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## THE ROLE OF AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION IN THE MODERN FILM INDUSTRY

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The audiovisual translation industry, known for its inherent adaptability and flexibility, finds itself navigating through significant changes in both consumer behavior and professional standards. With the exponential growth of multimedia content production and distribution, audiences increasingly gravitate towards online streaming platforms, relegating traditional television channels to the sidelines. This seismic shift is largely driven by industry giants such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, HBO Max, Apple TV+, and Disney Plus, whose global expansion efforts underscore the pivotal role of audiovisual translation and media localization in the entertainment landscape.

For example, in 2019, Netflix boasted over 106.1 million subscribers outside the US, out of its total 167.1 million subscribers, underscoring the indispensability of audiovisual translation in reaching diverse global audiences. To cater to the varied linguistic and accessibility needs of their viewers, these platforms offer a plethora of services including subtitles, dubbing, SDH (Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing), and AD (Audio Description) for the visually impaired. Consequently, the industry turnover has witnessed a meteoric rise, with a marked surge in the localization of audiovisual content.

Over the past decade, the European Union alone has experienced a significant uptick in the subtitling and dubbing market, a trend expected to persist in the foreseeable future. Projections indicate that the five leading streaming platforms, currently boasting approximately 357 million paid subscribers, are poised to soar to 553 million by 2025, signaling an unprecedented demand for translated content.

However, amidst this escalating global demand lies a pressing challenge: a shortage of proficient professionals in the dubbing and subtitling sector. This shortage is particularly acute for specific language pairs and in regions with limited access to higher education. Nevertheless, the unyielding demand for audiovisual translation persists, driven by companies recognizing the pivotal role of multilingual adaptation in facilitating global expansion.

Consequently, there is a burgeoning need for specialized training programs in audiovisual translation to bridge the talent gap and meet the surging demand effectively. As companies strive to tap into diverse markets worldwide, the importance of skilled professionals proficient in dubbing and subtitling cannot be overstated, making it imperative to nurture and equip the next generation of audiovisual translators with the requisite expertise.

Over the years, the field of translation studies has undergone a profound transformation, capturing the keen interest of linguistic scholars. These scholars have delved into the intricate nuances of language, exploring its profound connections with various aspects of human existence. They've probed deeply into the intricate web of social, cultural, and linguistic systems that come into play during the translation process. Recent years have witnessed a surge in research endeavors within the linguistic domain, shedding light on the inseparable bond between language and the ever-evolving cultural tapestry of each society. Consequently, language itself is in a perpetual state of flux, reflecting the dynamic nature inherent in the discipline of translation. What was once hailed as groundbreaking research in the field may now be perceived as outdated or flawed, given the continuous evolution of language and translation practices.

In response to the evolving landscape of linguistic inquiry, a distinctive discipline has emerged within the broader realm of translation studies: audiovisual translation. This specialized field has attracted considerable attention and scrutiny due to its unique characteristics. Unlike traditional text translation, audiovisual translation grapples with multimodal materials, encompassing not only the textual dimension but also the visual and auditory elements intricately intertwined with the text being translated.

Yuri Lotman proposed that the power of cinematic influence lies in its ability to convey a wealth of meticulously organized and densely concentrated information. Here, "information" encompasses all intellectual and structural elements communicated to the audience (Lotman, 1976).

The genesis of cinema traces back to the pioneering efforts of French inventor Louis Le Prince, whose silent film *Roundhay Garden Scene*, shot in Leeds, England in 1888, heralded the dawn of cinematic storytelling. Despite the absence of sound, Le Prince ingeniously incorporated a musical score. Yet, filmmakers soon recognized the indispensable role of language in cinematic communication, spurring innovations to transcend the limitations of silent visuals.

In 1903, Edwin S. Porter's seminal film *Uncle Tom's Cabin* introduced language on screen for the first time, utilizing "intertitles" strategically placed between movie scenes to propel the narrative forward. Subsequently, in 1909, M.N. Topp introduced the concept of "subtitles," presenting additional text at the bottom of the screen beneath the action. This groundbreaking technique proved to be both cost-effective and instrumental in facilitating the global dissemination of films through translation into different languages.

While the primary function of subtitles is to effectively convey on-screen events to viewers, their role has evolved over time, mirroring the trajectory of cinematic history. From the advent of movie cameras in 1892 to the era of globalization, subtitles have not only made video content accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing but have also served as a bridge to diverse audiences worldwide, enriching the cinematic experience for all.

In the contemporary internet age, the accessibility of online video content transcends geographical boundaries, necessitating its availability to a diverse global audience, regardless of linguistic differences. High-quality subtitling, which meticulously accounts for the intricacies of various languages, emerges as an indispensable solution to this imperative.

The genesis of subtitles can be traced back to intertitles, a feature prevalent in early silent films. These intertitles, carrying essential textual cues for storytelling, were imprinted on cardboard, filmed, and strategically inserted between scenes. Remarkably, even in these nascent stages, early subtitle cards

exhibited traits akin to modern subtitles, employing punctuation for enhanced readability and employing a three-dot ellipsis to denote unfinished sentences.

The inaugural instance of subtitle cards finds its roots in Edwin S. Porter's landmark 1903 film, "Uncle Tom's Cabin." During the silent film era, the translation of films followed a relatively straightforward process: subtitle cards from the source material were translated and reproduced on sturdy cardstock for seamless integration.

Denmark and France emerged as pioneers in the release of subtitled films in 1929, marking a significant milestone in the acceptance of such cinematic presentations. The prevalence of dubbing versus subtitling across European nations varied considerably, often dictated by economic considerations. Larger nations tended to favor dubbing owing to its perceived cost-effectiveness, with dubbing even assuming the role of a tool for political censorship during periods of totalitarian governance.

Dubbing garnered favor for myriad reasons, including the prevalent illiteracy at the outset of the 20th century and its strategic utility as a mechanism for film censorship. In nations under authoritarian regimes like Italy, Spain, and Germany, dubbing provided authorities with a means to manipulate dialogues and reshape film narratives to align with ideological agendas. Moreover, dubbing served nationalist aspirations, seeking to homogenize language and suppress regional dialects and minority languages.

Similarly, in Franco's Spain, dubbing served as a tool to perpetuate ideological conformity and marginalize minority languages. Post-Nazi Germany employed dubbing to sanitize film dialogues and downplay references to its dark past, exemplified by adaptations such as Alfred Hitchcock's 1946 film "Notorious," wherein Nazi characters were reimagined as generic criminals.

Dubbing, a process involving the recording of additional audio tracks in a foreign language and integrating them into the original film, has long been recognized for its complexity and high cost. Consequently, filmmakers began exploring alternative methods, leading to a resurgence in the use of subtitles. Subtitles provide a means for text to be displayed at the bottom of the screen without disrupting the visual narrative.

The dominance of the United States in the film industry led to English becoming the primary language of production. In response, foreign subtitles gained prominence, particularly after World War II, as European countries sought to counteract American influence by producing films in their native languages.

Despite the enduring popularity of dubbing in some circles, subtitles continue to be widely embraced due to their affordability and minimal intrusion. However, audience preferences for dubbing versus subtitling vary significantly. In regions with lower literacy rates, subtitles may present accessibility challenges, while certain viewers find them distracting and struggle to read them quickly.

Jean-Marie Straub, a respected French filmmaker, vocally condemned dubbing, denouncing it as an ideological imposition that compromises authenticity and diminishes viewer engagement. Straub championed subtitles as a means of preserving the cultural integrity of the original film.

The human voice possesses a remarkable ability to evoke a wide range of emotions. Arthur Pilipets, a radio host and dubbing actor, underscores the significance of voice timbre in eliciting emotional responses from audiences.

In Kazakhstan, the field of audiovisual translation has experienced rapid growth, spurred by legislation mandating the screening of national cinema in the Kazakh language. This legislative move underscores a significant shift in the country's language policy. Additionally, foreign films shown in Kazakh cinemas must now include subtitles in the Kazakh language. Meanwhile, the dubbing industry in Kazakhstan is on the rise, with specialized studios translating popular Disney films into Kazakh. Notably, film actors play a role in selecting dubbing actors to ensure alignment with the character's portrayal in Kazakh.

The evolution of technology has significantly shaped the landscape of training for audiovisual translators, particularly in the realm of subtitling. From its inception, audiovisual translation has been closely intertwined with technological advancements. Significant milestones include the emergence of cinema in the early 20th century, the integration of sound in the late 1920s, the pioneering development of dedicated subtitling systems in the 1970s, and the digital revolution in imagery during the 1990s. In recent years, there has been a notable surge in interest in harnessing new cloud-based and language technologies to boost efficiency and streamline workflows.

In the 21st century, the widespread adoption of technology has facilitated the rapid dissemination of cultural content, predominantly in audiovisual formats. According to Díaz

Technological advancements, along with multimodal production techniques and the availability of audiovisual translation, have accelerated the distribution of audiovisual materials across various platforms, including television, computers, tablets, smartphones, and digital screens. Technology has become omnipresent, influencing not just individual social interactions but also shaping the broader external environment. - Sintas and Massidda (2019, 255)

This transformative shift is evident in the audiovisual translation industry through the development of specialized tools tailored to the digital age. These tools encompass neural machine translation (NMT) engines, translation memory (TM) systems, automatic speech recognition (ASR) software, text-to-speech (TTS) converters, and translation tools for speech-to-text (STT) and speech-to-speech (STS) conversion.

Audiovisual translation primarily involves translating the verbal component of video content, emphasizing the synchronization of verbal and non-verbal elements. Translators engage with not only textual aspects but also other polyphonic elements of media art, including dialogue, sound effects, and visual imagery. G. Gottlieb identifies four main channels of information considered during translation: verbal audio, non-verbal audio, verbal and visual, and non-verbal visual.

The interpretation of meaning in audiovisual translation encompasses analyzing the entire content of the audiovisual product and each individual scene, aiming to achieve equivalence while addressing cultural, grammatical, stylistic, and pragmatic aspects. Synchronicity is crucial, ensuring alignment between source and target texts, including lip synchrony, which presents significant challenges.

Various approaches exist for translating spoken language in audiovisual programs, with revoicing and conversion into written text being the predominant methods. Revoicing involves replacing the original dialogue with new audio in the target language, either entirely or partially. Each translation mode has its own suitability for different audiovisual genres, with some modes being more commonly used in specific contexts than others.

Ultimately, the choice of translation method hinges on factors such as audience preferences, financial constraints, program genre, distribution format, and audience profile. Despite historical debates between proponents and opponents of different approaches, there is a growing consensus that each method has its own merits and can be equally effective.

For several years, full access to audiovisual media for social minorities such as the hearing-impaired and visually impaired has been an issue. Recent developments and research indicate that the needs of these groups are increasingly being met, and this area of knowledge currently occupies a strong position in the field of audiovisual translation. Accessibility is a new key concept; an overarching term encompassing all related new translation methods.

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