

Translators as Authors: Creativity in Media Localization
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ABSTRACTS

Sapienza Università di Roma
Dipartimento di Studi Europei Americani e Interculturali

**Translators as authors:
Creativity in media localization**

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Cyberdubbing practices as sites of experimentation and creativity

Rocío Baños-Piñero, University College London

The aim of this paper is to reflect on how creativity is used in cyberdubbing, understood as non-traditional online dubbing practices that include parodic and serious dubbings undertaken by fans, Internet users and digital influencers, be them professionals or amateurs. In addition to introducing the term “cyberdubbing” and presenting the wide range of practices that it may encompass, the paper will pay particular attention to examples where cyberdubbers experiment with dubbing as an audiovisual translation mode in a creative manner. This overview will allow us to reflect on the impact of these non-traditional dubbing practices on long-standing concepts and theories in translation studies (i.e., equivalence) as well as to discuss whether there is potential for their implementation in a professional or training environment.

Bionote

Rocío Baños is Associate Professor in Translation at the Centre for Translation Studies at University College London, where she teaches Audiovisual Translation and Translation Technology. She holds a PhD on dubbing and the prefabricated nature of fictional dialogue from the University of Granada. Her main research interests lie in the fields of Audiovisual Translation, Translation Technology and Translation Training. She has published various papers in these areas. Her latest research has focused on underexplored forms of audiovisual translation, such as voiceover translation of reality TV, fandubbing and fundubbing.

Polish dubbing of animated films: Is creativity always the way to go?

Łukasz Bogucki, University of Łódź

Poland was a dubbing country between 1945 and 1989, when voice-over became established as the main AVT modality in many audiovisual contexts, chiefly on television. Dubbing has prevailed, but solely as a method of rendering animated films. Polish dubbing of animated productions is rather peculiar in terms of faithfulness to the original; the translation is very frequently free, bordering on adaptation, and always quite creative.

This talk will explore the translation strategies and techniques of Polish dubbing, with reference to such key notions in translation studies as adaptation, translation quality assessment and domestication. No knowledge of Polish is required to understand the talk.

Bionote

Łukasz Bogucki is currently vice-rector for international relations of the University of Lodz in Poland and head of the Department of Translation Studies and Language Pedagogy at the Institute of English Studies. Between 2012 and 2020 he was head of the Institute.

Łukasz is a linguist, whose main research areas are audiovisual translation studies, computer assisted translation and interpreting studies. He has published five monographs and about 70 papers. He is co-editor of the Peter Lang series Lodz Studies in Language. He was previously on the board of the Journal of Specialised Translation (JoSTrans).

Using amateur dubbing and humour to enhance wellbeing and creativity in the hospital setting

Margherita Dore, Sapienza University of Rome

Dubbing has always been an expensive and time-consuming AVT mode as it entails complex processes and requires many professionals to be carried out (Ranzato 2016; Dore 2019; Spiteri Miggiani 2019). However, recent advances in technology have allowed dubbing to be done easier and more cost-effectively. Computer software available on any personal computer can be used to create homemade dubbed versions, which mostly offer content that is unavailable on the mainstream market (fandubbing) or aiming at parodying people and/or situations (fundubbing; Chaume 2019; Baños 2019).

This study focuses on using amateur dubbing and humour as a non-pharmacological technique to help children and adolescents who have had to be hospitalised during their development. The main objective of this project is to involve patients in a playful activity like dubbing and put them at the centre of this process to elicit humour and foster positive emotions, thus also distracting them from the difficult moment they are facing. Creativity is an essential feature of this activity as participants are free to replicate official dubbing as it is or depart from it (La Polla, 1994; Minutella, 2012; Dore, 2019; Dore & Vagnoli, 2020, Dore et al. 2021). No one passes judgement on the participants' performance as the main purpose is to have fun and possibly learn something new. Here, the rationale behind the project's organisation is explained, by also showing what professionals are involved and how amateur dubbing is creatively done. The feedback of some adolescents, legal guardians and operators who took part in a semi-structured interview regarding the amateur dubbing experience is also provided. Their preliminary comments confirm the effectiveness of this approach, and these insights and suggestions will be considered to enhance the future development of this non-pharmacological therapy, along with its replicability.

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Bionote

Margherita Dore is Associate Professor at the University of Rome ‘La Sapienza’, Italy. She is the author of *Humour in Audiovisual Translation. Theories and Applications* (Routledge, 2019). She edited one essay collection on translation practice (*Achieving Consilience. Translation Theories and Practice*, Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2016), a special issue of *Status Quaestionis* on audiovisual retranslation (2018), one special issue of the *European Journal of Humour Research* on multilingual humour and translation (2019) and (with Klaus Geyer) a special issue of *InTRAlinea* on dialect, translation and multimedia. She (co)authored several papers on humour in translated audiovisual texts and in a range of other contexts, including stand-up comedy.

To boldly go: The challenge and opportunities of transcreation for subtitlers

David Katan, University of Salento

Transcreation was almost unheard of 20 years ago, but is now rapidly becoming mainstream in translation theory and in the market. Though many scholars and practitioners believe that this new popularity is no more than a 'rebranding' of what a good translation should be, this presentation will explain how a transcreator differs from the traditional profile of a 'translator', how it can help define 'creative translation' and the boundary with localisation (Chaume 2018; Katan 2021).

The talk will focus on two areas. First we will look at how transcreation is challenging traditional ideas of translation, and translators themselves. Transcreation sees the translator as a collaborator, as a consultant and 'on the board', in much the same way as Universal Design, Accessible Filmmaking and Creative Media Accessibility (Romero-Fresco 2019). One of the main challenges to taking on this role, as we shall see, are translators themselves.

Secondly, we will look at how traditional translation constraints may be obviated by transcreation. With regard to AVT, while transcreation clearly includes the worlds of dubbing, voicing and more generally sound, transcreation naturally starts with 'abusive subtitling' (Nornes 1999).

In terms of practice, we will focus on exploring how to reduce the space and time constraints for subtitlers using user-friendly software. Following previous research (Katan 2018), we will show how thinking transcreationally can open up new possibilities regarding how to squeeze more culture-bound information on the screen without creating more 'clutter'. In particular we will consider techniques used by film makers (but not by traditional subtitlers) both in the past and more recently, to show how the new universe of transcreated subtitles may require only 'boldly going' by the translating community and does not actually represent a challenge for the cinema audience. To conclude, we will present some early audience reception results of an experiment using some of these techniques using ShotCut software.

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Bionote

David Katan is professor of English and Translation at the University of Salento (Lecce), specializing in intercultural communication, transcreation and tourism. Publications including contributions for the *Routledge Encyclopaedias of Translation* (2nd and 3rd eds.), *Translation and Conflict* and *Translation and Globalisation*, the *Benjamins Handbook of Translation Studies* (1st and 2nd eds.) and for the Wiley-Blackwell *Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics* (1st and 2nd eds.). *Translating Cultures: An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators* is now in its 3rd edition (Routledge, 2021).

He has been keynote speaker for a variety of international conferences in Australia, Columbia, Italy and South Africa, and is currently Visiting Researcher at the University of South Africa.

He is editor-in-chief of *Cultus: the Journal for Intercultural Mediation and Communication*.

Professionally he works as a translator, specializing in museum and tourism guides. Research interests include creative subtitling and translation as narrativity.

Creative audiovisual translation in foreign language learning

Jennifer Lertola, University of Eastern Piedmont

In the last twenty years, the application of audiovisual translation (AVT) in the foreign language classroom has raised the interest of scholars and teachers (Lertola, 2019; Talaván, 2020). Such application has been defined as didactic AVT (Talaván, 2020). Didactic AVT encompasses the active use of different AVT modes – subtitling, dubbing, audio description (AD), subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH), voice-over and free commentary – by language learners in face-to-face, blended or online contexts. As supported by recent empirical studies, didactic AVT can foster both receptive and productive language skills as well as other transferable skills (Ávila-Cabrera, 2021; Ávila-Cabrera & Rodríguez-Arancón, 2021; Ávila-Cabrera & Corral, 2021; Baños et al., 2021; Fernández-Costales, 2021a & 2021b; Vermeulen & Escobar, 2021; to mention the most recent).

Didactic AVT tasks can be either standard or reverse. Standard interlingual procedures require language learners to provide the written or oral transfer from L2 to L1. Reverse interlingual procedures require learners to carry out the language transfer from L1 into L2. Whereas, in the intralingual combination learners carry out the transfer from L2 to L2. In language learning, AVT modes do not always imply translation nor the presence of a source text. If the video is silent the activity can be categorised as intersemiotic (i.e. from non-verbal to L2). A recent trend in didactic AVT is the use of creative subtitling and creative dubbing. In a preliminary project, Talaván (2019: 54) has proposed creative subtitling and creative dubbing “as the creative manipulation or adaptation of the original text into a fake translation (into subtitles or dubbing tracks) that produces some kind of humoristic effect on the audience”. Through these creative tasks, learners can develop integrated language skills such as writing, speaking and listening, together with (inter)cultural awareness and knowledge of vocabulary as well as grammar.

First, the paper will provide an overview on the state of the art of didactic AVT. The paper will present previous international projects on the application of AVT in the foreign language classroom and will then describe TRADILEX (Audiovisual Translation as a Didactic Resource in Foreign Language Education), a recent project funded by the Spanish Government (Talaván & Lertola, forthcoming). TRADILEX aims to determine the improvement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), in terms of communicative and mediation skills, promoted by didactic AVT. To this purpose, empirical research on the use of a specifically-designed methodological proposal, which includes lesson plans on diverse AVT modes, is currently being piloted with B1-B2 level EFL learners in university language centers all over Spain. The paper will present the diverse didactic AVT modes used in the project and will focus on creative subtitling and creative dubbing by providing learners’ samples. Finally, the paper will present and discuss preliminary findings on the use of creative AVT.

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Bionote

Jennifer Lertola is Junior Assistant Professor of English at Università del Piemonte Orientale, Italy. Her main research interests include audiovisual translation, foreign language teaching and teacher training. She is the author of “Audiovisual Translation in the Foreign Language Classroom: Applications in the Teaching of English and Other Foreign Languages” (Research-publishing.net, 2019). She has participated in several international research projects, including ClipFlair (Foreign Language Learning through Interactive Revoicing and Captioning of Clips) funded by the European Lifelong Learning Programme. She is part of ARENA and TRADIT teaching innovation research groups at the UNED, Spain. TRADIT is currently developing the TRADILEX project.

Fansubbing in the digital age, latest trends and future prospects

Serenella Massidda, Roehampton University

In the first two decades of the new century, translation practices have unquestionably witnessed a myriad of transformations at various levels: technological, digital, virtual, social, mediatic and cinematic.

From the advent of ubiquitous and cloud computing, to the boom of video streaming on demand (SVoD) and the shift from cable to Internet TV, these epochal breakthroughs have all concurred to accommodate as well as modify the needs of multifaceted audiences and users worldwide. Once lost in their passive roles of spectators restricted and controlled by traditional linear TV, new audiences are currently offered more they could ever dream and ‘told’ what they like—literally anticipating their own tastes and needs. As a result, the nature of participatory and fan culture has changed accordingly: once a necessary evil able to make foreign products accessible and available in the local language, fansubbing activities, as of now, have no *raison d’être* anymore. This study sheds light on fansubbing activities in the digital age, focusing on the geolocalization of fan practices worldwide, the legal dimension of the phenomenon, the latest technological trends and future prospects in the light of the swansong of the democratic, hopeful, and creative pathway traced by the Web 2.0

Bionote

Dr Serenella Massidda is Senior Lecturer in Audiovisual Translation at Roehampton University and Honorary Research Associate at University College London, UK. She holds a European Doctorate in Audiovisual Translation and an MSc in Scientific and Medical Translation with Translation Technology (Imperial College London).

She has published extensively and is the author of *Audiovisual Translation in the Digital Age – The Italian Fansubbing Phenomenon* published by Palgrave MacMillan in 2015. A professional translator and subtitler, member of the Executive Board of ESIST (European Association for Studies in Screen Translation), APTIS (Association of Programmes in Translation and Interpreting Studies UK and Ireland), I-LanD Research Centre, Women in Localization UK and the Editorial Board of *Linguistica Antverpiensia*, she is OOONA Academic Partner and member of the Steering Committee of THE POOL (the-pool.com/team). She has been teaching Audiovisual Translation and Subtitling Technology since 2010 in many academic institutions in the UK, and Europe.

Her research and academic consultancy with the localization industry are in the following areas: AVT technology, Localisation workflows, Subtitling Training and Quality, Translation Software Development and User Experience, Crowdsourcing Translation and Fansubbing Practices.

Impact studies and research projects developed: Subtitling Certification (*Netflix Hermes Test* 2016-2017), *OOONA Educational Platform* (Cloud Subtitling Training 2020-2022) and *¡Sub! Localisation workflows that work* project (2021-2022 UNINT-Roehampton) on Subtitling Workflows.

Creative dubbing for sexuality visibility: The gay character in animated sitcoms

Davide Passa, Sapienza University of Rome

People belonging to cultural minorities are often reduced to a few characteristics in fiction so that they can be easily recognisable to the reader/viewer. This study intends to apply a queer perspective to AVT Studies (see Chagnon, 2014; De Marco, 2009-2016; Lewis, 2010; Ranzato, 2012, among others), i.e. the study of non-binary sexualities and their linguistic representation in AVT, in line with the third approach to the investigation of gender issues in AVT research, as discussed by von Flotow & Josephy-Hernández (2019). Examining how a translation conveys stereotypical fictional gayspeak implies investigating the process of sexualisation of the TT. This study focuses on excerpts from popular animated sitcoms where the Italian dubbing of gayspeak departs from the original version in creative ways, as creativity is one of the strategies used to make characters' sexuality visible in the TT. This research rests on the idea that sexuality crosses linguistic and cultural boundaries through translation (Bauer, 2015), as each society indexes sexualities with different linguistic items. Translation is therefore a sexuality-constructing activity, where the sexualisation of the TT implies reconstructing the characters' sexuality in a way that is appropriate to the target culture.

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Bionote

Davide Passa is a PhD student in *Studies in English literatures, cultures, language, and translation* (Language and Translation Studies) at Sapienza University in Rome, where he has also been nominated Graduate Teaching Assistant in L-LIN/12 English language and translation. He is member of AIA, EST and IATIS, as well as part of the Editorial Staff of the class-A journal *Status Quaestionis*. He has published articles on the fictional use of sociolects and their rendering in translation, with particular attention to fictional gayspeak and drag lingo. His PhD thesis focuses on the linguistic characterisation of fictional gay men in twenty-first century British drama. His main research interests are Sociolinguistics, (Audiovisual) Translation Studies, language and sexuality studies, corpus linguistics. He teaches English language and culture in secondary schools.

(Word)Play with life: Creativity in game translation

Silvia Pettini, Roma Tre University

“Creativity is one of the pillars of game localization, crucial to producing an exciting and engaging game” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013, 250). This definition, which represents one of the core skills of game localizers and translators, relates to the notion of game localization as a skopos-driven translation, that is driven by the purpose of entertaining target players by keeping the same look and feel of the original game (ibid., 150). Consequently, “with games, fidelity takes a different meaning whereby the translator does not have to be loyal to the original text, but rather to the overall game experience” (Mangiron and O’Hagan 2006, 15). Translating the game experience, however, means both guaranteeing functionality and enhancing players’ immersion into the game world, it means allowing players to both use the product and enjoy the artifact. Moreover, different video games offer different game experiences and the approach and strategies used in translation vary accordingly. As Bernal-Merino claims (2015, 52), the priority given to local tastes, expectations, preferences, and sensitivities may indeed involve very creative decisions in game translation, but the parameters and limitations of creativity are defined by games themselves. In other words, “game worlds and experiences, together with players’ expectations of and interaction with those worlds and experiences, shape the level of creativity, if any” (ibid.).

The Sims series (Electronic Arts 2000 –) is one of the most commercially successful simulation game franchises at global level. Originally created by designer and *auteur* Will Wright, over its four main titles and numerous expansions and spin-offs, this series has become a cultural phenomenon by replacing monsters with plain humans and proving that ‘real’ life can be simulated by interactive entertainment (Bittanti and Flanagan 2003, Chan 2003, Sihvonen 2011). In this sense, *The Sims* represents “a landmark in videogame history” (Frasca 2001, online), because, as Nutt and Railton (2003) explain, it has established real life as a game genre. Players understand and enjoy the game through their notion of real life, and on this basis, they can use the game as a sort of life laboratory to play “with ‘like real life’ narratives” in either realistic or very creative ways (ibid., 589).

Against this background, this paper aims to explore instances of creativity in the language of real-life simulation by investigating the translation from English into Italian and Spanish of *The Sims 4*, the fourth major title and also the latest instalment in series of the same name. In particular, this research focuses on in-game texts (Bernal-Merino 2015, 110-114), and special attention is paid to “lexical creativity” (Munat 2016) in order to describe how game writers and translators “exploit the language system creatively, at the level of phonology, morphology, or syntax”, and “invent, modify, mix, and remix single morphemes, entire words, or whole expressions by applying or by violating productive and creative word-forming processes” (Munat 2016, 92) for the purposes of players’ fun.

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Bionote

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Creativity in AVT: Enhancing localisation and accessibility

Alessandra Rizzo, University of Palermo

In accordance with Jakobson's (1959) tripartite classification of translation as "rewording", "translation proper" and "transmutation", audiovisual translation practices can be understood as sites of creativity that, by virtue of the complementarity of the multiple oral and visual layers, contribute to strengthening the social and cultural dimensions of marked artifacts. In line with this belief, this study investigates the shape and role of integrated titles and pop-ups, intermedial surtitles, subtitles and voiceover within the same language and when translating across languages. To this end, a selected heterogeneous corpus of text bites encapsulated in small windows on screen and voiceover tracks within documentaries (i.e., festival documentary films), advertisements (i.e., commercials) and theatrical performances (i.e., accessible stage in English) has been compiled. Different perspectives have been adopted in relation to the practice of creativity in translational and authorial contexts, where creativity has been considered to be a constitutional component of the translating process, a choice on the translator's part and a vital resource for transcreation.

This rising interest in new and alternative forms of audiovisual translation is confirmed by the publication of recent research on topics such as translation creativity, creativity in dubbing and audiovisual translation as a localisation practice (O'Sullivan 2013; Ranzato 2011; Chaume 2018); inventive and heterogeneous types of subtitles (Foerster 2010; McClarty 2014; Díaz-Cintas 2018); intrusive layers of texts and free-floating texts featuring on mainstream screen media, as well as on niche filmic productions (Dwyer 2015); creativity in advertising translation (Valdés Rodríguez 2008); titling and re-voicing practices, and creative authorial titling as a diegetic device (Dwyer 2017; Pérez-González 2012, Katan 2018); the intermediality of surtitling technology in theatre translation (Brodie 2020), as well as the embeddedness of access services in the early stages of the filmmaking process (Romero-Fresco 2019).

The scrutiny of the various translation and subtitling activities, as instantiated in the selected corpus, serves to interrogate the potential of audiovisual translation modes as harbingers of creativity as well as to foreground the role of these innovative practices in the fostering of greater accessibility of audiovisual productions for different types of audience and for domesticating purposes. Final thoughts will aim to articulate the concept of creativity within translation and non-strictly translation frameworks, highlighting its value as an aesthetic and artistic instrument that can fortify practices of localisation and accessibility. These practices will encourage forms of activism as participation and solidarity, as well as unconventional communicative ways of transferring content in the form of subtitles, surtitles and titles as integrated texts that offer novel aesthetic and narrative modes of interpretation.

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Bionote

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She is a member of the Centre for Research in Translation and Transcultural Studies and of the AIA, ESIST and EST associations. Her research interests focus on audiovisual translation, accessibility, ELF in the context of migration and the visual arts, and on titling and subtitling as counter discourse and practices of creativity. She has extensively published in national and international journals, and in dedicated volumes. She edited the special issue "Translation and Accessibility for All in the Creative Industries: Digital Spaces and Cultural Contexts" for *Bridge: Trends and Traditions in Translation and Interpreting Studies* (2020), and coedited *Translation or Transcreation?* (with Cinzia Spinzi e Marianna Zummo, 2018) and the special issue "Translating the margin: Lost voices in the aesthetic discourse" for *InVerbis* (with Karen Seago, 2018). She is currently working on the monograph *New Perspectives on Translation. Aesthetics of migration in Documentaries and for the Stage* (Peter Lang).

Creativity in media accessibility: Individualising the ‘all’

Pablo Romero Fresco, University of Vigo/ Roehampton University

Although the emergence of integrated and collaborative approaches to media accessibility (MA) and audiovisual translation, such as accessible filmmaking, often require creative/non-standard approaches, professionals trained in this area are hard to come by. The aim of this presentation is, firstly, to explore some of the reasons why MA does not seem to have pursued this creative route consistently until now. Consideration will be given here to the currently prevailing experimental/cognitive turn, which favours quantitative approaches and has been used to inform current MA guidelines and their emphasis on comprehension and objectivity. Secondly, the presentation defines creative MA and focuses on an emerging movement of artists who use MA as a source of creativity, often embracing engagement and subjectivity. Their work constitutes a valuable contribution to research and training in MA, placing the focus back on the individual (in contrast to the prevailing emphasis on quantitative studies) and taking a necessary and urgent step in the path towards a wider political aim of inclusion and equality.

Bionote

Pablo Romero Fresco is Ramón y Cajal researcher at Universidade de Vigo (Spain) and Honorary Professor of Translation and Filmmaking at the University of Roehampton (London, UK). He is the author of the books *Subtitling through Speech Recognition: Respeaking* (Routledge), *Accessible Filmmaking: Integrating translation and accessibility into the filmmaking process* (Routledge) and *Creativity in Media Accessibility* (Routledge, forthcoming). He is on the editorial board of the *Journal of Audiovisual Translation* (JAT) and is the leader of the international research group GALMA (Galician Observatory for Media Access), for which he is currently coordinating several international projects on media accessibility and accessible filmmaking. Pablo is also a filmmaker. His first short documentary, *Joining the Dots* (2012), was used by Netflix as well as film schools around Europe to raise awareness about audio description. He has just released his first feature-length documentary, *Where Memory Ends* (2021), which has featured in *El País* and other leading Spanish media outlets.

Extending the creative intent: pushing boundaries in dubbing scripts

Giselle Spiteri Miggiani, University of Malta

This talk is intended as an academic reflection on the term ‘creative dubbing’. On the one hand, it challenges the idea of creative dubbing meant as something ‘other’ than the current norms and mainstream practices, that is, a deliberate change in the existing domain (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), with authorial intent. On the other hand, it embraces this possibility by exploring ways in which we can rethink the term ‘creative dubbing’. To this end, the first part will look into its interpretations and uses from an industry perspective (Chaume, 2021), as well as the so-called constrained creative process (Wang, 2009; Krauth 2016; Baetens, 2010; De Geest and Goris, 2010). The latter implies an interplay between the boundaries and creative freedom intrinsic to this professional practice. To what extent are dialogue writers already challenging these boundaries in mainstream dubbing practices? Examples will be drawn from the Italian dubbed version of *Potlach* (Réa, 2006).

The second part will explore hypothetical ways in which dialogue writers can shake client and viewer norm expectations. This will be followed by examples drawn from an emerging English-language dubbing practice that may be unintentionally breaking consolidated norms (Spiteri Miggiani, 2021a; 2021b), and possibly changing the original creative intent. Could this unintentional digression from dubbing routines be considered as a form of creative dubbing? Examples will be drawn from Netflix’s English dub streams of *Fauda* (Amit et al., 2015-), *The Rain* (Bose and Allen, 2018-), and *How to sell drugs online (fast)* (Kässbohrer et al., 2019-).

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Bionote

Giselle Spiteri Miggiani, Ph.D. is an audiovisual translator and dubbing dialogue writer since 2006. She is a tenured lecturer in the Department of Translation, Terminology, and Interpreting Studies at the University of Malta where she introduced Audiovisual Translation as a new area of studies. She acts as visiting lecturer and guest speaker at other foreign universities and delivers training and consultancy to media localisation companies and EU Institutions. She has lectured at the Università degli Studi di Torino, University College London, Universidad de Sevilla, University of Roehampton, ISTRAD, Universidad Europea, University of Essex, La Sapienza di Roma, Council of the EU, European Parliament. Apart from her global and industry-oriented research on dubbing, her current work focuses on the development of media and culture access in Malta. She is the author of the book *Dialogue Writing For Dubbing. An Insider's Perspective* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

In pursuit of the cinematic experience: Creative translation in the silent era

Serenella Zanotti, Roma Tre University

Creativity was an inherent feature of film translation in the silent era. Translating films in the silent film world entailed much more than translating words – it was a far more radical and material process of re-shaping and adapting the film text to meet the requirements of local audiences, exhibitors, and censorship boards (Vasey 1997). The aim of this paper is to examine the work and modus operandi of film translators in the late silent era, with a focus on the Italian context. Drawing on primary sources relating to the work of some prominent translators of the time, I will explore elements of continuity in film translation practices from the last decade of silent cinema to the age of dubbing. Using contemporary periodicals, censorship records and archival material, I will examine the intricacies and complexities of the film translator’s craft, which extended beyond the translation of text on screen. It will present evidence supporting the view of silent film translation as “a holistic process” (O’Sullivan and Cornu 2018: 16) involving not only the translation of title cards, but also a variety of interventions ranging from film re-editing, to the creation of publicity materials such as film novelizations, to more radical creative reworkings. In keeping with an approach that highlights not only breaks but also continuity with the past, I will attempt to provide an account of the way translation practices in the silent film world were developed and how they can be seen to have informed later approaches to film translation.

Bionote

Serenella Zanotti is Associate Professor of English and Translation Studies at the University of Rome III, Italy. Her main research interests are in the area of Translation Studies, with a focus on film translation history and translation archives. Her most recent work centres on Stanley Kubrick and the making of foreign-language versions. Among her publications are two monographs on James Joyce and numerous edited volumes, most recently *Linguistic and Cultural Representation in Audiovisual Translation* (Routledge, 2018), *Reassessing Dubbing: Historical Approaches and Current Trends* (Benjamins, 2019) and *English in Audiovisual Translation Research: Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives* (Textus, 2021). She is a member of the ITEM research group on ‘Multilinguisme, Traduction, Création’ (Institut des Textes et Manuscrits Modernes, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris).