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# DEEP FOCUS



A division of the American Translators Association

AMERICAN  
TRANSLATORS  
ASSOCIATION

AUDIOVISUAL  
DIVISION

SPRING  
ISSUE

IN THE WISE WORDS OF ROBERT DE NIRO IN CASINO,

“

THERE ARE THREE WAYS OF DOING THIS:  
THE RIGHT WAY, THE WRONG WAY,  
AND THE AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATORS' WAY.

”



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Welcome to our very own ATA'S AVD Mentoring Program. We will pair old rabbits with newbies to discuss anything interesting in the audiovisual field. You always wanted to try out subtitles but you have no idea how or where to even start or how the workflow works? We will find the right mentor for you. You are a mentor and would love to share your knowledge as a subtitler and help train new talent? This is the place for you.

BY BRITTA NOACK



In conversations about audiovisual translation, I often hear statements such as, “Clients don’t care about quality,” “Agencies don’t care about quality,” “Translators don’t care about quality,” and so on. This begs the question, who wants quality? And ultimately, who is responsible for it?

First, let’s take a look at the audiovisual content ecosystem. Its members are content creators (studios, independent filmmakers, etc.), content providers (streaming services, broadcasters, etc.), translation agencies (posthouses, subtitling houses, dubbing studios, etc.), linguists, and consumers.

**On the creation side, does everybody want quality? The short answer is yes... but with a caveat.**

Content creators and providers will always want quality, as long as it’s accomplished within their time frame and budget. It’s not that they’re sitting around going, “I want to put out products with the worst quality in the world. I couldn’t care less about brand-damaging consequences due to customer dissatisfaction.” But wanting quality and demanding quality are entirely different things. To strive for quality, content creators and providers would have to resist the two “quality killers”: insufficient time to perform quality work and insufficient money to fund quality work. The “quality-time-money” triangle has been written about exhaustively, but it’s still ignored by many. Its bare-bones premise is that we can only pick two elements of the fast-cheap-good triad.

**On the consumer side, does everybody want quality? Yes!**

Consumers will always want quality. But wanting quality and demanding quality are also two different things. To expect quality, consumers need to do their part and inform the system when errors or defects slip by.

### **Responsibility**

It’s clear that everybody wants quality, but who should be responsible for quality? The answer: the entire ecosystem. In the words of W. Edwards Deming, the quality guru, “In a well-organized system, all the components work together to support each other.”

The individual consumer has the least input in the audiovisual content ecosystem. But as individual consumers, there is one thing we can control: our voice. And having a voice carries responsibility.

We are witnessing the phenomenal growth of streaming content. The largest global streaming company already has a button that allows us to flag errors. But do we? Do we pause our movie, click the button, write a note about the error and go back to our movie? No. We just repeat the tired phrase, “These people don’t care about quality.” Consumers usually don’t do their part; they want to be left alone to watch their content in peace.

But if, instead, we started creating a consumer culture of “assess-report-improve,” we would be nourishing the audiovisual content ecosystem and letting the creators or providers know that it’s okay to pay for quality and to take their time to achieve it. As end users, we are not part of the quality-assurance process, which is a preventive measure, but of the quality-control process, which evaluates and helps with future improvements.

How do we assess quality as consumers? A simple way is to ask whether the subtitles or dubbing stream met our expectations. For example: Did it have typos? No. Did it have translation errors? No. Were we able to read the subtitles before they disappeared from the screen? Yes. Then the quality is good. Style preferences should not be considered as a variable in assessing quality at this stage.

If we look more closely and narrow down the universe of consumers to look at the audiovisual linguists and editors, they have a unique, informed, comprehensive, and consumer-focused perspective that can be invaluable: they know enough to point out real mistakes when caught as end users. And they should do their part to help accomplish the purest goal of this ecosystem: to create quality subtitle and dubbing products.

Since everyone both wants quality and should be responsible for it, we should consider it a team activity, and as such, accept and enjoy being part of this wonderful ecosystem.

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March 1st, 2019.

Welcoming 2019 in style here at the AVD!

With the launch of our very own Deep Focus newsletter's second edition packed with engaging informative and educational articles as well as reviews on conferences and technologies.

Contributions from experienced fellow translators provide a fresh outlook on our trade aimed at keeping you up-to-speed on current industry trades and practice; from illustrating pieces on the latest tool trends to a description of AVT courses taught at influential universities; including addressing time management for quality work in the localization field, and facts about client-translator business relationships.

Deep Focus is part of our comprehensive spreading effort to rightfully represent all of you, which is made up of our forum, our social media platforms, our website, division events, our career-building programs, and our mentoring program. In a nutshell, there are many people actively working hard to make our AVD bigger, better, stronger. I want to thank them all and acknowledge their hard work. And speaking of diffusion, we are hoping to see AVT proposals from our members for this coming #ATA60 Palm Springs Conference.

I hope you enjoy our Spring newsletter!

Ana Gabriela González Meade  
Deep Focus Editor



## EVENTS IN 2019 FOR AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATORS

We are welcoming 2019 with great anticipation at the Audiovisual Division!

Translators and interpreters have many ways of finding resources to develop their business and professional skills. It can be through reading newsletters and communications from associations they belong to or by following online, social media, colleagues, workshops, conferences, and much more. Audiovisual translators have the same opportunities.

There are some very exciting events happening in 2019 in the audiovisual world.

Conferences are a particularly good opportunity to learn, network, and develop skills. And why not make a little vacation out of it? Conferences take place in different cities, countries or continents even, so it's a wonderful chance to organize a few days around events or conferences you'd like to attend, and discover new places and cultures.

We always go back home full of energy, ideas, and inspiration. We make new connections, new friends, and new clients. There is always something to take home!

Here are some of the audiovisual-themed conferences that will take place around the globe this year:

### **5th International Conference on Audiovisual Translation INTERMEDIA**

<https://intermedia.ils.uw.edu.pl/>

University of Warsaw, Poland  
**September 19-20, 2019**

This conference is coordinated by members of Intermedia AVT Research Group.

Registration starts in late April and closes on August 31st; fees range from PLN 520 (\$140) to PLN 880 (\$240)\*.

Payments

are made in Polish zlotys. Pre-conference workshops are planned (additional fees apply).

One of the keynote speakers is Carol O'Sullivan, Director of Translations Studies in the School of Modern Languages at

the University of Bristol where she teaches subtitling, among other subjects. She is also the author of *Translating Popular Film* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) and is working on a project on the history of screen translation in the silent and early sound periods.

Another keynote speaker is Jan-Louis Kruger, Head of the Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University in Sydney and Audiovisual Translation (AVT) teacher. He is currently working on projects that investigate cognitive load in the context of educational subtitling.

### **Conference on Translation and the Media**

<https://avt.um.ac.ir/index.php?module=htmlpages&func=display&pid=110>

Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran  
**May 4-5, 2019**

The languages of the conference will be English and Persian. Registration starts February 4th. The registration fee for international participants is \$100\*. Post-conference workshops are planned.

Here is the contact for more information on conference and workshop registrations for international participants:

<https://avt.um.ac.ir/index.php?module=htmlpages&func=display&pid=141>

### **8th Media for All International Conference**

<https://www.tolk.su.se/english/media-for-all-8>

Stockholm University, Sweden  
**June 17-19, 2019**

This is now open for registration. Fees range from 1800 SEK (\$200) to 2600 SEK (\$290)\*. Pre-conference workshops are planned (additional fees apply).

The conference is about creating and mediating understanding in an increasingly complex mediascape. Understanding not only of audiovisual content, but also understanding of and between producers, consumers and prosumers, understanding the technical and cognitive processes involved, understanding consumers' needs and desires, and understanding working conditions, among many other perspectives. So, let's get together to understand all these complexities!

## ATA 60th Annual Conference

[https://www.atanet.org/events/annual\\_conference.php](https://www.atanet.org/events/annual_conference.php)

Palm Springs, California USA

**October 23-26, 2019**

This conference is organized every year by the American Translators Association and is addressed to all language professionals and all specializations.

2019 will be the second year for our Audiovisual Division. Registration opens mid-summer.

Advanced Skills and Training (AST) Day courses take place Wednesday, October 23 (Additional fees apply.)

### The European Film Forum

[https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/european-film-forum-kicks-2019-during-berlinale?](https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/european-film-forum-kicks-2019-during-berlinale?fbclid=IwAR2MGm5IAH2aQmVYb2XPNMjv2Lkb1XCgZ8MB9AllmQ_i0OJGAtQ___oXtCk)  
fbclid=IwAR2MGm5IAH2aQmVYb2XPNMjv2Lkb1XCgZ8MB9  
AllmQ\_i0OJGAtQ\_\_\_oXtCk

Berlin

**February 11, 2019 - 2pm-5pm**

MEDIA organized a European Film Forum during the Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale) with the theme "Subtitling and Dubbing: Using Technology to Help European Films Travel". This will be conducted as a debate and will discuss questions like "What can TV learn from film production when it comes to subtitling and dubbing?".

The event was streamed. Check the website for more information.

\*US dollar amounts are approximate

Thank you to Mara Campbell for the resources!

**Sophie Céneray**  
**Public Relations Coordinator**  
**ATA's Audiovisual Division**  
**English to French translator,**  
**specialized in subtitling**  
**and dubbing quality control.**



## TIME TO SLOW DOWN

### TIME TO SLOW DOWN

by Aanand Dika

"Quality means doing it right when no one is looking."  
Henry Ford \*

Well, in our case then not only is the audience "looking", they are indeed reading all that is translated on screen in the form of subtitles. So, for translators there can be no compromise in quality. But quality is not just limited to the technical aspects such as spelling or punctuation. If user experience is compromised because the subtitles are too 'wordy' and reading speed is negatively affected, or because a particular show or movie's ideas and concepts are just not easily translatable in a foreign culture, then the quality of the translated subtitle language should be considered poor.

As a Hindi linguist of content produced in English for the emerging Indian audience, with millions of viewers who speak and read only Hindi, but are very interested in international shows, the two issues I mention above are quite common and certainly affect user experience. I will discuss one of these issues below. The focus here is programs that are created with English as the base language and Hindi as the target translation language.

#### Reading Speed

Hindi is a much more 'wordy' language than English. Now if the translation was just for a book or printed material, then the translator wouldn't necessarily have to worry about the amount of words required for translation into Hindi. But on screen it is a completely different story. You may encounter a sequence of very fast dialogues or characters discussing and speaking of concepts and ideas that don't have directly translatable words in Hindi. A much more detailed explanation is required, thereby increasing the number of words. Therefore, reading speed is negatively impacted. Since there is a finite amount of time a subtitle card can be displayed on screen, this becomes a very big problem.

In reviewing many Hindi subtitle files, I have come across translations for very fast dialogue exchanges where all the content is translated perfectly and completely, but as the scene moves forward, the viewer is unable to fully read the subtitles

and within seconds has missed significant portions of the translations.

One important and detrimental side effect of this is, viewing fatigue. You have an audience who is reading subtitles and trying to keep up with the pace and short duration of the subtitles, and at the same time is also trying to capture on-screen visuals with dialogues in an unfamiliar language. Within a few minutes of the program, fatigue sets in and results in a very poor user experience. The only way to keep up is to REWIND-PAUSE-READ-PLAY, and repeat. I find myself reviewing such files more frequently than I thought would be necessary. In addition to the issue of long and wordy subtitles there is also the possibility that the end user is not a very good or fast reader or is older and takes time to read. Translators may not be able to satisfy every kind of viewer, but I believe that an attempt must at least be made to serve all.

To achieve this one must be creative and write in simple fluid language that benefits a majority of foreign language viewers, while keeping the original idea of the content intact. But is this achievable? Yes, it is. Reducing word count and reading speed is quite achievable with short, precise and yet accurately translated sentences so the essence of the dialogue is maintained. But this takes time.

And often this is where the problem lies: Time.

As translators I believe we are often not given enough time to create a file, review it fully and then get creative with portions of the program that are negatively affected by reading speed.

Once in a while, I come across a Hindi file where the translator has successfully overcome the reading speed issue. The approach is usually simple. Compared to the original dialogues, the Hindi subtitles are cleverly edited, reduced and rearranged to express only that which is most pertinent to the scene. Native analogies or jokes and in some instances even cultural references are used in place of the originals and this effectively reduces the amount of verbiage needed for the idea to come across to the viewer.

I am quite certain that such excellent and creative translations take effort, and this effort takes time. So, it is important that translators be given the right amount of time to create quality work, giving the user a great experience. The best way to bring in Hindi speaking audiences who want to watch international shows is to create quality translations that are technically and creatively perfect. But to retain them, this process will have to be repeated over and over again, every time.

\* Source:  
[https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/henry\\_ford\\_106096](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/henry_ford_106096)

**Aanand has been a professional in the Film and Media industry for 25 years. He started out as a film and video editor in India and has worked in Quality control for packaged and digital media for many years. An experienced Audio engineer he is now contributing to the world of subtitles as an expert in the Hindi Language. He teaches Hindi in Los Angeles at the Beverly Hills Lingual Institute.**



## THE SKINNY ON PAYMENT FOR AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

### The Skinny on Payment for Audiovisual Translation

By Alexander C Totz

All things payment are such an essential part of audiovisual translation as I have come to learn in my decade plus of experience. It's quite easy to rattle off all of this in hindsight. Even within our field, I'm convinced the business of this specialization is a rather unique animal indeed. (For a much deeper dive into the business of translation, I refer one and all to Corinne McKay<sup>1</sup> and Judy Jenner<sup>2</sup>.)

First and foremost, you must clearly know what your overhead is in order to break that down into a viable rate. I learned this the hardest possible way on my very first large project. Literally out of nowhere, I got a call from Hollywood. Someone who was partnering with several highly established entities and names was looking to get something translated. It was all so sudden and seemingly far-fetched that the first place I went for guidance was the Internet, to see if this person was actually legit.



Given though that it was my first job, I pretty much bit immediately. Cutting to the chase, even though I delivered on time—in the middle of the holiday season!—it took me about two months to finally get paid. The essential point here is to ensure from the start that everything is in writing. Most luckily for me, and this really was kind of dumb luck, I had put a late payment clause into the contract. Thanks to the insistence of the partner who'd originally contacted me, I ultimately earned double of what I was originally supposed to be paid.

Once you're approached by a potential client, it's good to suss them out to learn about their work, and more importantly if you really want to work with them. See what they've actually done or produced, and certainly what others might have said about them.

In one way or another, all the audiovisual clients I have worked with are creatives: people who are struggling, persevering at some stage in their journey to bring some creative work into the world. Typically, they are motivated by passion, even and especially if the material stakes are high. As a former theater director, and now a filmmaker, I have a keen sense of those stakes.

At this early juncture though, I find it critical to be as dispassionate as possible in assessing the scope of the work and my potential service to it. I usually then ask what they're after in the final product. Specifically, what this is for, who is going to be reading or seeing it. With the struggle to get something born into the world creatively, there is often plenty of ego involved. But more importantly for translators, there can be a pretty fundamental and consistent lack of understanding and respect among creatives for the service that we provide.

In my experience, many of them, for their own very good reasons and otherwise, want something for nothing. The most important quality you can look for in a potential client is a genuine respect for the skills and services you have to offer for exactly what they are worth, both to you and the market. The advent of technology and globalization, specifically the ease with which people can now communicate and travel across physical borders, has for me mostly been paradoxical as a translator. We can be perceived as gatekeepers, annoyingly holding back the tide of change.

But as Corinne has pointed out, it's really in the confidence and certainty that we genuinely have something special to offer that we actually have “gates” worth “keeping”.

Even if you're just starting out, based on your overhead it's essential to know how much work you can/might produce at an hourly and a daily pace. Then once you hang your shingle out there, it's the small points, or at least they seem small, which can be very much worth paying attention to. Getting “dinged”—bank fees, any kind of transaction fees—is usually part and parcel of international transactions. It's always best to factor this into your rate or fee, or make it very clear in the written contract. For large jobs, especially with new clients, I find it essential to have a written agreement of some sort. Once that's signed, and as part of that, I typically ask for a start work payment. Then, just prior to delivery, I ask for proof that the delivery payment is being sent before delivering.

Finally, it's really important to be flexible. About three years ago, I did a very large project for several big, well-known entities—a striking déjà vu from my very first project. My initial quote was based on my per-word rate, but ultimately it came through when I gave them an hourly one. No matter how you scale your rates, it's really important that your clients can understand them in a way that makes sense to them and their work. That flexibility though can extend to what they can actually afford. Often if we can't reach an agreement, I ask about their budget. That same client returned to me sometime later with another project which wasn't nearly as far advanced as the previous one. On an exceptional basis, I worked for very little, but actually had a blast on the work in question. Sometimes passion does matter—why else would we do this otherwise?

1Corinne McKay, “Thoughts on Translation”

(<http://www.thoughtsontranslation.com>)

2Judy Jenner, “Translation Times”

(<https://translationtimes.blogspot.com>)

**Alexander C Totz has been an audiovisual translator for over a decade. Clients have included France Télévisions, Sony Pictures Television, Blumhouse TV; filmmakers Euzhan Palcy, Guillermo del Toro and Jacques Perrin; and producers Jake Eberts and Mark Morgan. Graduated from NYU SCPS with a Professional Certificate in French>English Translation, Alexander is completing their first film, a short personal documentary about the long-term effects of bullying. They can be reached via [www.cinoche.biz](http://www.cinoche.biz)**





**AUTOMATIC SPEECH  
RECOGNITION SOFTWARE:  
WILL THEY REPLACE AUDIOVISUAL  
TRANSLATORS IN THE NEAR  
FUTURE? PART 1**

**Automatic Speech Recognition Software:  
Will they replace audiovisual translators in the near  
future? (Part 1)**

By Mara Campbell

Let me start with a straight answer to the titular question so that you can continue reading with a light heart: No! Now that we can all breathe easily, I will elaborate.

You might be familiar with the concept of Speech Recognition Software (SRS) if you use Siri, Alexa, or Google Now. The software “listens” to you, “understands” you, and takes action. As translators, many of us have used Dragon Naturally Speaking or the Speech Recognition apps that come with Windows and Apple operative systems, which listen and transcribe what we dictate. These technologies also produce live closed captions with a technique called “Respeaking.” Nowadays, automatic speech recognition (ASR) software transcribes audio or video files automatically, and some even time or spot the transcription to produce closed captions (mainly live, but off-line, too) or subtitles for a show. You might be familiar with Google’s ASR tool which produces closed captions in many YouTube videos. These SRS and ASR tools fall under the umbrella of Artificial Intelligence.

In 2016, I attended the NAB (National Association of Broadcasters) Show in Las Vegas and the IBC (International Broadcasting Convention) show in Amsterdam, both broadcasting technologies trade fairs. In those events, I met with different companies that develop ASR solutions and decided to try them out to find a tool we could use in our company to cut costs and turnaround times. My company only provides off-line subtitling and captioning services, so I wanted to see how the various software options, developed mostly with live captioning in mind, would respond in this environment.

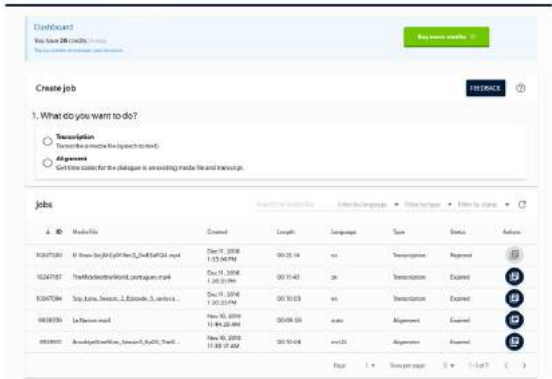
These companies work mainly on applications of speech recognition technologies that already exist. For example, Amazon developed software for their Alexa system, which they have already “taught” to recognize speech and have loaded with a huge knowledge-base and vocabulary. Companies like the ones I tested can use that technology to inform their software development. What mostly sets companies apart is how they apply and adapt these existing technologies, and which user interface they provide.

I tested three tools, two English and one Dutch. I also am aware of a Swiss tool which I have not yet used; hopefully, in the second part of this article I will be able to present an analysis on that software, too. I prepared 10-minute clips of shows and movies with different challenges, to see how they responded and compared. Since most of these software tools offered multilingual resources, I set up a small sampling of the typical shows and films we work with.

**In English:** Brooklyn Nine-Nine, a fast-paced police sitcom; Drugs in Hollywood, a documentary series about drugs, featuring a scripted narrator and non-scripted dialog delivered by drunk and/or drugged people; Uncle Grandpa, an animation show for children with very fast dialog and multiple characters with cartoonish voices.

**In Latin American Spanish** (note that LAS presents a multitude of different accents and variants, with differing vocabulary, grammatical constructions, etc.): El Show de Jaime Maussan, a Mexican journalistic show about UFOs and aliens, mostly scripted, but with some interviews; El Puntero, an Argentine drama about a political broker who mediates between underclass poverty and politicians; El Señor de los Cielos, a Mexican show about drug lords and trafficking; Soy Luna, an Argentine teenage telenovela with many characters/actors from all over Latin America; Odisea Argentina, an un-scripted Argentine political program with three presenters who debate current events and politics.

**In Brazilian Portuguese:** O Caminho das Nuvens, a dramatic film with many adult and child characters.



**Image 1: Interface of one English software tool**

I encountered some difficulties when testing the software, so I could not test all clips on all ASRs. The Dutch tool does not offer Portuguese as a language. One of the English companies does not have a user interface yet so I could only test one clip with them so far (via email), but they tested it on four different speech recognition services (Amazon, IBM, Google, and their proprietary one), and provided an accuracy percentage for each. The second English software supports all languages and has a very good user interface, but offered a limited trial, so I could not process each clip.

Next is the question of whether the tools provide a text transcription only, or a timed subtitling file. Both English companies only provide text transcription, which is useful only to some extent or for a small part of the job. The Dutch company generates a very well timed transcription, and has a commendable grasp of line and subtitle breaks. The Dutch and one of the English tools showed a sound management of punctuation, although they definitively do not punctuate like real linguists... but who does, right?

To date, I have the Brooklyn Nine-Nine clip processed by each tool, which allows me to do a good comparison, and then at least one version of each of the other clips, which means I cannot compare results to determine which is more accurate, but I definitely can tell if they are useful for a typical audiovisual translator's workflow.

So far, my conclusion is that these tools are years away from becoming useful for audiovisual translators and AVT companies. First of all, the files produced by some of the ASR tools need to be segmented and/or timed, which could be quite time-consuming. The Dutch software is definitively the most useful tool, because their user interface is very good and easy to use, and they even have a built-in editing tool for timing and text. But the actual transcription requires heavy editing.

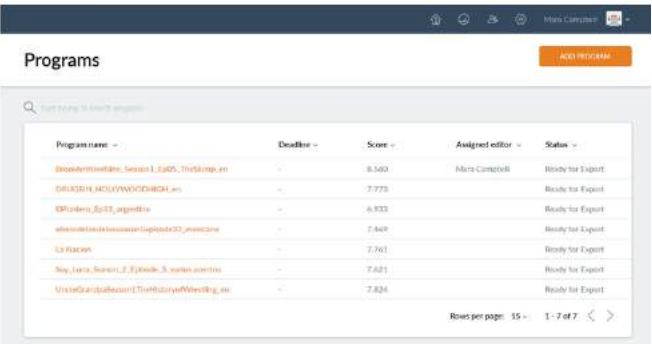


Image 2: Dutch software interface

Here there are three examples from the Brooklyn Nine-Nine show for comparison. For the English company (“English company 1”) that provided four different transcriptions from different services, I will use the one generated by Amazon, which had an overall accuracy scoring of 91%.

EXAMPLE 1

(Quotes added by me; line breaks, capital letters, and punctuation — or lack thereof — are original):

English company 1:

“it’s my craft anyways grandson’s coming in they reunite and I throw another case on the old solved it hey micros aren’t you want to see me captain”

Dutch company:

17  
00:00:53,120 --> 00:00:59,760  
It's my craft anyways grandsons  
coming in they reunite and I threw  
another case on the old salted pile.

18  
00:01:03,640 --> 00:01:11,840  
Hey Microsoft. You wanted to see me  
captain.  
(Note that in subtitle 2 there are actually two different speakers; in real-life subtitling, we would need to adjust the line break and add a dialog line or split the subtitle in two.)

English company 2:

“It's my craft. Anyways grandson's coming in. They reunite and I throw another case on the old solved pile. Microsoft. Went to see me Captain.” (Note: this tool identifies different speakers relatively accurately, even marking them as a female or male voice, and, in this case, it did recognize a change of speaker in “Went to see me Captain.”)

The correct human-made subtitling:

31  
00:00:53,178 --> 00:00:54,847  
It's my craft.  
32  
00:00:54,847 --> 00:00:56,598  
Anyways,  
grandson's coming in.  
33  
00:00:56,640 --> 00:00:58,100  
They reunite,  
and I throw another case  
34  
00:00:58,100 --> 00:00:59,810  
on the old “solved it” pile.  
35  
00:01:03,272 --> 00:01:04,606  
Hey, my croissant.  
36  
00:01:10,153 --> 00:01:11,613  
You wanted to see me,  
Captain?

EXAMPLE 2

(Quotes added by me; line breaks, capital letters, and punctuation—or lack thereof—are original):

English company 1:

“absolutely sir I won’t just head it up I will head and shoulders it

up I will dive into women rounded just be just be altogether good with it be more articulate when you speak to the children” (Note: “Be more articulate...” is spoken by another character.)

Dutch company:

22  
00:01:25,040 --> 00:01:35,760  
Absolutely, sir, I won't just headed up I will head and shoulders it up I will die women around it just be altogether good with it

23  
00:01:35,960 --> 00:01:38,120  
, the more articulate when you speak to the children.

English company 2:

“Absolutely sir. I won't just headed up I will head and shoulders it up. I will dive in swim around it. Just be all together good with it.

Be more articulate when you speak to the children.” (The software identified the change in speaker and separated the text in another line.)

The correct human-made subtitling:

45  
00:01:24,168 --> 00:01:26,670  
Absolutely, sir.  
46  
00:01:26,670 --> 00:01:28,046  
I won't just head it up,  
47  
00:01:28,046 --> 00:01:29,798  
I will  
head and shoulders it up.  
48  
00:01:29,798 --> 00:01:32,050  
I will dive in,  
swim around it,  
49  
00:01:32,050 --> 00:01:35,762  
and just be altogether good with it.  
50  
00:01:35,762 --> 00:01:38,390  
Be more articulate  
when you speak to the children.

EXAMPLE 3

English company 1:

“uh mystery missus torino I'm glad you're here Man present to you Oh my darlings Thank god Found you uh look at those beautiful cheeks” (Note that sentences starting with “Oh, my darlings” are spoken by a second speaker.)

Dutch company:

47  
00:02:50,640 --> 00:02:55,440  
Mr-Mrs to Reno glad you're here  
man present to you properly.

48  
00:02:55,640 --> 00:03:01,680  
My darlings then God I found you oh  
look at those who in full she.

English company 2:

“This you're Mrs. Torino. I'm glad you're here. May I present to you.

My darlings. Thank God I found you. Oh look at those beautiful cheeks.” (The software identified the speaker change and separated text into another line.)

The correct human-made subtitling:

89  
00:02:50,128 --> 00:02:51,755  
Ah, Mr. and Mrs. Terrino.  
90  
00:02:51,755 --> 00:02:53,173  
I'm glad you're here.  
91  
00:02:53,173 --> 00:02:54,842  
May I present to you...  
92  
00:02:54,842 --> 00:02:58,637  
Oh, my darlings.  
Thank God I found you.  
93  
00:02:58,637 --> 00:03:01,598  
Oh, look at  
those beautiful cheeks.

English company 2 consistently presents more accurate transcriptions and includes better punctuation and capital letters. But the Dutch company, although not quite as accurate

in the transcription, creates timed subtitles (if you compare the timecodes with the final subtitles, you see that they are very well timed), which might compensate for some of the misunderstandings.

Regarding the other clips in English that I got transcribed, the results were not very good. The file for *Drugs in Hollywood* was not useful at all, but I actually expected that, being a non-scripted show full of slurred dialog and slang. Even a human transcriber would have trouble tackling that show. And the one for *Uncle Grandpa*, although better, still presented errors probably caused by the cartoonish voices and the outlandish topics covered, including strange names and invented words, so the software had serious problems with it, too. Clearly, this technology is still not perfected to be used on all kinds of material, and it probably performs acceptably on scripted material and single-speaker shows like newscasts, documentaries, lectures, sermons, etc.

As for the tests I performed on the Spanish clips, the results were very poor. The different accents and variants were too much for the ASR software options to compute, and the transcriptions were utterly unintelligible. Editing would have been more time-consuming than transcribing from scratch. The Portuguese was also quite bad, although better, compared to the Spanish.

I knew quite well that these tools would provide minimal assistance and extensive post-edition would be needed before resulting ASR files could be used as translation templates or for delivery to client. My next step will be to edit the English transcriptions into final deliverables and compare the time and effort each takes. I will share my findings in part 2 of this article, coming soon in the next issue of *Deep Focus*.

**Photographs show sample interfaces of undetermined brands meant solely for illustrative purposes.**

**Mara Campbell is an ATA-certified translator from Buenos Aires, Argentina, and has been subtitling, translating subtitles and scripts for dubbing for the past 20 years.**

**Mara is currently COO of True Subtitles, the company she founded in 2005, that has clients in three continents. Her work has been seen on Netflix, Hulu, HBO, BBC,**

**Amazon, and more. She teaches courses on subtitling, closed captioning, and Latin American Neutral Spanish, and has spoken in conferences in Argentina, Uruguay, and Germany. She can be reached at: [maracampbell@truesubtitles.com](mailto:maracampbell@truesubtitles.com)**



## HOW HYBRID TECHNOLOGIES WILL MAKE MEDIA TRANSLATION PROFESSIONALS MORE COMPETITIVE IN THE ERA OF MEDIA GLOBALIZATION

### How Hybrid Technologies Will Make Media Translation Professionals More Competitive in the Era of Media Globalization

By Ivanka Vassileva

The era of media globalization has brought about a strain on the content delivery supply chain. On one hand, filmmakers and media content creators are faced with a challenge. They have to quickly make their content available globally, translated in many different languages at the same time, in a fast, accurate, and secure way. Savvy consumers worldwide demand localized content and expect the highest level of quality. On the other hand, translation companies and professionals are faced with ever-so-tight project delivery timelines, so they struggle to find and retain premium talent who can sustainably deliver that fast with the desired level of quality and very often operate with the friction of quite disharmonious legacy workflows and practices.

One possible solution that promises to make all sides happy, and resolve these problems in a sustainable way, is a hybrid system. Hybrid management ecosystems differ from pure cloud or web-based project management systems in that they allow the access, storing, and collaboration on data from multiple web and desktop systems, and devices. What that means for media localization professionals is a standard hybrid platform that combines the benefits of the traditional commonly used desktop programs with the advantages of web-based platforms.

### COMPLETE PROJECTS FOR MULTIPLE CLIENTS IN ONE FAMILIAR ENVIRONMENT

Hybrid media localization software allows you to complete projects for multiple clients in one familiar environment. This allows you to take on more work, and service more clients faster through their proprietary system or your own, because it connects external systems into the hybrid.

Often, freelance translators are forced to work in many different cloud platforms which are very limited in functionality. They may need to produce annotation for one project, translate for voice-over/dubbing for another, and do subtitling for a third. Hybrid media localization software makes it easy to



complete a variety of projects from the convenience of one centralized professional environment, which also connects to other external systems and does not tax the speed of your execution.

This will make you more flexible to take on assignments from various clients.

**INTEGRATE ALL YOUR ONLINE AND OFFLINE DICTIONARIES, SPEECH-TO-TEXT ENGINES AND TRANSLATION MEMORIES**

Hybrid technologies integrate all your online and offline dictionaries, speech-to-text engines and translation memories for your specific language pairs and specialized translation tasks. You can easily integrate more than one web dictionary in addition to the desktop ones available on your personal computer and start using them in the hybrid software in no time. Hybrids also offer the possibility to integrate multiple cloud and non-cloud speech to text engines in a single environment and switch between all of them depending on their level of performance in a certain language.

All these integrations allow you to work faster and produce higher quality translation work.

**WORK ONLINE AND OFFLINE**

Hybrid media localization software allows you to work online and offline. This gives you the freedom to work from anywhere, anytime, and be more productive even when a reliable and high broadband internet connectivity is not available.

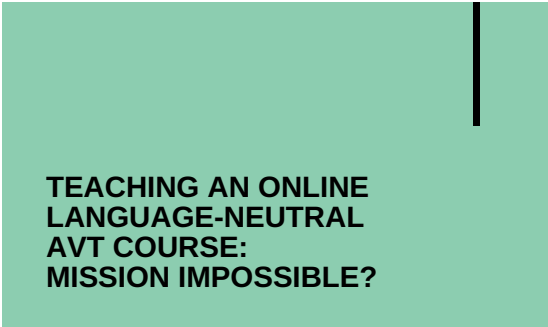
**NO MORE PAPERWORK AND HEAVY LEGAL PROCEDURES**

Hybrid software works directly with encrypted, watermarked or otherwise protected video materials. This way, translators' work security is guaranteed without the need to sign heavy contracts and legal documentation in order to secure the privacy of the content they are provided to work with. They directly access and translate the client-protected video material and avoid downloading, storing, protecting, and deleting the movies or entertainment video.

In conclusion, hybrid solutions allow translators and media localization specialists to quickly and efficiently take on more assignments. Hybrid is the better solution, because it draws the best from the benefits of both cloud and desktop (secure as web, and powerful as desktop).

Ivanka Vassileva: [info@profuzdigital.com](mailto:info@profuzdigital.com)

Ivanka Vassileva is a linguist and a polyglot, and Founder and CEO of Profuz Digital and of PBT EU. With a Master's degree in Linguistics and Translation, and over 15 years of professional experience in the broadcast and media industries, Ivanka is passionate about media accessibility for all. She is actively involved in the design, development, and global promotion of SubtitleNEXT (new generation timed-text software) and NEXT-TT (highly customizable hybrid ecosystem for managing the full range of production studio processes).



**Teaching an Online Language-Neutral AVT Course: Mission Impossible?**

By Ana Lis Salotti



Photo: Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal license.

I have been teaching translation courses in American universities for the last four years, both online and in person. During my teaching career, I have learned a great deal, possibly more than my students. One such instance of remarkable learning for me was when I rose to the challenge of teaching the first online, language-neutral Audiovisual Translation (AVT) course for the Certificate in Translation Industry Essentials at the NYU School of Professional Studies last fall (2018). This piece will attempt to summarize my pedagogical approach, share my teaching outcomes and challenges, and reflect on my practice as an AVT course instructor.

This course is currently part of the NYU SPS Certificate in Translation Industry Essentials, one of NYU's many career advancement courses, and is taught completely online through NYU's learning management system (LMS) called NYU Classes. Most of the students who take this Certificate are adults with a university degree. I taught a diverse group of students, based around the world and working in different language combinations.

When I first learned I would be teaching an AVT course, I immediately made a virtual bee line for my university library. I quickly noticed what Díaz Cintas describes in his *Didactics of Audiovisual Translation* (2008): there is not a whole lot written about teaching AVT yet. I have used his book, along with *Topics in Audiovisual Translation* (2004) edited by Pilar Orero, to help me design this AVT course from scratch, and then teach it. Both are invaluable help to any AVT instructor, with discussion pointers, exercise ideas, and thought-provoking content for students.

After these first, essential documentation efforts, I decided to devise a "multimedia" syllabus featuring an introductory video with a dual objective—to hopefully encourage students to actually read the syllabus, and to mirror the nature of AVT. Maybe a next step would be to caption the video! I devised my syllabus around a 10-unit structure, each unit running for a week throughout the duration of the course. This structure was based on Amador et al's article (2004).

Each unit was kicked off with a one-hour, more or less technical online class per week, I introduced a new topic. The class content was then reinforced by an accompanying weekly reading and assignment. I made a heavy use of the forum feature on the LMS, opening a conversation thread for each reading, posting questions to guide reading discussions and waiting to post my contributions to enable a conversation among peers. Throughout the years I've noticed that, once the teacher gives her opinion on a translation or technological issue, the discussion tends to end there, or very soon afterwards, no matter how much one tries to encourage others' input. Discussions on the forums were very lively, with over 40 contributions in some of the threads.

The unit would close every week with a hands-on assignment. For example, in the first week's class, I kicked off the course with an introduction of AVT and its main modalities. With only an hour lecture, I had to pack a lot in. I presented AVT as a distinctive, constantly changing field in translation, and introduced and compared the most essential characteristics of subtitling, dubbing (voice-over and lip sync), subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (SDH), and audio description for the blind and partially sighted.

The reading of the week, taken from Pérez-González (2014), not only reinforced my lecture on these modalities, but also introduced students to game localization, surtitling, respeaking and 3D subtitling as other AVT modalities. After that, they worked on their first, ungraded assignment. For this, I had them play around with the free online subtitling platform Amara. My teaching objective in this assignment was to have them intuitively create subtitles of a short video clip of their choosing, without much instruction from me. My teaching expectation was to show them how different an intuitively created "fan-sub" could be to a more professional one, based on my ultimate feedback and their own comparison between their initial subtitles and the type of subtitles they would be able to create themselves by the end of the course.

All assignments were hands-on and reflected real-world working conditions as much as possible. For example, students had firm, tight deadlines, and learned and implemented the subtitling and captioning guidelines that are widely used in the industry. Assignments required practice in applying style guides, show guides, and glossaries when working in AVT, and they create subtitles using open-source captioning software, such as Subtitle Workshop, Subtitle Edit and Aegisub. Additionally, they had two group assignments: one student was the project manager of an AVT project from start to finish, another student was the AV translator who created subtitles, SDH, a dubbing script or an audio description script—whichever they chose—and the third person performed quality control and proofreading. These group projects were designed to simulate real-world roles and working conditions, making them appreciate AVT as a team effort.

For some assignments, students worked without source language scripts, reinforcing the multimedia peculiarity of AVT: our "source text" is a video that no text document can replace. For others, they worked without timed templates, so they had to create and time their subtitles using captioning software. In yet others, they had a badly timed, badly structured subtitle template, and had to readjust timings, combine or split subtitles, readjust subtitle line breaks, and translate. These assignments allowed students to practice timing, or "spotting," according to when an utterance starts and finishes, adjust for camera shot changes, and consider grammatically logical breaks in subtitles, among other technicalities. Other assignments had students find their own audiovisual material, including scripts and subtitle templates, by making an extensive use of internet resources. This task did not come without challenges.

While all this made for a very enriching and rewarding course both for my students and for me, it also brought about some hurdles, the main ones being technology-related.

In Díaz Cintas' words (2008): "Audiovisual translation in general, and subtitling in particular, shares an umbilical relationship with technology, which to a large degree determines it." In retrospect, I am now convinced AVT technical expectations must be laid out clearly ahead of time. During course registration, students should know they'll be expected to download various AVT software tools to their computers, spelling out all applicable software and hardware specifications, have a computer-savvy attitude, be fairly good at web browsing and Google searching, and be flexible and self-driven enough to try and learn new software, mostly on their own. Again, Díaz Cintas (2008) says it best: "One of the fingerprints of audiovisual media is its penchant for change [...]" and later "[...] anybody interested in training or being trained in this field is expected to have very good ICT knowledge and to be willing to become familiar with constantly new and updated programs and specifications." Additionally, students could profit from having an educational license to professional captioning software for a more real-world approach to the profession and appreciate its differences with open-source, free software. This, however, is not always financially possible for every university. And even if it were, it seems unrealistic to have troubleshooting and technical support specialized in AVT software within the university IT support desk. This task would invariably fall on the teacher's shoulders.

Another challenge I experienced had to do with giving feedback to students. This was a neutral-language course: the classes, the readings and all course communication were conducted in English, but students were working from or into languages that sometimes I didn't speak. In those cases, feedback was somewhat restricted. I provided comments on all technical aspects, such as timing, line breaks, synchronicity, guideline applicability and overall usability of the localized content, but nothing on translation itself. If they were working into English, I added comments on naturalness and smoothness of the language. This alone can sometimes shed some light on a meaning or problem in the language transfer, but not knowing the source language professionally, I couldn't pinpoint the problem much further. Ideally in such a varied setting, the teacher should have various language teaching assistants that could go over the students' assignments and comment on translation issues. Again, this is probably not financially or realistically feasible for every university.

Alternatively, in a language-neutral AVT course, one could also have students work more intra-linguistically, as opposed to inter-linguistically, i.e., concentrate more on the technicalities of AVT and on accessibility, creating same-language captions, SDH or audio description scripts instead

of translating subtitles and dubbing scripts from one language to another. Having all students work into English could also be another interesting, albeit somewhat limiting possibility.

While undergrad and postgrad courses and degrees specialized in AVT are well established and thriving in Europe and to a lesser extent in Brazil, Mexico and Argentina, the US is still lagging behind. To my knowledge, no translation degree in the country focuses on AVT. There are some courses at the postgrad and certificate levels, like at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, University of Washington and now NYU, but they're few and far between. Having said that, there is light at the end of the tunnel, and we are headed in the right direction. There is more and more writing on AVT, more reflection on its professional practice and more high-quality training opportunities. We still have a long way to go, but we're getting closer.

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**Ana Salotti is a freelance English-Spanish translator with an MA in Translation. With over 12 years of experience, she has specialized in audiovisual and natural sciences translation. She started translating soap opera scripts back in 2006. She has subtitled numerous movies for large and indie film festivals. For the last three years she's been performing quality control of subtitled and dubbed media content. She teaches translation courses at NYU and Hunter College, and is the acting Assistant Administrator of ATA's AVD.**



## ATA AUDIOVISUAL DIVISION'S NEW MENTORING PROGRAM

### ATA Audiovisual Division's new Mentoring Program

Welcome to the new AVD Mentoring Program, a program we are establishing for translators in good standing with ATA to learn more about audiovisual translation. Have you always wondered what it would be like to subtitle a movie, or are you already working in the field of audiovisual media and would like to strengthen your techniques and skills? We are here to help you achieve exactly that.

Mentors as well as mentees will be chosen by the program to fit desired skillsets and objectives. Both sides will be emailed short questionnaires from [mentoringavd@gmail.com](mailto:mentoringavd@gmail.com) to be filled out and returned so we can determine which translators could gain the most out of a mentor/mentee relationship.

The program will last six months and each mentor will hold two monthly (1-2 hour) meetings with his or her mentee. As these partnerships are likely to be long-distance, meetings will be conducted online, for example, via skype. Once partnered, meetings should be scheduled so mentoring can begin. We will not have a set timeframe for partnerships to start, but they will end after a six-month period. The Mentoring Program will guide partners and answer any questions that arise. Additionally, the program will mediate and assist in case of concerns or problems. Each partnership will forge its own relationship and define contents, expectations, and six-month goals. We also welcome and encourage established mentor/mentee partners to apply; they are highly likely to benefit from this program. If a potential mentee would like to participate and has a specific mentor in mind, he or she is certainly welcome to contact the Mentoring Program and we will try to contact the desired mentor. However, there is no guarantee that the mentoring translator will be able to participate.

What can both mentors and mentees expect and what are the program benefits?

The Mentoring Program is an excellent way for translators who are new to the field of audiovisual translation to get their feet wet and receive guidance from some of the most experienced sages in the field. Within this program, certain

topics might be explored in depth, e.g., tools and software, business practices, getting started in the AVT field, looking for clients, and finding your special area of expertise.

The mentee is in full control and can set agendas based on his or her needs and interests. For example, maybe you always wondered what it would be like to translate comedy shows or sitcoms. Perhaps you have created subtitles for certain genres, but now you want to take on the next challenge. Choose your mentor based on individual goals in order to be matched with someone with relevant experience. Ideally what follows are fun-filled, in-depth sessions along with tips and tricks and anything else you wish to focus on. During this time, you'll have the chance to get all your questions answered and strengthen your skillsets.

As a mentor, this is a rare opportunity to pass on your knowledge and wisdom as an established AV translator. Trust us, taking less experienced translators under your wing and getting them acquainted with our field will give you a warm feeling of satisfaction. You'll probably end up learning a thing or two along the way, and you will definitely have made a new colleague and friend with whom to expand your network. That alone is priceless.

A very important factor to know is that the mentor/mentee relationship is not an internship. Mentors will not be allowed to have their mentees perform research or any other work for a paid project. Mentees, on the other hand, cannot expect mentors to help them find new clients or work.

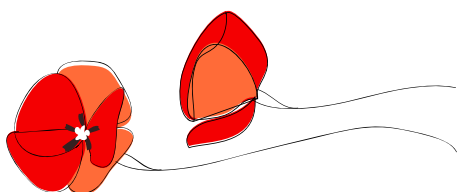
The AVD Mentoring Program is here to help translators achieve their goals, and is solely designed to benefit from sharing knowledge and strengths. Furthermore, AVD will keep mentors and mentees informed of any training opportunities it hosts or helps organize. We will meet with all interested ATA conference mentor and mentee attendees in Palms Springs 2019 to share experiences, tips, tricks, and lessons learned in order to enrich future mentor partnerships.

We are working hard on starting our program and are in the process of fine-tuning our guidelines and questionnaires, so we welcome you all to jump on board.

We hope we sparked your interest; we cannot wait for you to work with us and make our new Audiovisual Division richer with your expertise and passion for learning. To receive a mentee or mentee questionnaire or for further information and questions or concerns please write to Britta Noack who can be reached at [mentoringavd@gmail.com](mailto:mentoringavd@gmail.com).



Britta Noack is the Mentoring Program Coordinator of the newly founded Audiovisual Division of the ATA, a veteran State Certified German to English translator and subtitler, and a longtime member of the ATA. She currently travels a lot between her two home bases of San Diego, CA and Osnabrück, Germany. Contact: mentoringavd@gmail.com



## AVD'S 2019 AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATORS WORLDWIDE MEETUPS!

So far: Los Angeles, Seattle, San Francisco.

Big shout-out to hosts and attendants everywhere.

Check coming locations @ATA\_AVDivision (Twitter) and @AudiovisualDivisionATA (Facebook), see you there!

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### 2019 coming locations:

Buenos Aires, Rosario, Mexico City... and many more!

