

Introduction

A tool for social integration? Audiovisual translation from different angles

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In the early twentieth century, when silent movies started to talk, some of the best-known types of audiovisual translation (AVT), subtitling and dubbing, were created as a way to overcome the language barriers that were suddenly endangering very profitable film exports. Mostly North American film companies feared their revenues would dwindle unless they found a way to translate their productions into different European target languages. A possibly less exclusively commercial motivation lay at the basis of translation for the small screen later on in 20th century Europe, more specifically, in the European Union, as it strove to overcome language barriers between its nation states, in a bid to overcome socio-economic barriers and promote a sense of unity

In the 21st century, AVT has grown exponentially and diversified to such an extent that it has exploded what were once considered to be its constraining technical features, its media-specific characteristics, its Euro-centric borders and its classic, interlingual translational and textual features. Indeed, AVT is mingling with multimedia translation and localisation, and increasingly determining our access to information and entertainment, which themselves are in a sense, the two sides of one and the same coin.

In fact, AVT appears to be acting as a microcosm of current text production more generally. It reflects the ongoing revolution in text production and consumption that mixes written, visual and aural modes, alternates or combines different carriers, undermines traditional notions such as the linearity of verbal texts, questions the relations of dependence between source and target text(s), and reaches out for increasingly diversified audiences (cf. Zabalbeascoa 2005, for instance).

Rapid change is a quintessential feature of our time and it is therefore hardly surprising that it should affect AVT. Disentangling the knot of influences underlying its ever-shifting trends, however, would involve excursions into different disciplines that are beyond the scope of this introduction. A few key issues that merit separate mention, because they touch on some of the core issues tackled by various authors in this volume, are the unavoidable globalization-localisation pair, the impact of technological change, the possibility for empowerment it creates, the fairly recent trend of defining audiovisual translation as a form of media accessibility and the socio-economic overdetermination of all these (cf. also Gambier 2003: 171-190; Orero 2004: VII-XIII; Diaz Cintas, Orero & Remael 2007: 11).

To begin with, each of these issues has an impact on each of the others: one of the effects of globalization-cum-localisation is the increased

diversification of audiovisual production, whereas technological advances make it physically possible to diversify AVT forms and affect the way they are produced. The empowerment that the internet offers its users, allows them to circulate new forms of AVT or modified versions of existing ones, breaking the hold of the AVT industry on the market. Moreover, the accessibility provided by new technological tools has strengthened lobbying groups (e.g. for the blind and visually impaired) in their demand for “media for all”. Such developments suggest there is great potential for better quality, tailor-made AVT, more universal accessibility, and, one would therefore think, unproblematic social integration of all population groups into the fabric of today’s (information) society. However, possibilities for change always appear to be curbed by political and socio-economic realities, by the powers of finance and their cost-cutting exercises, by the stark contrasts between rich and poor, and the sometimes stifling influence of people or organizations with vested interests in *the status quo*.

In short, audiovisual translation in its many guises could be a tool for emancipation and social integration, but is it? The reactions we received in response to our original call for papers for *Linguistica Antverpiensia* NS6, “Audiovisual Translation: a tool for social integration”, have led us to check our optimism, add a question mark to our original title and rephrase it as “A tool for social integration? Audiovisual translation from different angles”. However, this slight shift in perspective has also created room for the diversity in both practice and research that appears to be so typical of this field, encompassing issues related to the topic of ‘social integration’, but also the difficulties in achieving it, as well as new evolutions that may one day lead to improved accessibility.

In fact, social integration itself can take many forms, some of which may be welcomed by all, some of which may be experienced as enforced compliance to the rule of majority. We interpret the term in its positive sense, as the possibility to fully access the cultures of the country and the world one lives in. Besides, we believe that AVT should promote social integration in this sense, and the volume you are about to read looks at current trends in AVT focusing on the way these affect its producers, researchers and users.

There is one sense in which we feel the collection may fall somewhat short: Europe is still overrepresented, compared to other continents. This is neither accidental, nor is it a purposeful strategy on our part. It is no doubt due to the fact that this world is still one of different speeds, even within Europe. It is also one additional motivation for persevering in striving to achieve what AVT originally set out to do: obliterate unwanted boundaries. Especially in the field of audiovisual media it is disconcerting to find that for all the talk about globalisation and localisation, global media accessibility and its attending policies, we still have a long way to go if worldwide social integration within and between continents is to be achieved.

In any case, we do cross the borders of Europe in the first two articles of this collection, which report on the links between **AVT POLICIES AND (COMMERCIAL) PRACTICE, MULTILINGUALISM AND IDENTITY** in Israel and South Africa respectively, where **SUBTITLING** is the dominant AVT form.

In “Translation for Israeli television: the reflection of a hybrid identity”, **Rachel Weissbrod** sets out to analyze translation for Israeli television in its two historical phases. She explores whether and in what ways Israeli television serves the national cause, and what the implications are for Israel’s largest minorities – Israeli Arabs and some new arrivals, more specifically, 1990s immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The article starts by exploring Israeli Television from the late 1960s, its relations with nationalism, statehood, and their manifestations in translation. Then it moves on to the changes that have come into effect since the 1990s under the dual influence of multiculturalism and commercialism, and their implications for AVT. Weissbrod shows that Israel may be evolving into a multilingual, multicultural country in some respects, but that in AVT-practice commercialism appears to have a strong hold on the promotion of multilingualism.

Jan-Louis Kruger, Haidee Kruger and Marlene Verhoef write about “Subtitling and the promotion of multilingualism: the case of marginalised languages in South Africa”. In South Africa, the concept ‘linguistic human rights’ is closely tied to the concept of multilingualism; however, the authors state, the degree to which the state has managed to attain its objectives regarding people’s language rights, is debatable. The article details the television broadcasting situation in South Africa and goes on to investigate the role that television subtitling may play in the promotion of multilingualism in South Africa. After a reflection on the current language political situation in the country, more particularly as it pertains to the public broadcaster, it also looks into the impact subtitling may have on language comprehension, considering such South African realities as illiteracy and lack of access to education. More specifically, the article details the findings of a pilot study which investigated language status, linguistic attitudes and language acquisition, focusing on the speakers of two of the more marginalised national languages, *i.e.* Tshivenda and Xitsonga. Offering a good example of how AVT could contribute to social integration, if given a chance, the pilot study carried out by Kruger, Kruger and Verhoef reveals that their respondents realized that “subtitles in their mother tongue would contribute to the recognition, development and expansion of their language”.

Three articles add **SUBVERSION AND INNOVATION** to empowerment issues. In “Films, Subtitles and Subversions”, **Elena Di Giovanni** shows that AVT, and subtitling more in particular, can also contribute to empowerment and emancipation in other ways, even if this is at a cost. Focusing on subtitling for film festivals, a hub of subversive practice with regard to mainstream cinema and its mainstream ideologies, she explores

the notion of ‘subversion’ as it can be applied to the practice of film subtitling within this very idiosyncratic environment. Devoting special attention to one specific Italian human rights film festival (of 2005), she describes the organisation and circumstances in which the subtitling had to be carried out (a mainstay of film festivals), and details the role and efforts a number of student-subtitlers put into rendering the films accessible to people attending the festival, allowing them to have their full effect. The article highlights the complex role the subtitlers played, as well as the linguistic, socio-cultural and emotional constraints they had to take in their stride.

A different type of subtitler and their subtitled product are the focus of the investigation in **Luis Pérez-González’s** “Intervention in new amateur subtitling cultures: a multimodal account”, *i.e.* the fans of Japanese animated cinema worldwide. Subtitling has become increasingly entangled in utilitarian-commercial forms of localisation, but it has also contributed to enhancing social cohesion, e.g. among the d/Deaf and hard of hearing. As different subtitling variants cater for increasingly specific target groups, this also results in the emergence of audiences with very different expectations, and in this case, an audience that has a lot of clout due its access to new technologies and its efficient networking. The fans of Japanese animated cinema pose a very idiosyncratic challenge to mainstream film production and subtitling. Pérez-González first examines the genealogy of this particular audience segment and then goes on to analyse the specific form of cultural mediation they promote. The author shows how fansubbing contributes to the “gestalt semiotics” of the subtitled text, subordinates cinematic naturalism to the search for modernization, and develops new narrative techniques, characterizing its conventions in terms of their “multimodality”. Fansubbing also influences subtitling policies. Indeed, the article argues that “[...] fansubbing epitomizes a peculiar form of comprehensive intervention in the traditional dynamics of the audiovisual marketplace”(71).

Carol O’Sullivan’s article “Multilingualism at the multiplex: a new audience for screen translation?” looks into the phenomenon of “part-subtitling”, with a focus on anglophone audiences. Basically, part-subtitling is a strategy for making a film shot in two or more languages accessible to the viewers of its primary language audience. It is conceptualized during film production and represents “an aesthetic or political choice within a film, rather than a strategy for the transfer of a complete work”, the author writes (81). Like fansubbing, part-subtitling on occasion experiments with subtitle form and positioning; moreover, it becomes a vehicle for plot and character development. An increasing number of films are foregrounding translingual and cross-cultural issues today, and this particular subtitle variant, the author argues, may be a way of introducing new audiences to subtitled films. O’Sullivan warns against over-optimism, demonstrating that the co-existence of different languages in films does not necessarily imply openness to other cultures, but ends on a positive note, claiming that part-

subtitling may serve as “a trigger for the multilingual imaginations of viewers” (92).

The following two articles turn to **AVT, LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND TRANSLATOR TRAINING**. In “Sous-titrage et apprentissage des langues”, **Yves Gambier** offers a broad and comprehensive survey of research into the use of both interlingual and intralingual subtitling in controlled and spontaneous language learning environments. The author’s starting point is the question of how we can improve people’s command of foreign languages, as the internationalisation of the media and the development of communication and information technology are changing our relationship to these languages. Since screens are ubiquitous in today’s world, putting them to good use for teaching seems the obvious thing to do. However, not all types of subtitling and not all contexts promote language acquisition equally well. The article investigates the nature, scope, context and methodology of a wide range of classic as well as newer studies and ends with suggestions for further research.

Broadening the scope from subtitling to include other forms of translation, the contribution by **Juan Antonio Prieto Velasco, Maribel Tercedor Sánchez and Clara Inés López Rodríguez**, “Using Multimedia Materials in the Teaching of Scientific and Technical Translation”, integrates different forms of AVT into the teaching of specialized translation. Stressing recent developments with regard to the formats and multimedia information channels used in AVT today, or the current interaction between AVT and multimedia, they demonstrate that the non-textual information evolving around texts can be an asset in training future translators who will have to face up to the challenges of quickly changing working environments. Indeed, even in technical and scientific translation new formats involving visual information have become the mainstays, meaning that translators are faced with new constraints, possibilities, and translation problems that require increasingly creative solutions. Working within a process-oriented frame-semantics approach to knowledge representation, the authors demonstrate what the role and functions of multimedia objects can be in a translation teaching environment, using a wealth of examples of concrete graded classroom exercises, and incorporating the awareness that the texts produced today must also be ‘accessible’ for all.

The **COMPOSITION OF AVT-AUDIENCES AND THE ACCESSIBILITY OF CULTURAL EVENTS**, are also central concerns in the two articles on **SURTITLING FOR OPERA AND THEATRE**, adding another angle to our spectrum of AVT as a tool for social integration. In “Surtitling today: new uses, attitudes and developments”, **Marta Mateo** first examines the formal particularities of this AVT form, including its affinities with subtitling. She then investigates whether surtitling has made opera more “audience friendly” and has changed audience expectations, also considering the influence it may have on the way some operas are produced today. The second part of the article goes on to explore the more recent use of surtitling for drama, looking into the way it differs from opera surtitling and the new

possibilities it offers for theatre performances. The article is partly based on a questionnaire distributed among a number of theatres, inquiring into the participants in the surtitling process, their functions, and their views on the use of surtitles, but also considering technical issues, the factors determining translation decisions, and data regarding surtitling reception, including intralingual surtitling.

The article by **Lucile Desblache** “Music to my ears, but words to my eyes? Text, opera and their audiences”, first surveys the translation of opera libretti throughout the history of the genre, concentrating on how attitudes to languages and to audiences have had an impact on different ways of providing translated versions of the operatic text. The author’s detailed analysis of language use and translation in libretti as well as the careful examination of opera audiences and their (variable) preferences, provide a firm basis for the analysis of subsequent evolutions and conflicts following the introduction of surtitling. Ample attention is also devoted to the ‘invisible’ and sometimes thankless task of the surtitler, often “[...] at the centre of a controversy which denigrates translation work and the importance of translation” (165). Still, surtitlers are very conscious of the need to render the text comprehensible for the audience, but to remain in harmony with the production, says Desblache. What is more, the negative reactions of some opera critics discussed in this article, are shown not to be shared by all. The author therefore concludes: “The rekindled interest in opera, noticeable at the turn of the last century, may be reflecting European nostalgia for visions of a culture that has gone by. But it also mirrors other priorities firmly linked to our present and happens in response to successful efforts made by opera houses and festivals to be culturally and financially more accessible to a wider public” (168), which not only confirms some of the findings of **Marta Mateo**, but also links the article to the broader theme of diversity and accessibility central in most of the articles discussed so far.

The collection then turns from texts on screen or stage, to texts written to be spoken. **DUBBING**, one of the most established forms of AVT, one traditionally associated with **IDEOLOGICAL CONSERVATISM AND DOMESTICATING TRANSLATION PRACTICES** (cf. Danan 1991, 1995) appears to remain true to its reputation, but some change is making itself felt both in new approaches to its research and in the way some dubbing is produced, at least to a limited extent.

Two articles propose new research angles for this classic form of AVT. Dismissing the old paradigm that opposed subtitling to dubbing on the basis of very subjective perceptions of their relative merits, **José Luis Martí Ferriol** throws new light on the similarities as well as the differences in the translation methods underlying the two types of AD in “An empirical and descriptive study of the translation method for dubbing and subtitling”. His article, based on PhD research, is product-focused and based on the specificity of the audiovisual text as “[...] a construct whose specificity consists of a conjunction of image and words”(173). The corpus of the study consists of a number of independent American films shown in Spain (and

expected to highlight differences in translation method), in dubbed and subtitled versions, in the period between 2001 and 2004. The study is strongly statistical in approach and develops an empirical methodology that is diametrically opposed to the rather subjective research that once was the staple in the domain of AVT. It defines translation method in terms of a graphical and parametrical representation, and more concretely, as a function of three parameters: constraints active in audiovisual translation, translation norms and translation techniques.

In “Synching and swimming naturally on the side – the translation of hesitation in dubbing”, **Pablo Romero Fresco** also favours quantifiable methods in the sense that the author makes use of three extensive corpora for his research. Moreover, he distances himself from an earlier generation of researchers in dubbing, in focusing on the “naturalness” of dubbed dialogue rather than the constraints that are traditionally viewed to determine it. His study analyses the use of hesitation markers in dubbing in order to look precisely at this naturalness of dubbed dialogue without losing sight of the audiovisual constraints within which it has to work. The analysis is carried out by comparing the dubbed dialogue of 48 episodes of the popular American sitcom *Friends*, and their Spanish dubbed versions. The results are contrasted with those offered by the analysis of another corpus made up of 26 episodes (one season) of the Spanish sitcom *Siete vidas* and the spontaneous speech section of the Spanish corpus CREA, elaborated by the Real Academia Española.

The traditionalism of dubbing practice is central in the next contributions devoted to this AVT mode. In “Dubbing practices in Europe: localisation beats globalisation”, **Frederico Chaume** shows that dubbing refuses to bend to the homogenisation so typical of globalisation trends in other translation domains. The author writes that perhaps “[...] due to notions of nationalism and singularity attached to this concept, dubbing still shows different macro- and microtextual practices in the European countries in which it is the most popular type of audiovisual translation” (203). His article investigates this conservative trait as it is manifested in the dubbing process, in its different approaches to text segmentation and its use of dubbing symbols, covering practices in France, Germany, Italy and Spain. However, the author concludes with a brief consideration of a few attempts at homogenisation on the dubbing front, some more successful than others. Does it come as a surprise that once again it is audience intervention, or rather the initiative of one audience sub-group that operates outside the established production channels that succeeds in breaking with tradition? In this particular case, it is ‘fandubs’ (mostly created for *anime*, like fansubs) that are opening up a route to homogenisation, which in this particular case means breaking with industry-imposed national domestication and possibly acting as a catalyst for change in professional dubbing.

In “Other voices, other rooms? The relevance of dubbing in the reception of audiovisual products”, another article exploring dubbing’s so-called ‘conservative’ traits, **Victor Ruiz M. González and Laura Cruz**

García take as their starting point the generally accepted idea that dubbing, “does not give the audience the opportunity to fully perceive the cultural gap between what they hear and see, and their own reality”(219). They examine whether this might affect the reception of dubbed versus subtitled films in Spain. More specifically, they have designed and conducted a first, pilot study in which they aim to identify the elements viewers use to situate a film in national terms, comparing the reception of dubbed and subtitled films. The study contrasts what is defined as “marginal” films, *i.e.* films that break with the homogenizing trends of international mainstream commercial film production dominated by the USA, with more uniform international productions and hybrid films. With regard to the question of whether it is actually the case that dubbed versions succeed in obliterating the national origins of films, their findings show that viewers often use the production values of films to determine their origin. As a result, it is especially when films mix genres that the average filmgoer encounters problems and that dubbing makes identifying a film’s nationality rather problematic, even if this does not appear to influence viewers’ preferences.

All the same, this does come across as an enduring case of **DUBBING LIMITING ACCESS TO OTHER CULTURES**, rather than promoting social integration and accessibility, a topic that is also central to the following two papers on **TEXT MANIPULATION AND CENSORSHIP** in the dubbing process. **Chiara Bucaria** looks at “Humour and other catastrophes: dealing with the translation of mixed-genre TV series”. She examines examples from three US TV series (some of the most controversial products on Italian TV in the last few years) dubbed into Italian. Her aim is to analyse the degree of manipulation that they have undergone in terms of the linguistic representation of clashing genres. Indeed, as the title suggests, special attention is devoted to the translation of humour in filmic texts that present a mixture of drama and comedy. In view of what happens with the transposition of swearwords and other potentially disturbing contents, it is fair to say that the filter of dubbing has a very fine mesh, even though the criteria underlying the manipulations do not appear to be consistent at all. Generally speaking, the dubbed versions are all “normalized”. In other words, even if dubbing does not achieve homogenisation in its production process, it (still) does in the product it delivers. According to the author, the inconsistencies in the translational choices suggest the working of arbitrary preferences and possibly the influence of “[...] economic and marketing factors that leave little room to considerations about a respectful treatment of the original product” (251), or, one might say, to the right to have access to some of the more controversial aspects of a culture often equated with mainstream conservative ideologies.

In a similar manner, **Delia Chiaro** shows in “Not in front of the children? An analysis of sex on screen in Italy”, that Italian television is not quite liberated yet, at least when it comes to imported TV productions. Explicit references to sex and sexual behaviour beyond “traditional male/female ‘mainstream’ sexual practices” become increasingly taboo in

the translation of sexually explicit series such as the US produced *Sex and the City*. First considering the current state of censorship and AVT in Italy, the author examines the norms governing the translation of ‘adult’ material in the above-mentioned series. The article offers detailed examples of translation strategies, examining shifts in the linguistic content of the programs, but also points out that, for instance, the quality of some of the Italian voices and the sounds the dubbing actors do or do not make, further affect the tone of the target text, in some instances giving precedence to the comic rather than the sexual character of a scene. On the other hand, mitigation is more common than downright deletion, and interviews with professionals involved in the dubbing process suggest that it is self-censorship rather than an institutional form of censorship that underlies the decision-making process. Chiaro no doubt rightly wonders, however, whether the morals of the dubbers actually reflect the morals of the TV-audience interested in series such as the one under consideration.

The **TRANSLATION OF TELEVISION ADVERTS**, a less-studied form of AVT and **ITS IMPACT ON AVT-PRACTICE**, for instance in dubbing countries, is the topic of “A complex mode of screen translation: the case of advertisements on Spanish television” by **Cristina Valdés** and “La traducción de la publicidad televisiva: la globalización, catalizadora de cambios en la estrategia traductora”, by **Rosa Agost**, who claims that the translation of television publicity, may be a catalyst of change. **Valdés** first looks into how the Spanish dubbing tradition and its concomitant language policies for television affect decisions regarding the translation of ads, indicating, however, that the fragmentation of the TV market and its internationalisation have brought about significant change in recent years. Although all television channels have their own regulations regarding advertising, they are also kept within certain bounds by two subsequent European directives (1998 and 2007). Another factor of change is the increased interest in foreign languages and cultures displayed by the younger generation, reflected in an increase in untranslated publicity spots. These “spots”, audiovisual texts whose main components, image and sound, form a cohesive unity that is meant to trigger a persuasive effect, are the main focus of the article; especially, the shifts this effect may undergo in translation. Such text manipulations and the decisions or constraints that prompt them, are analysed in detail on the basis of one specific example, involving English-Spanish translation. Even though for now, dubbing remains the prominent translational mode, some change may be afoot.

This same idea is developed by **Rosa Agost**, who also tackles the translation of television spots in Spain, although she cautions against hasty conclusions: it is too early to conclude that shifts in the translation of publicity will lead to shifts in AVT in other domains. Still, her more extensive study yields results that complement the findings of the very detailed case study carried out by **Valdés**. Following a survey of AVT in publicity and the limited attention devoted to it in translation studies, **Agost** details the findings of a survey of 800 television spots from two time periods (1995-96

and 2000-2007), and a questionnaire on the reception of AVT, with special attention for the translation of TV ads, submitted to 460 individuals of different ages and backgrounds. The study combines open with controlled response set-ups, and complements primary data with information obtained through interviews. A few of the issues Agost sets out to investigate are: is dubbing still the most generally appreciated form of AVT in Spain? Are the younger generation more open to multilingual texts and to subtitling in publicity? Is there a link between the perceived target audience of a given TV ad and the form of AVT used? Does globalisation have a homogenizing effect on the publicity for some products?

LANS6 moves on to the theme of media **ACCESSIBILITY** in a narrower sense in the next 4 articles, devoted to **LIVE TELETEXT SUBTITLING** for the d/Deaf and hard of hearing, **AND AUDIO DESCRIPTION (AD)** for the blind and visually impaired. All articles focus on **TRAINING AND/OR RESEARCH**, investigating how some of the newer forms of AVT can be incorporated in existing research and training programmes. In a sense, how to make them 'accessible' in yet another way.

In "De tolk als respeaker: een kwestie van training", **Bart van der Veer** investigates the skills required for the production of live subtitles with speech recognition technology. The author first defines this new approach to subtitling, which makes it possible for a 'respeaker' to provide live events with subtitles for a d/Deaf and hard of hearing audience, but points out that the technique is still open to improvement. One crucial problem is the delay that occurs between the moment the text is re-spoken and the moment the subtitle actually appears on screen. Respeaking, van der Veer writes, requires technical skills related to the software used, but also oral and cognitive skills that are reminiscent of the skills of conference interpreters. His article therefore looks into the degree of correspondence between different forms of interpreting and respeaking, and then applies his findings to respeaker training, in order to determine which skills should be given priority. He distinguishes different phases in the training process, some of which are reminiscent of subtitler training, but most of which belong squarely within the set-up traditionally associated with interpreter training courses.

We turn to audio description (AD) with "Designing a course on audio description and defining the main competences of the future professional", by **Anna Matamala and Pilar Orero**. The starting point for this article is the course on AD that was recently developed at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona within its MA in Audiovisual Translation. The authors first define the profile and skills of a "good audio describer", basing themselves on a critical survey of a range of professional and academic publications, including personal research, before proceeding to discuss the stages and components of the AD course being taught at the Autònoma. They stress that describers' skills should go beyond professional and academic ones, considering their role as social intermediaries, and they differentiate competences depending on the context and text type within which

the AD will have to function. This can give rise to complex taxonomies, which are discussed in some detail. The article then considers competences and learning outcomes, content and set-up of the course, as well as graded exercises and materials – pointing to the requirements of different types of AD – and concludes with suggestions for assessment.

The more research-focused and theoretical article on AD by **Catalina Jiménez Hurtado**, “La Audiodescripción desde la representación del conocimiento general. Configuración semántica de una gramática local del texto audiodescrito”, starts from the idea that new objects of study, *in casu* the AD script, require new scientific approaches or the adaptation of existing ones. Moreover, she too stresses that the emergence of new textual forms also calls for new didactic approaches. The development of scientific investigation and teaching therefore need to go hand in hand, not least to give sufficient visibility to the new groups of professionals entering the market today. Both linguistics and translation studies have developed ways to analyse the semantic and grammatical characteristics of new text types, the author states, but she details the difficulty one encounters in designing an approach that is adequate for AD scripts, especially within the field of corpus analysis. It is within this context that she undertakes to create a local grammar of AD scripts, on the basis of an analysis of the representation of knowledge typical of AD, *i.e.* the description in words or other signs of a specific visual reality encoded by the fragments of a given film.

Audio description involves an intense process of assessment and decision-making – this is the angle of “Audio Description from a discourse perspective: a socially relevant framework for research and training” by **Sabine Braun**. The author also outlines new avenues for empirical research, but starts from a discourse-based approach, which she believes can provide a useful framework, not only for research, but also for training and practice. According to Braun, mental modelling theory, as well as research into visual perception and cognition, offer an interesting view on what happens in the process of understanding verbal discourse, sound, images, and their interaction, the first step in the AD process, and a crucial factor for the subsequent selection of material. What is more, a model of discourse processing which can provide guidance in assessing and selecting material for AD could obviously be extremely useful for training beginning audio describers. In the comprehension of verbal discourse, Braun writes, addressees build up a mental model of the situation described in a particular instance, and create expectations about how the discourse will continue. Research into visual perception and cognition reveals that comparable bottom up and top-down processes are applied for the comprehension of visual input. The opening scenes of the film *The Hours*, serve as a case study.

The contributions we received show that the classic forms of AVT (*i.e.*, subtitling and dubbing) are far from extinct. In some cases they fall victim to the limits imposed on them by their commissioners, by those dictating the production guidelines, or self-censorship, but some new variants are

throwing off these shackles as users take control or become more discerning. New forms of AVT or ‘mutations’ of existing forms, also reach or create new audiences in the sense that they render previously ‘elitist’ cultural manifestations more popular or more accessible; and some open up the world (and/or the television news) to population groups previously threatened with isolation for lack of information. AVT is put to different uses in different parts of the world where it meets different needs and is redefined by cultural sub-groups. In some contexts, such as film festivals, working in AVT can be a subversive, liberating experience. Besides, AVT has great didactic potential in different fields and situations. Research too is reconsidering what were once considered established approaches to AVT, offering fresh perspectives and hopefully giving AVT research more clout within the scientific community.

We have come full circle. AVT is obviously being studied from increasingly different angles, but does it also promote social integration? Some of the contributions demonstrate that it does, others state that it could, others still seem to question the possibility, or simply direct their focus elsewhere. And yet, all the articles in this *Linguistica Antverpiensia* NS6 demonstrate that AVT is reaching more and increasingly heterogeneous audiences. The wealth of possibilities it has in store for its users and researchers seems unlimited.

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