anticipated that, in the not so distant future, an increasing number of companies will consider adopting automation tools in their subtitling practice to reduce turnaround times and rationalise costs. In view of this increasing automation trend, it is highly recommendable, from the subtitlers' perspective, that close attention should be paid to the advancement of technology and its influence on subtitling practice. One way of keeping abreast of new changes could be to regularly attend workshops or receive further training, so subtitlers can familiarise themselves with the latest industry news and advances, to further their professional development, to hone their skills, to enhance their networking opportunities and, ultimately, to remain competitive in the job market.

SUMAT and SAVAS are nothing more than a topical example, on a par with 3D subtitling, as to how subtitlers' work will keep evolving prompted by advances in technology. The increasing pervasion of post-editing tasks in translation seems to be an irreversible trend that will certainly shake up all branches of the translation industry, with the inevitability that some subtitling procedures will need to be readjusted to the new realities. Changes brought about by new improved technology may also have a positive influence on the quality of the support materials provided to subtitlers, as enhanced software could minimise the number of human errors and boost consistency in various aspects of the work flow. Needless to say, the working conditions of subtitlers will, to some extent, depend on how practitioners embrace the potential inculcated by technology and whether they are able to adapt to the changes taking place within the industry.

Given the broad differences, not only between countries, but also within countries with respect to practices and rates, drawing general conclusions that could be valid across the globe is a rather difficult task, if not impossible, or even desirable. Nonetheless, there are some issues which are raised regularly by subtitlers and on

which a reasonably homogeneous consensus can be gauged across the board: pressure of (unnecessary) tight deadlines, unreasonable remuneration, need of the profession to gain further visibility in society, stronger networks available to subtitlers, and well-built professional bodies that can help to advance the development of the profession and the running of the industry.

All in all, this study has yielded rich findings that help shed light on the working conditions and rewards under which subtitlers perform their activities in different countries. With the state of affairs of the industry identified, directions for making improvements are also pinpointed in relation to the working conditions of the professionals involved and to the industry practices, as well as to the quality of the subtitling output. The contribution of this thesis will be further elaborated in the following section.

7.2 Contributions of the Research

Despite the long and fascinating history of translation, it was not until the 1970s that translation studies became an academic discipline (Bassnett, 2002). Audiovisual translation, a fledgling domain within translation studies, is a practice that arose in the 1930s, but only began to be studied seriously as part of the discipline around the 1990s (Orero, 2009; Pardo, 2013). Despite the fact that this complex and vibrant area of human endeavour has attracted growing interest from various quarters and is gradually attaining form, the existing literature is still rather thin. Although there are certainly overlapping theoretical dimensions between general translation studies and AVT, there are still fundamental inadequacies in the methodologies used to approach this relatively young area of research, particularly since it is subject to unique constraints related to technical requirements. The pressure to keep pace with rapidly-changing technology also adds to the complexity of the topic. In this

sense, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three, the traditional debate of quality assessment centred on literary translation can only serve as a research ground upon which researchers can further build theories that address quality issues exclusive to the realm of audiovisual translation and, more particularly, to subtitling. In this regard, this work can claim to be the first to venture in such detail into the specific realm of subtitling in order to revisit the existing guidelines for subtitling good practice and map out the real working conditions of subtitlers and their likely impact on quality.

In addition to the existing gap between general translation theories and those specific to the specialised genre under analysis in these pages, the synergies between academia and industry seem to be rather weak and could benefit from a boost. Audiovisual translation came into existence shortly after the invention of cinema and new professional practices such as dubbing and subtitling were attempted in order to address the emerging multilingual needs within the industry. In the early years, theoretical input from translation studies was absent and scholarly discussions on the topic of subtitling only began to develop at a much later time. The end result is that the development of practice and theory unfolded separately and in that order, with some of the professional issues still being uncharted territory from a theoretical perspective. With the aim of contributing to closing some of the existing gaps in previous scholarly debates and with the focus narrowed to interlingual subtitling, this thesis has concentrated on the examination of under-researched professional factors that could undermine the quality of subtitling, thanks to a thorough empirical study of the working conditions under which subtitlers perform their tasks. In this respect, this is one of the most comprehensive pieces of research to have been conducted to date on the state of affairs of the traditionally veiled subtitling industry. Theoretical and practical implications have been drawn from the survey findings, with an attempt to relate the factors associated with subtitling quality in order to answer the question "Who or what determines an acceptable

level of quality?" in the hope that could help counteract the circulation of poor quality subtitles and improve the working conditions of subtitlers in general.

On the whole, the added value of this study can be assessed from two perspectives: its respective contributions to the industry and academia. From an industry perspective, the contributions made by this study can be summarised under the following six aspects.

Firstly, it provides a detailed overview of the industry status quo. As mentioned, most subtitlers work individually and it is this isolation which has traditionally obscured the transparency of the working conditions of the profession and has severely curtailed opportunities for the exchange of information. Eagerness to gain a better understanding of the remuneration in place and of the professional working environment in general has been recurrently expressed at professional and academic conferences, as well as raised in numerous online forums. In order to satisfy those calls, a survey on the working conditions and rates of subtitling was conducted across the globe, with the hope that the results would be of some help in delineating the profession. The information collected through the survey has the potential to offer subtitlers a firm standpoint from where they can learn and become better players in the industry.

Secondly, the study helps disclose some of the reasons behind the precarious situation in the industry. With the intention to elicit significant quantitative, as well as qualitative, information from respondents by employing a quantitative research tool, the design of the survey accommodated closed questions, semi-open questions and comment boxes. This qualitative information, together with the descriptive details supplemented by numerical data, allow these survey's findings to offer a richer and deeper context that help identify the roots of some of the most acute

problems in the industry. With dramatic variations in the remuneration rates, as well as in the given deadlines revealed in the survey results, various reasons were identified that could lead to the inferior position of subtitlers in the negotiation relationship and the implacable pressure of deadlines on subtitlers. It is through the diagnosis of those potential reasons that directions for improvement could be pursued.

Thirdly, this research proposes some feasible methods and directions for improvement. In the short term, as identified by the survey findings, subtitling quality could be enhanced if processes were streamlined, the quality of the support materials provided to subtitlers was improved, and reasonable rewards were offered to practitioners. In the long term, raising awareness of the importance of subtitling quality among audiences, film directors, producers, distributors, broadcasters, translation agencies and government agencies, along with greater emphasis on the adverse influence of poor quality subtitles, can contribute to the advancement of the industry and the profession.

Fourthly, in a timely manner, this thesis unveils some of the changes that have taken place after the economic downturn of the late 2000's, highlighting their influence on the industry and the resulting quality of subtitlers' performance and pointing to potential future developments. Unsurprisingly, the situation of the subtitling market seems to have deteriorated since the beginning of the financial crisis, mainly in terms of procedural changes and payment rates resulting from tighter budgets and heavier pressure to maximise profit margins. These findings offer the key players in the industry food for thought and raise some of the issues that should be considered by all stakeholders before it is too late.

Fifthly, this study contributes to increasing the visibility of both the profession and the professionals. By disseminating the information gathered through this survey and by shedding light on the professional reality, the whole process has contributed to focusing attention on the key issues, to raising awareness of the need to squarely face current issues and to promoting the recognition of the subtitling profession.

Finally, it offers an overarching overview of the working conditions of subtitlers in countries where subtitling is a more recognised profession and in those where the profession is still rather nascent; it can also be used as a springboard by the latter to learn about better conditions and improve their situation. As indicated by the survey findings, subtitlers from countries that have the support of strong unions and associations tend to enjoy better working conditions, with higher remuneration and respect for their royalties. While 'better' working conditions can be seen as a sign that indicates a higher maturity level, the survey report can also serve as a reference for subtitlers from countries where the subtitling industry is not so advanced and where improvements need to be made.

The implications of this study can also be of substantial help in enhancing the education and training of new subtitlers. Given the importance of addressing professional issues in the classroom and the fact that the information provided to students seems to be inadequate, the main contribution of this study towards subtitling education at an academic level lies in providing a comprehensive understanding of the professional reality. With solid knowledge about the profession, students are more likely to be better prepared for the real world because they will better understand the potential challenges ahead and be driven to increase their competitive stance in the market and develop new skills such as post-editing. As discussed in section 6.3, subtitlers need to know where they stand in the marketplace and learn how to position their translation products, decide to whom they should sell the products, promote awareness about the importance of quality,

increase the purchase intent of their products, enhance their negotiation power and produce translations of 'adequate' and 'varying' quality that tally with the rewards and expectations of their clients. In this context, they will be more likely to behave ethically in a competitive world.

This study also comments on the consensus for the need, almost the urgency, to streamline solutions for cooperation between universities and the industry and highlights the potential advantages of such collaboration.

A further important contribution to research in subtitling concerns information gathered from the Chinese market, where existing literature is very thin and related industry or government reports are also commonly absent from national debates. The survey results indicate that subtitling is still far from becoming an established, recognised profession in Chinese-speaking countries, where related education and training is also very limited. In this sense, this study is the first of its kind to investigate in detail the conditions of subtitlers whose working languages include Mandarin and who reside in different geographical areas. With the boom of the Chinese film industry, the opening up of the Chinese audiovisual market, the rise of audiovisual programmes imports from English-speaking countries, and the increased knowledge of the English language among the Chinese-speaking audience, more attention is being paid to the quality of subtitling. Through the results of the two survey rounds, this study not only adds both macro- and micro-perspectives to the existing literature in relation to subtitling in the Chinese language, but also enhances the related subtitling research available in Chinese-speaking countries.

Finally, as in other professional arenas, surveys of this kind should be conducted regularly in an attempt to maintain the pulse of the industry and this pioneering

work will hopefully serve as a prototype for future researchers, who can further enhance and adapt it to their needs.

7.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

As stated in Chapter One, this study has investigated the potential factors influencing the quality of subtitling output in theory and in practice. An online questionnaire survey has been chosen as the method for this empirical research. Accordingly, the exploratory analysis of the survey findings mainly built upon the quantitative data collected through the online survey, fulfilling the purpose of providing an overview of the subtitling industry's state of affairs and revealing the relationships between the status quo and its influence on subtitling quality. Despite quantifiable data being able to substantially improve understanding of the conditions under which subtitlers work in different countries and the inclusion of semi closed-ended questions and comment boxes helping to elicit more detailed responses from participants, there may be still limits to gaining descriptive information that is as detailed as that obtained from interviews. As Scholl et al. (2002) argue, online surveys are limited by their inability to probe in-depth qualitative information to the same extent as a skilled interviewer. Also, the answers tend to be shorter and cursory as, on the one hand, respondents are inclined to avoid typing longer answers and hindering the flow of the process of filling out a questionnaire and, on the other hand, it takes time to bring them to a state in which they are more willing to take the time to search for their inner feelings and be more expressive about their personal situations (Check and Schutt, 2012). The fact that the comments collected from the survey are rather short and straightforward seems to affirm such a tendency and inclination. Hence, further research could be conducted to focus on qualitative data collection and analysis, so that more meticulous opinions and attitudes towards the pursuit of subtitling quality can be gathered and examined.

With the first survey round open to all subtitlers working in any language pairs and the second round focusing only on those whose working languages included Mandarin, the vast geographic distribution of respondents may, to a certain extent, limit the depth of the analysis. As mentioned in section 6.2.4, to make effective improvements, changes ought to initially occur at a national level, then a stronger network at an international level could materialise. Due to heterogeneity in cultures, national regulatory practices and the level of development of the subtitling industry, proposals to improve the working conditions of subtitlers and promote the status of the profession must be tailored to meet the needs of individual countries. Therefore, if similar nationwide studies can be undertaken regularly and the results published, horizontal awareness will be simultaneously fostered among professionals, governments and academics, increasing the possibility of actions of a greater scope and under a collaborative basis.

With the target audience of the survey being professional subtitlers, the results have been predominantly discussed from a subtitlers' perspective, which necessarily means that the viewpoints of other industry players including producers, subtitling studios, translation agencies, DVD distributors and corporate clients could not be conveyed in great detail. From a macroscopic perspective, compromise from each of the parties in the industry chain is required in order to guarantee the healthy survival of the profession. To gain a complete picture, the working conditions of subtitlers and the quality of subtitling output, as seen by practising subtitlers, needs to be complemented with further investigations into the attitudes towards working conditions and subtitling quality of other stakeholders.

As discussed in section 6.2.4, the subtitling profession could also benefit if governments were to become aware of the importance of subtitling quality: e.g. literacy in the mother tongue and foreign language acquisition. Scholars such as Crystal (2006) and Merchant (2001) have discussed the continuous deterioration of

the language used on the Internet and other digital media, although little emphasis has been placed to date on the role that subtitling plays in this equation. Accordingly, further research in this field may bear interesting fruit.

While technology has favoured and facilitated the use of subtitles for language acquisition, in turn this means that different audiences will have different expectations of the subtitles they view and different opinions about their quality. With this study investigating the factors influencing subtitling quality mainly from academic and industrial perspectives, further research targeting actual end users, namely the audience's perspective, will be most welcome and will help amplify the breadth of existing research.

Additionally, with the Internet, known as the engine of globalisation, accelerating the speed of cultural shifts, the understanding and acceptance of foreign cultures fostered during the 'cultural globalisation' process may also gradually change the audience's perceptions of what is 'foreign'. From this perspective, it seems legitimate to argue that the preference of the audience for domestication or foreignisation translation strategies may be evolving, thus also to some extent influencing their perception of quality in subtitles; however, further research is necessary to prove this point.

Although not touched upon in the survey due to scope limitations, fansubbing may be considered to be one of the major factors destabilising the professional landscape, particularly in Chinese-speaking countries. It can perhaps be said to contribute to the poor quality of some subtitles in circulation, the unreasonable subtitling rates paid by some companies and some of the absurd deadlines imposed for official productions. However, an increased awareness of quality might be blossoming among some fansub groups. In fact, two replies from the second round were

rejected because they were completed by fansubbers, one based in Taiwan working from English to traditional Chinese and the other based in China working from Spanish to simplified Chinese, and were thus excluded from the discussion. Their responses seem to indicate that attention to quality is not absent from the fansub groups in which they worked. Despite the fact that the former had never used any subtitling program and worked on templates only, along with the video clip, she considered the quality of the templates and the provided AV material to be very good; the latter had access to a free subtitling program developed by the fansub group, as well as templates and AV material of a fair quality level. Both expressed their willingness to attain quality by spending longer on the task, with the former further commenting that "if the quality of my output is considered unacceptable by the fansub group leader, then they would just stop working with me. So, I still have to be careful although translating for free". On top of the pressure from within the fansub group, the fact that both were always credited for their work might also strengthen their intention to produce subtitles of reasonably good quality. Despite these positive signs attention being paid to subtitle quality, it is not possible to generalise from this context and this approach possibly only exists in certain fansub groups. Nevertheless, fansubs' approach to good quality and the corresponding good practices adopted by these fansub groups, as well as their implications on the industry, might be worthy of further exploration.

7.4 Final Remarks

Despite a history of over 100 years, subtitling has neither become a fully recognised profession nor a mature academic discipline, even though it is an activity that is close to daily life. The importance attached to the quality of subtitles seems to be increasing in various quarters, but little attention has been paid to the working conditions of subtitlers and their potential influence on the quality of the subtitling

output. As the narrator Sandeep Garcha (in Campwala, 2013: online) states at the end of the documentary *The Invisible Subtitler*:

> Subtitled films have always been a part of film history. But subtitlers themselves, who bring these films to use for our entertainment today are being marginalised in the film industry. Subtitles are an invisible feature of a foreign film and that is exactly how they are being treated in this globalised business of the film industry, making them look […] as invisible as possible.

Although the primary aim of this study is to examine the factors that may affect the quality of subtitling, both in theory and in professional practice, it also strives to offer a detailed insight into the under-researched working conditions of subtitlers. The reality of the subtitling profession reflected in the survey results is one which does not guarantee matching rewards for hard work in terms of financial retribution and social recognition. It is an occupation which often does not allow sufficient time for an assignment, where professionalism is not necessarily valued, but, at the same time and rather paradoxically, one where the quality of subtitling is still much emphasised, at least nominally, by the academe and most of the stakeholders. The question is how to best make use of this awareness to act as a catalyst to enhance the state of the profession, the status of subtitlers, and the training and education of audiovisual translators, as well as the development of the discipline. For this to occur, the roots of these challenges should be adequately identified and addressed. While identification has taken place in the previous pages, addressing the issues should, hopefully, occur in the near future.

Since interlingual subtitling is a branch of translation studies, some of the discussions raised in this study will also be of interest to those who work with other forms of translation. In this sense, this study may also be of certain value in terms of providing references for translation studies in general. Indeed, the development of the

subtitling industry has the potential to enhance the prosperity of the translation industry as a whole and, conversely, it is unlikely that the subtitling industry would flourish without the improved functioning of the translation industry. In consequence, changes shall be made through a broader framework of collaboration and a long-term plan for improvements in the translation industry in general, rather than limiting the scope specifically to the subtitling industry.

Of course, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to these intricate issues where conflicts of interest abound, nor is there a shortcut for speedy improvements. A long-term campaign of raising awareness is required in order to stand against poor-quality subtitles and the unreasonable working conditions of professionals. As new challenges may also sprout with the development of the industry and its close association with technology, all stakeholders should find common ground to guarantee the healthy survival of the profession. The key for success may well be in collaborative input provided from the triple helix of academia, industry and government.

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