

DEEP FOCUS



TWELFTH ISSUE

AVD NEWSLETTER

Deep Focus is a quarterly publication of the AVD Audiovisual Division (officially established on August 29, 2018) of the American Translators Association, a non-profit organization. *Deep Focus* is committed to raising awareness of the audiovisual translation profession.

DEEP FOCUS

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LETTER FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

DEBORAH WEXLER

Dear Audiovisual Translators,

I wrote such a lengthy piece for you for this issue that Lucía, our newsletter proofreader, suggested adding it as an article instead of a letter. Therefore, you will find my take on subtitle timing principles in the body of *Deep Focus*.

Instead, I will use this space to exhort all senior audiovisual linguists to submit your proposals for articles. We need all of you to help educate the next generation of linguists who would be delighted to learn from your experiences. You probably think what you know is not a big deal, but it is a huge deal for those who are just starting, especially in countries where no AVT curriculum has been created in colleges.

If you are interested in being published in *Deep Focus*, please contact Ana González Meade, our Head of Publications, at publicationsavd@gmail.com.

I hope to see your names printed in our beautiful newsletter soon!

Sincerely,

Deborah Wexler



EDITORIAL

ANA G. GONZÁLEZ MEADE

Dear readers,

Our fall issue is finally here! As always, we hope to bring visibility to our translation field with firsthand articles from practitioners and industry stakeholders.

In this issue, we introduce our brand-new column Snap, Crackle, and Pop Culture: References from Both Sides of the Pond, which aims to shed a light on cultural references from the US and the UK. There is also a special piece by our AVD Administrator where she shares some of her amazing expertise on principles of subtitle timing. Additionally, a seasoned subtitler shares useful tips to maximize mental skills on the job, a jewel about web-based suite of tools for video localization, and even a case study on a tricky topic-specific Netflix show localization.

Thanks to those who took part in our annual ATA62 Conference in Minneapolis, which brought a lot of us a very deserved and longed-for chance to reconnect with friends and colleagues.

As we are just coming out of the annual conference season, we will be featuring our yearly AVD perspective by looking back on Minneapolis @ ATA62 and other important audiovisual translation-related conferences in our coming winter issue, so keep an eye out for it.

These are happy times here at AVD as through our very own Lucía we recently welcomed baby Sofia, the latest addition to our LC extended family!

A special shout out to Michelle Bradley for her solidarity and eagle-eyed skills giving our issue's layout the final proof.

Lastly, we proudly share ATA's open letter tackling claims made about a "shortage of professional translators and subtitlers" that bravely sets the record straight by bringing to light the actual crux of the matter in our profession in the entertainment industry: addressing working conditions.

Happy reading!

Ana Gabriela González Meade, M.A.
Deep Focus Editor

Translators and Subtitlers in the Entertainment Industry Need Fair Working Conditions

ATA has shared an open letter in response to recent statements in the press and on social media about a shortage of professional translators and subtitlers. The letter is a call for fair working conditions for translators in the entertainment industry.

"There is no shortage, but instead a disconnect between the value of this skilled work and the pay offered, leading to a perceived lack of qualified professionals available for these jobs and subpar subtitles in the world's most popular titles in film and TV. Current practices within the entertainment industry devalue subtitlers' work, discourage truly qualified professionals from accepting these jobs, and impede international viewers' enjoyment of these titles," ATA President Madalena Sánchez Zampaulo stated in the letter.

"On behalf of the American Translators Association, the largest association of professional interpreters and translators in the world, I urge film and television production studios and the language service providers they contract with to refocus on a quality subtitling process, which starts with hiring *professional subtitlers* at *professional rates* rather than unskilled multilingual labor at pay that can work out to well below minimum wage."

ATA President Sánchez Zampaulo also noted that claims that there is a shortage of professional translators and subtitlers is simply untrue. "ATA's own thriving Audiovisual Division, which brings together highly trained professionals who are ready and able to work, is evidence to the contrary."

"The veritable explosion of international entertainment options is a positive development and producing high-quality subtitles is in the best interest of studios, streaming platforms, and viewers. The professionals who work painstakingly to craft the multilingual versions of our favorite movies and shows should be able to share in the revenue generated thanks to their work."

[ATA Advocacy Outreach](#)

[ATA's Open Letter to the Entertainment Industry](#)

HACKING YOUR BRAIN WILL MAKE YOUR DAILY ACTIVITIES EFFORTLESS

BY DOUGLAS FRÓES

There is a story, told by Marcus Tullius Cicero, that Simonides of Ceos was attending a dinner at the house of a nobleman named Scopas.

After reciting his poem, the story goes that Simonides received a message asking him to go outside to meet someone. When he got there, he couldn't find anyone waiting for him.

While he was away, the whole hall's roof fell, crushing Scopas and all guests attending the banquet to death.

The only way to identify the wholly smashed bodies so their families could bury them was Simonides' organized memory techniques. He could recall where every guest was seated at the table.

Simonides of Ceos was believed to be the first to teach and create a memorization method. Since the beginning of time, people have needed to organize information. Without easy writing or information storage devices; the most prominent minds needed to rely on mental skills to gather and retain critical information.

With the evolution of technology, we were gifted with equipment that could make our lives quite comfortable and easy to deal with. Although this new technology made daily tasks easier to accomplish, part of it was not so beneficial to us. We started relying on technology more than we rely on our most natural informational tool: our brain.

As a result of this, I have begun to study and practice the art of having a well-trained memory, which in my humble opinion is one of the key components of a highly skilled and operative thinking brain. If we cannot retain all the information needed to accomplish our daily tasks in a well-organized manner, all other mental skills don't serve us much. It would be like a having high-speed processor PC without a functional hard drive.

As translators, we need to constantly research terms in areas that we are not so knowledgeable about and examine reference materials to maintain consistency across different files from the same content or client.

Most of you, reading this piece, work with different clients with distinct style guides regarding format, grammar, formality, etc. How many times a week do you have to go through the guidelines before starting a new task? How many times does the KNP (Known Names and Places consistency list) you are provided not include some plot-pertinent terms used in a show's previous season or the first trilogy movie?

In my case, as I mostly do quality control, one of my primary concerns is to maintain consistency across previous and new materials that are related. Sometimes this is hard to achieve when you have, as an example, the first season and second season of a show being translated by different translators and you want to keep consistency with terms that are not present in the KNP.

For example:

Translator one:

EN - Dear...

BPO - Caro...

Translator two:

EN - Dear...

BPO - Querido...

Both translators are correct as either "Caro" or "Querido" would work as a translation for "Dear" in Brazilian Portuguese. Although both are valid, they differ in formality.

The above example happened to me a while ago, and it was a critical and recurrent term on a show where the translator from season one was not the translator on season two. There was a gap of almost a year and thousands of other projects between seasons.

Regardless of the time that had passed, as soon as I hit play on the new episode and that same subtitle came on screen, even with a different translation, it triggered an automatic response that alerted me to the inconsistency. And this is something that happens to me more often than you would expect.

It sounds like fiction, but this happens when you train your memory, using various techniques with practical exercises often. You get to the point where your brain starts to work for you without much effort, recalling information faster, making you feel a bit like you have superpowers. And I can assure you, that feels great.

Then, you will start noticing how effortless the same tasks you were used to having turned to be. How much your productivity has improved and the amount of time you will have left for yourself every day. And all of that will change your life. Believe me.

The Linking Method

The following is a practical exercise where you can see almost immediate results in the development of your mental abilities by using the linking method.

Below you will see a series of names of objects, animals, etc.

You have three minutes to try and memorize all of them in the exact order they are listed only using your memory, i.e. without writing them down.

Book – Table – Pin – Car – Fish – Bed –
Computer – Piano – Staircase – Skateboard –
Cow – Plane – Cheese – Sword – Pig – Cigarette
– Hospital – Syringe – Candy – Boat

After spending three minutes trying to memorize the list, get a piece of paper and a pen, minimize this window or put aside your printed copy, and try to recall and write down the names from the list in the same order. When you have finished, come back and restart your reading.

Now compare the list above with the one you just wrote. When you find the first item in the wrong order, count how many were correct preceding it.

If you could not write all of them down in the correct order, don't be frustrated. Most people can recall a maximum of 7 pieces of information at a time. After that, an average brain starts to disregard some information to make room for new details.

To retain the information with ease, it is essential to create a mental image where items interact in the most ridiculous and out-of-the-ordinary manner.

Let's start with book and table. Visualize a book with arms and legs reading another book on a table in a cafeteria or a book that has several tables flying out of its pages when opened. Please refer to Picture 1.

The visualization should take no more than a couple of seconds. Over time it will become straightforward and fast to do it.

- For table and pin, visualize a table wholly made of pins. When you try to touch it, you always prick yourself with the pins' sharp ends.
- For pin and car, visualize a pin as if it were a cartoon character, wearing a driver's helmet, driving a racecar at full speed.
- For car and fish, visualize a car turned into a giant fish tank with several colored fish inside.
- For fish and bed, visualize a fish wearing a sleeping cap, lying in bed under a blanket, warm and cozy!
- For bed and computer, visualize an animated bed, sitting and working on the computer.
- For computer and piano, visualize an animated computer roller skating down the street. When the computer looks at its feet, the roller skates are pianos on wheels.

- For piano and staircase, visualize the keys of a piano as if they were the steps of a staircase, and when you walk on it, they sound.

- For stair and skateboard, visualize a monumental staircase where a pro skater slides down the handrail performing some crazy maneuvers.

- For skateboard and cow, visualize the same skater reaching the end of the staircase and see that the one doing all the maneuvers is a cow with a helmet and elbow pads.

- For cow and plane, visualize a cow dressed as a flight attendant serving passengers on a plane.

- For plane and cheese, visualize a plane entirely made of Swiss cheese and likewise full of holes.

- For cheese and sword, visualize a block of cheese in knight's armor fighting with a giant sword.

- For sword and pig, visualize a sword with the pommel at the end of its hilt in the shape of a pig's head that speaks to you and yells, "Let's fight!"

- For pig and cigarette, visualize a pig smoking several cigarettes at the same time.

Now try and create your own associations with the other items on the list: cigarette - hospital - syringe - candy - boat.

Once you're finished, review the associations one more time, clearly visualizing the mental images created for the list.

Put this material aside again and write the list anew. Compare it with your previous list. I am confident that you will be impressed with how much you have improved.

The Phonetic Alphabet

The phonetic alphabet involves relating consonant sounds with numbers from 0 to 9 to convert numbers into words.

Since numbers are abstract and difficult to remember, converting them into words gives them meaning, making them easier to memorize.

- The number 1 relates to the letters T and D, because of the similarity between 1 and T, and then D because it has a sound similar to that of T.
- The number 2 relates to the letter N, because it has two vertical lines.
- The number 3 relates to the letter M, because, turning it counterclockwise, we will have a 3.
- The number 4 relates to the letters R and RR. The final sound of "Four".
- The number 5 relates to the letters L and LL because it represents a multiple of 5 in Roman numerals.
- The number 6 relates to the letters CH, SH, J, and G, the smooth G as in George or giraffe as opposed to the hard sound of gecko or gimmick, which can be used for number 7.
- The number 7 relates to the letters C, G, K, and Q, the C as in ca - co - cu, and G as in ga - go - gu and hard ge - gi as explained above.
- The number 8 relates to the letters F, V.
- The number 9 relates to the letters P, PP, and B.
- The number 0 relates to the letters S, Z, and C, the smooth C as in celebrate or cinema.
- The letters H (when it is not in SH or CH), W, and X have no numeric value and can be used as vowels to help create the words.
- Now, let's convert numbers into letters.

Let's use the following number as an example:

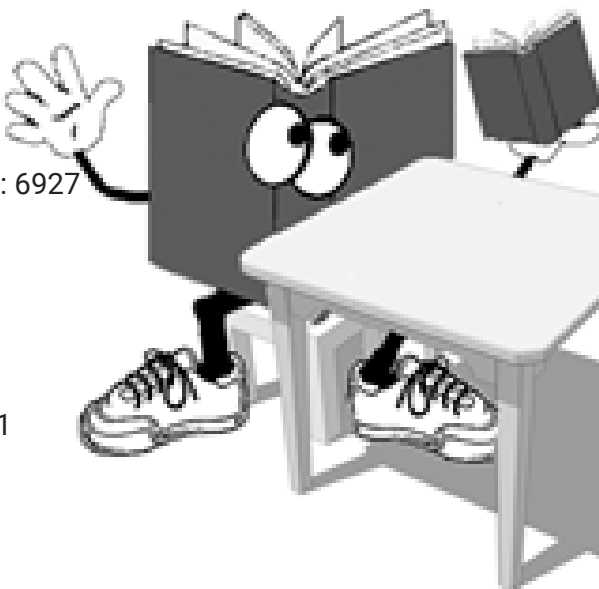
11 34 21 6927 6 85 12 1 0 741 2 2 11

Just by glancing at it, you may think it would be almost impossible to retain it in your memory. However, if we use the list relating the numbers and the consonants we have just learned, add any vowels needed to form words and create a story, we are perfectly capable of retaining the whole numeric sequence.

Today Mary went shopping. She fell down. It was great. No one died.

Now that you have a sentence created and memorized, you can simply convert the consonants back into numbers, at any needed moment, in a split second.

Today: 11
 Mary: 34
 Went: 21
 Shopping: 6927
 She: 6
 Fell: 85
 Down: 12
 It: 1
 Was: 0
 Great: 741
 No: 2
 One: 2
 Died: 11



You may be asking yourself, "Why do I want to convert numbers into letters or memorize a list of items, and what does this have to do with translation?"

Performing this kind of mental exercises will help you with your translations, proofreading tasks, and professional and non-professional activities, making your daily mental endeavors a piece of cake.

There is this false idea that a person can have bad memory. There is only untrained memory, and if you did the proposed exercise above, by now you would have realized that it isn't that hard to get to a point where you feel how your brain starts to work on your behalf.

Just keep practicing. Instead of writing down your shopping list, perform the same mental exercise in the example above. Convert your bank account details into a sentence. We have plenty of personal or professional opportunities to put this at work.

I recommend reading some of the materials I read when I started studying these techniques to retain speeches and people's names and faces.

One is "How to Develop a Super Power Memory" by Harry Lorayne. He has many other related books too. "Limitless" by Jim Kwik is another excellent book. He is a world-renowned brain coach that has many books and online trainings available. He coaches many Hollywood stars and political leaders. These authors also have materials about other mental techniques that give our brains an extra boost, like speed reading, fast learning, and many more.

It is time to get your brain working towards a new tomorrow, where I can guarantee you will feel better, more productive, less stressed, and with more time to enjoy life, or if you are a workaholic like I am, jump into more projects. If at least one of the readers of this material finds it useful, my objective will have been fulfilled, and I am pleased about that.

Douglas Fróes is a English/Spanish>Brazilian PT Translator and Quality Control Specialist. He started his journey working as a videogame linguistic and functional tester specialist reviewing

a great amount of the best Triple-A games, websites, and apps on the market. He started working with audiovisual translations in 2014 and since then has been working with content from the world's largest and most renowned entertainment companies. He is also a quality control instructor at EVAD and Director of QA at Kaiju Games.



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LOCALIZE THE PLANET

BY MARA CAMPBELL
AND SEBASTIÁN ARIAS

Audiovisual translation is full of challenges. Conveying meaning, nuance, intention, and things unsaid is not just “replacing words in the source language with their equivalent in the target”. But some projects stand out. Case in point: *The History of Swear Words*, a series that premiered on Netflix in January of this year.

It inevitably caught the attention of the authors—Sebastián being a seasoned dubbing director, and Mara having worked in subtitling for many years—who were eager to see how the platform would manage to localize such a show.

Dub vs. Sub

The History of Swear Words is about the grammar, etymology, syntax, and spelling of cuss words in the English language, which may not always (we dare say, seldom do) have a parallel in target languages.

What immediately stood out was that the program had not been dubbed. This might be due to the pandemic and the delays that many dubbing productions encountered, but, after watching it and confirming the inherent language and treatment complexities that such a show brings, we assumed it will never be dubbed and that must have been a conscious decision made by the producers.

Netflix uses voice-over for non-fiction works, which would, luckily, have left out the added complication of lip-syncing and isochrony (just thinking about dubbing the close-up of Nicolas Cage shouting a very long “Fuuuuck!” in the opening scene of episode 1 is a nightmare on its own).

In a show with these characteristics, the translator, with above-average knowledge of linguistics, might make decisions that don’t really work in the dubbing studio, forcing even the most experienced of directors to make changes that could erode all the care and consideration the translator dedicated to their text. The director might even use a calque, an incorrect meaning, or a term that offends a minority because they are not acquainted with current style guides.

The series’ Latin American Spanish subtitles are very good considering the circumstances, but the translator sometimes relied on translating a term and then later, for lack of a proper translation of its use, leaving it in English in quotes or, on the rare occasion where space allowed, adding some type of explanation as to what the term means. There are also whole segments where the term in the target language was different every time, and we end up seeing three different Spanish words referring to the same single English term, all because most usages in English are non-existent in Spanish. Play-on-words with “dick” as both organ and the nickname for Richards, and all five different definitions of “pussy” must have been particularly difficult. It is easy to imagine that the translators of all languages had similar conundrums when tackling this show.

But localization technique is irrelevant in this case because issues arise from the text and pose the same difficulties for dubbing as for subtitling. So, is it worth translating a show if the translators are forced to leave portions of their translation in the original language?

The Spitting Image of Monty’s Kids Singing Songs in the Hall on a Saturday Night

Some series and films have content so specific to a topic, a region, a language, that localizing them is a monumental challenge. Another such show is the Argentine satire *Peter Capusotto y sus videos*, which graced Netflix’s screens a few years ago with subtitles in English.

It is hard to describe the show to a non-Argentine due to its topical and oh-so-local features, but picture a sketch show with parts with comedic structure similar to *Monty Python* or *Kids in the Hall*, throw in a few parody songs á la Al Yankovich or Adam Sandler on SNL, and don't leave out some social and political commentary segments comparable to the *British Spitting Image* (adapted as *D.C. Follies* in the US) but without the puppets. It was hilarious for local audiences, but most of the jokes were impossible to translate (because subtitles deprive the translator of footnotes and explanations, which still would not have helped much) as anybody who is not from Argentina, regardless of the language they speak, wouldn't understand an iota of it. Even though the translators did a great job of conveying meanings to the best of their abilities, most of the jokes were not only not funny, but barely comprehensible.

Global Goes Local

All the major players in the VOD landscape are understanding that their productions cross frontiers more easily than ever before, and that is evident in the way the latest blockbusters are somewhat neutralized to be easily exportable and appeal to many markets. But there still are and always will be productions that retain local flavor and color and apply to a smaller demographic. Currently, AI is used in audiovisual productions to localize product placement, so the line between global and local is now blurry (Hypable, 2011) and (Twitter, 2019).

The issue is not the type of productions being brought into existence, but the idea that everything should be localized by default. Why does (better yet: why should) a VOD platform spend time and money localizing something that presents these insurmountable challenges when the audience probably will find no enjoyment in it?

Some material is almost like an inside joke. A screenwriter would never include a family joke in their script (unless they can explain it or recreate its making within the story), so why create

content that only a few (considering all the countries in the world) will understand? When you talk about your sibling with a stranger, you don't mention them by name; you say "my brother" or "my sister" because you know that if you just say "John" or "Jane", the other party will not know who you are talking about.

Should All Audiovisual Material be Localized?

This is a complex question with many possible answers. Yes, everybody should have access to all audiovisual material. But what if having that access is almost irrelevant because the content is, in a way, "closed" and presents comprehension barriers that have nothing to do with the language in which it is being watched? Furthermore, who is to decide what shows or films fall into this category?

What if we factor in the principles of accessible filmmaking? Pablo Romero-Fresco refers to the concept of "the global film" by quoting Regina Longo: "How does the risk of translation affect the medium? How does it affect its global address? How does translation as risk, as failure, as dysfunction allow us to reconceive the global currency and globalizing nature of screen media? This risk involves mismatch, error, cultural asymmetries, appropriation, censorship, gatekeeping, etc. It also involves renewal and revitalization, activity, mobility, activation, accessibility." (Romero-Fresco 2020). In this light, should shows like these never even get made?

Adapt or Adopt

An alternative would be to license the format and produce as many different versions as regions are interested in distributing them, in a similar way that many shows get remade around the world. For example, the adaptations of telenovelas such as the Colombian *Yo soy Betty, la fea* (US *Ugly Betty*) and Venezuelan *Juana la virgen* (US *Jane the Virgin*) retained the original idea and the main story, but localized customs, phrases, and even whole characters.

Original versions of reality shows like the Dutch *Big Brother*, Swedish *Expedition Robinson* (*Survivor*), South Korean *King of Mask Singer* (*The Masked Singer*), Spanish *Operación Triunfo* (*The One*), Dutch *The Voice of Holland* (*The Voice*) and the ubiquitous *America's Funniest Home Videos* (originally *Japanese Fun TV with Kato-chan and Ken-chan*) would not hold the same appeal in foreign territories as their original versions, and are remade locally without hesitation as subtitled and dubbed versions of these series would probably not bring in the same ratings (or ignite the same passions) in foreign territories.

Political satires are a whole other story: ratings for shows such as *Last Week Tonight* with John Oliver or *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah would be non-existent if they were broadcast abroad (not to mention that they would be, at the minimum, a few days late if subtitled, probably weeks late if they were to be dubbed), so it makes more sense to have local versions that talk about events affecting the country in question.

Now, in the case of *The History of Swear Words*, adapting it to different regions would not necessarily be a fit solution. Some people (linguists, for starters!) would probably want to watch the other versions of the show to see how they were handled and would need them localized, somewhat propagating the original problem.

Damn! So many questions, so few answers.

The authors wish to thank translator Adán Cassan for his help and insights.

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Mara Campbell is an Argentine ATA-certified translator based in the UK who has been subtitled, closed captioning, and translating subtitles and scripts for dubbing for the past 20 years. She has worked at several of the largest audiovisual translation companies in Argentina and the USA. She is currently COO of True Subtitles, the company she founded in 2005. Her work has been seen on the screens of Netflix, Prime, Disney+, Hulu, HBO, BBC, and many more. She teaches courses, speaks at international conferences, and is a founding member of the American Translators Association's AVD.



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TOP-TEN PRINCIPLES OF SUBTITLE TIMING

BY DEBORAH WEXLER

Somebody asked me why I hadn't written anything about subtitle timing. I said that most information about timing subtitles can be found online in style guides by content creators, distributors and translation agencies. But I thought about it and decided to share my ideas, terms and definitions in *Deep Focus* to reach those translators who want to look into the fascinating world of audiovisual translation but don't know where to start learning about timing. This is for them.

When I teach timing, these are some of the concepts I stress the most. I have practiced them since I was subtitling by hand, except for the one about the mouse, of course, which came later, when we moved from pencils and paper to computers. Except for principle 10, if you google the terms in this article, you won't find them because I use my own lingo (sorry!), but the principles are not new and have been used in the industry for decades, even if some haven't been defined.

1. Go Mouseless

You may have heard me say, "If your subtitling software doesn't allow you to drop your mouse, drop your subtitling software." Going mouseless speeds up subtitling by using keyboard shortcuts instead of the mouse.

While most commercial subtitling programs claim you'll be able to customize shortcuts via their in-program macros, they don't have all the combinations a professional subtitler needs. For example, not all subtitling programs snap in times and out times to shot changes. So regardless of the program you are using, you will need to create personalized shortcuts.

I believe one of the best investments a professional subtitler can make is a hotkey or macro program. There are some inexpensive ones on the market, and they'll allow you to increase your productivity considerably.

2. Avoid Chopping

Chopping is timing an in time late (after the audio begins) or timing an out time early (before the audio ends). If you need a mental image, think of a pineapple being trimmed using a machete. When the audio and the subtitles do not sync, it's noticeable and annoying for the viewer (I'm sure you have experienced this, especially on one of the large streaming services). This technical flaw makes viewers aware of the subtitles, interrupting their suspension of disbelief so they can no longer enjoy the story.

When I'm training someone, I always say, "Do not chop the audio on the in time." This is a close second place in the hierarchy of decisions a subtitler will have to make when timing individual subtitles (the first being timing around a shot change).

There are two important considerations regarding chopping: first, in times and out times should at least cover audio from start to finish and, second, shot change timing rules will make it difficult to avoid chopping 100% of the time.

The rules are simple:

- Do not put the in time after the audio starts.
- Do not put the out time before the audio ends.
- In times trump out times in overlapping dialogues.

3. Use the Three-frame Rule

I discovered this principle when I was timing karaoke style songs. With speech at normal speed, the sound of each letter generally lasts approximately three frames. Let's use the word "dog" as an example. If you play a subtitle and hear "og" instead of "dog," you just have to move your in time back three frames, and it will land exactly where it belongs.

A great shortcut you can create (and I say this because I have not seen it in any commercial software yet) is this one: "back three frames, add in time, play subtitle."

If you hear "og," instead of grabbing the mouse, looking at the soundwave, clicking the in time, pulling it back, etc., use this amazing shortcut and your video will go back three frames, the correct in time will be added, your subtitle will play, and now you'll hear "dog."

4. Avoid Cropping

Like in photography, this describes an out time that is timed to the last frame of audio. I advise against this. Instead, I recommend extending it a little and timing the out time one third to one half of a second later. Why? There are two reasons. First, to save yourself time. It's very difficult to find the last frame of audio while the video is playing. When you realize the dialogue stopped, your finger will take around a third of a second to obey your brain's command to pause the video. Some subtitling programs can adjust the response time, but most do not. So you will spend a lot of time looking for the last frame of audio in each subtitle you time. Even if you have a soundwave, you will be pausing the video, switching to the mouse and clicking on the soundwave, which is even worse. Second, leaving a bit of time after the end of the last sound alleviates reading speed issues both in transcriptions and translations.

As long as you don't chop the in time of the following subtitle or violate shot change rules, you'll be golden.

5. Mind the Gap

For this concept, imagine a subway station cautioning the public not to fall into the gap between the platform and the train floor. In subtitling, a gap is the period of time between subtitles. It refers to the moments when there are no subtitles onscreen, and we can enjoy the images in the video. When a subtitle appears at the bottom of the screen, your eyes move down to read the text. When it disappears, your eyes move up to see the images in the video. Your mind won't spend a microsecond over the bare minimum looking at a subtitle down below. The image will pull your eyes up. When you have a short gap between all your subtitles, your eyes will be ping-ponging during the full movie.

"Minding the gap" means closing small gaps between subtitles. "Mind the gap" is my term, but it's currently being called chaining or linking. I believe chaining was added to the Netflix guidelines not too long ago, but it has been done for over 50 years in some parts of the industry.

There are two main considerations for closing gaps. First, close gaps of 3 to 11 frames (or to 14 frames in a 30-fps video), leaving only 2 frames between subtitles (this is the industry standard). Second, when you have two subtitles with a gap in between, push the out time of the first subtitle forward until you only have 2 frames between them instead of pulling the in time of the second subtitle back to the out time of the first one. This will prevent timing off audio.

A very useful shortcut for this issue is one that pulls the previous out time to two frames before the in time of the active subtitle. It'll save you a lot of time.

6. Avoid Compression

Compression is an artificial space constraint created by the subtitler. I say artificial because, unlike real time and space constraints, compression is created by bad timing practices. This happens when subtitle timing unnecessarily compresses the space allowed. Or, in layman's terms, it's when you unnecessarily reduce the space allowed for text by creating a single subtitle instead of two.

Look at the following subtitle images, each with information about their time and space allowances:

TWO SECONDS ALLOW FOR ONE ROW OF TEXT.

THREE SECONDS ALLOW FOR ONE AND A HALF ROWS OF TEXT.

FOUR SECONDS OF TIME ALLOW US TO FILL TWO FULL ROWS OF SPACE WITH TEXT.

There is certain logic up to this point. As time grows, space grows. But what happens after four seconds? Remember that we can only have two rows of text on screen at a time, which means that the space won't continue to grow. The space is constrained to two rows after four seconds, so any longer than that will artificially compress what you can type.

SEVEN SECONDS OF TIME ALLOW US TO FILL TWO FULL ROWS, SAME AS FOUR SECONDS.

This chart shows compression in a nutshell. The space that you have on screen will be unnecessarily compressed if you use a single subtitle for five, six or seven seconds of on-screen time.

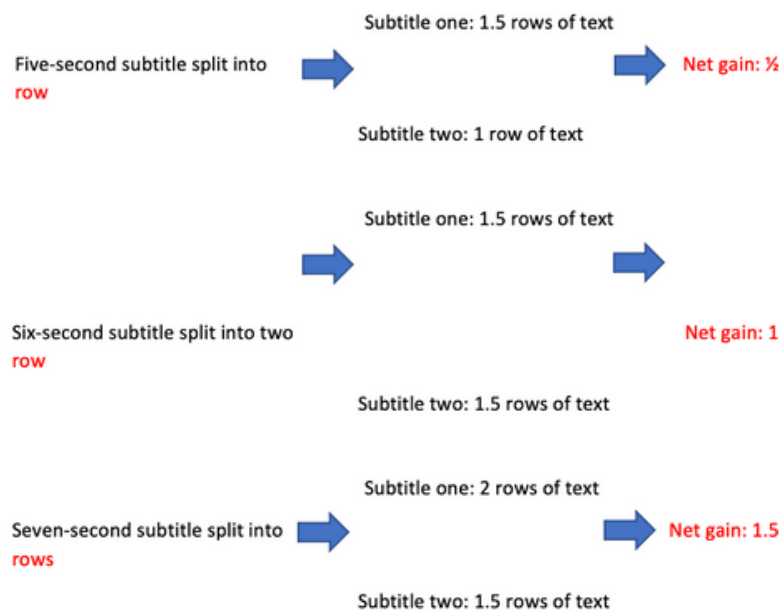
Two seconds	1 row of text
Three seconds	1.5 rows of text
Four seconds	2 rows of text
Five seconds	2 rows of text
Six seconds	2 rows of text
Seven seconds	2 rows of text

So how do you avoid creating an artificial space constraint? Let's look at our next principle.

7. Use Expansion

Expansion means avoiding artificial space constraints by splitting a long subtitle. In other words, keeping a single subtitle for up to four seconds of audio and splitting a subtitle that is five, six or seven seconds long.

Below, you can see artificially constrained subtitles being split into two subtitles and the net gain of this action. When you are creating English templates or English pivot templates, this will be of the utmost importance, because most languages will need more space than English. With expansion, translators using that template will not be forced to truncate text unnecessarily.



8. Avoid Flashing

To visualize what I mean by this, imagine a strobe light (tik, tik, tik!) that bothers your eyes. Flashing is a group of two or more subtitles with a duration of less than two seconds each. It also describes when text stays onscreen for less than two seconds causing it to "flash" before your eyes.

Flashing is a text segmentation problem and should be avoided. To solve it, keep one thought per subtitle. Avoid splitting linguistic units, but try to compress or expand subtitles over four seconds, especially if you are creating templates or pivot templates.

Watching content with flashing will feel like karaoke, with sentences fragmented into many pieces and multiple short subtitles. It's a bad practice, and now that you know about it, it's very easy to avoid. Some strategies are:

- Keep linguistic units together.
- Try to group one sentence per subtitle, but avoid compression.
- Join fragments by combining a subtitle with the previous or the following.
- Extend the out time by up to half a second when possible.
- Shorten 3-to-11-frame gaps between subtitles to 2 frames.
- Avoid the domino effect: creating timing errors in surrounding subtitles while trying to fix your current subtitle.

9. Avoid Omega-alpha Splits

Omega means end and alpha means beginning. Omega-alpha splits are when the end of one sentence and the beginning of another are in the same subtitle. This issue also falls under segmentation problems. In the following example, we have two sentences split into three subtitles. The first red fragment is end of the first sentence. The second red fragment is the beginning of the second sentence. The red text is what I call the omega-alpha split.

SUBTITLE 1:

The ghost was standing...

SUBTITLE 2:

...in the middle of the road. I didn't know...

SUBTITLE 3:

...that.

The following is another layout of the same two sentences, this time split into two subtitles. The last fragment of the first sentence and the next sentence are in the same subtitle.

SUBTITLE 1:

The ghost was standing...

SUBTITLE 2:

...in the middle of the road. I didn't know that.

It's an easy fix now that you know you shouldn't be doing it: just group the omega with its own linguistic unit and the alpha with its own linguistic unit. A period is a natural place to split your text into rows or into subtitles.

SUBTITLE 1:

The ghost was standing

in the middle of the road.

SUBTITLE 2:

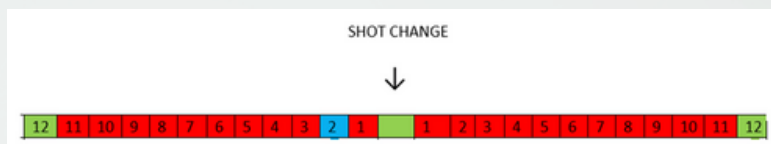
I didn't know that.

Minimum duration allowed and shot-change rules are among the very few exceptions that will give you no choice but to break this rule.

1. Snap to Shot Changes

There is a lot of literature out there showing you how to snap in times and out times to shot changes, so my intention is not to cover all the rules in this article, but rather to give you the basics if you are new to timing subtitles.

There is a window of time around shot changes that has specific rules. In the example below, you are seeing 24 frames from left to right. This window, in a video with a 24-frame rate, represents one second of your favorite movie. You can see 12 frames or half a second before the shot change and 12 frames or half a second after the shot change.



You cannot add in times or out times in the red zone. The size of the window and shot change rules can vary by client and also with time, when clients change their minds, but the window notion will remain unchanged.

Out Times That Land in the Red Window

If your subtitle lands in the red window and the audio ends...

1. Before the shot change: pull the out time to two frames before the shot change.
2. After the shot change: push the out time forward to frame 12. If this causes it to collide with the next subtitle, you will need to snap the out time back to the shot change (the blue box) and snap the in time of the following subtitle to the same shot change.

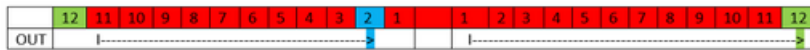


In Times that Land in the Red Window

If your subtitle lands in the red window and the audio starts...

1. 9 to 11 frames before the shot change: pull the in time back to 12 frames before the shot change.
2. 1 to 8 frames before the shot change: push the in time forward to the shot change (although I disagree with this tactic).
3. 1 to 11 frames after the shot change: pull the in time back to the shot change.

SHOT CHANGE



Can you guess why I disagree with the second tactic? We shouldn't chop the audio on the in time! Correct! When client preferences allow me to break this rule, I do. If the subtitle does not collide with the previous one, I push the in time to 12 frames before the shot change.

These are my top ten principles of subtitle timing, but they're not the only ones. There are dozens and dozens of them, and they all must be learned and followed by professional audiovisual translators who create files from scratch or conform them. My hope is that, instead of discovering them in their mistakes, like some of us veterans did, more and more subtitlers learn these principles before they start timing.

Deborah Wexler is an ATA-certified English-to-Spanish translator and editor with over 20 years of experience, specializing in audiovisual translation and Spanish orthography. She has translated over 6,000 program hours for television, VHS, DVD, Blu-ray, streaming media and the big screen. She is Manager of Operations of the Americas at Pixelogic Media. She is also a freelance audiovisual translator and quality control specialist. She is the Administrator of the ATA's Audiovisual Division and a frequent speaker at international conferences, and she is an educator who has mentored and trained many translators.



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ENTERPRISE-GRADE SUBTITLING TOOLS FOR EVERYONE

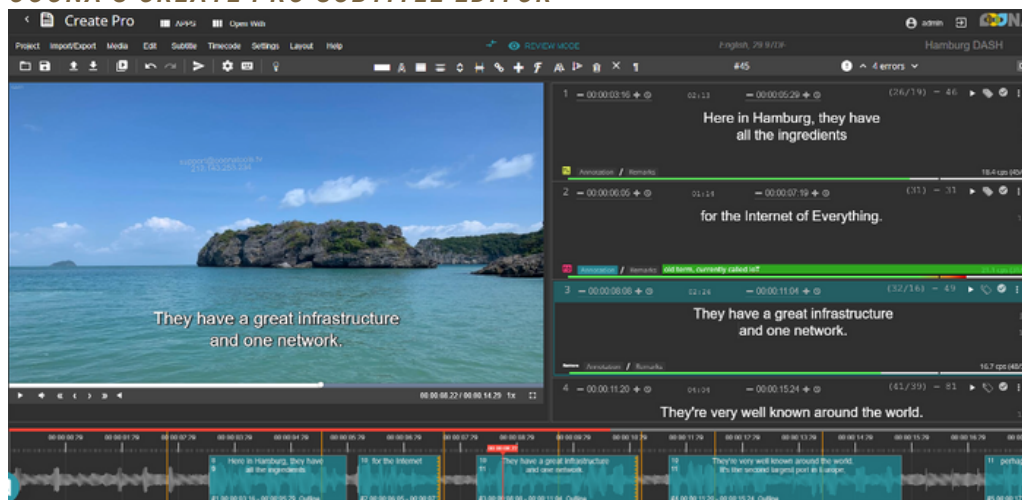
BY ALEX YOFFE

According to Statista, the global localization industry has been enjoying steady growth over the past decade, almost doubling in size. The creative industries, which encompass arts and culture, marketing and advertising, media and publishing, as well as gaming, constitute the highest-growth sector globally in the localization space. Streaming content localization has been the driving force in the media industry and the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated it further, with no sign of this slowing down. In fact, Digital TV Research predicts a rise in SVOD subscriptions globally by 65% from 2020 to 2026, which could only mean increased content localization demand. The media localization sector is thus attracting a lot of attention in the form of M&As, investment funding opportunities and technology innovation.

As video overtakes written forms of communication, especially online, video localization has also become a core function in verticals such as e-learning and is steadily making headway in institutional, corporate and e-commerce localization. According to The 2021 Nimdzi 100, over half of the world's top language service providers offer subtitling (68.4%), transcription (58.2%), dubbing, voice overs and audio services (54.4%), while most of them are LSPs that do not specialize in the media vertical. The launch of the Subtitling and Voice-Over Unit by the European Parliament's Directorate-General for Translation last year is a testament to the increasing importance of video localization workflows.

The ability to handle video source content has been singled out as “a key skill for the translators of the future” by audiovisual localization expert Yota Georgakopoulou. No wonder localization analysts report on its bright future—see Multilingual’s multimedia localization service market report in 2020, The 2021 Nimdzi 100 which includes a section on multimedia localization, or Slator’s 2021 video localization report— and LSPs offering video localization services are mushrooming.

OOONA'S CREATE PRO SUBTITLE EDITOR



This growth has created an ever-increasing demand for professional tools to service video localization workflows, preferably online, so as to support remote working and centralized quality assurance processes. The recently updated Nimdzi Technology Atlas provides a bird’s eye view of the fast-growing number of tools available to service the wider localization industry. Many new additions that cater to audiovisual localization workflows are making their way into the atlas, which now lists over 100 such tools. At the same time, all major computer-assisted translation tools have now added the ability to translate video by way of subtitles on top of their traditional text editors. While there are plenty of tools to choose from that can provide one with the ability to create subtitles, few offer the full set of functionalities required by seasoned subtitlers, who require tools that provide them with the accuracy and flexibility needed to make their daily work more efficient. As opposed to the traditional desktop editors that were dominating the market until recently, even fewer are available in a stable online environment.

Features subtitlers have come to love in desktop subtitling editors are not easily found in most online ones. Such features include accurate frame timing, shot-change detection, reading speed indicators, customizable hotkeys, automated backups, sophisticated QA and assisted translation tools, support for different user profiles and customer presets, the ability to use templates and communicate between team members for better and faster workflows, as well as conversion to any of the myriad file formats used in the subtitling industry.

Security is also a prime concern for the media sector, with content owners making it a prerequisite before onboarding any potential vendors. Multi-factor authentication, video watermarking, cyber security certifications, continuous pen testing and 24/7/365 technical support are now the norm for platforms used by LSPs wishing to offer video localization services to their end clients.

Add the need for a sophisticated translation management system able to handle any type of video localization workflow and any team size, able to scale at whim, as content volumes fluctuate, and one will be pressed to find a platform that will tick all these boxes. Furthermore, the ability to handle client orders automatically, auto- or bulk-assign work to resources, maintain metrics on users, offer live dashboards and file management, as well as integrate with finance tools for a complete end-to-end solution, cut down duplication of effort, turnaround time, the potential for error, and offer a seamless experience to users.

The need for such video localization workflows is of course not new – it was only accelerated in recent years as everyone was moving to the cloud. A decade ago, basic freeware tools and a couple of LSP-owned proprietary solutions was all there was. In 2012, OOONA started with a translation management platform and web-based localization tools were later added. Since then, the platform development has evolved by working alongside high-profile, multinational LSPs servicing top film studios and streamers to reimagine the aim of servicing the world's most demanding video localization needs.

With a security-approved tech stack, multiple security certifications, and an interface informed by the feedback of world-renowned academics and practitioners, the platform was moved to AWS a few years ago for a seamless delivery of content and the ability to work on all operating systems. Built for scale, it is able to support accelerated media workflows. It focuses on user experience and integrates via APIs custom complementary tools, such as speech recognition and machine translation engines. Translation memories are also on its roadmap being at the heart of the localization workflow and growing needs without having to leave its ecosystem. More specifically, the OOONA Integrated platform handles subtitle and caption files, scripts, metadata, and synopses and any other type of information around video that helps automate and streamline video localization workflows.

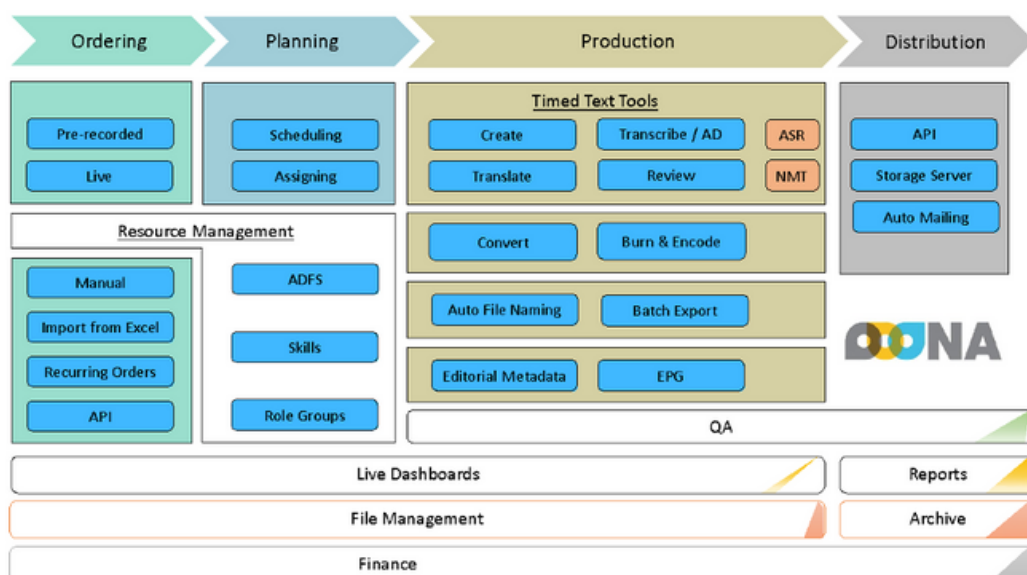
The media localization market thrives despite its fragmentation, and accounts for “over a thousand LSPs of all sizes around the world, many of them smaller, family-owned businesses,” says Yota Georgakopoulou.

Therefore, the purpose is for the toolset not to be limited to large enterprise users alone, but to make it accessible to individual freelancers as well.

In line with the belief in supporting the industry and making it sustainable, the EDU platform provides academic institutions the ability to prepare new trainees for the business of video localization, in a fully remote setting if needed, while the joined effort with GOSUB ensures high-end training specific to our media localization tools to all prospective OOONA users. The POOOL initiative in turn aims to provide professionals in our booming sector with more visibility through an online directory that connects them directly with hundreds of LSPs requiring their services.

The aim is to make this an even more inclusive initiative for the benefit of the hundreds of language service providers and thousands of translators that specialize in video localization, a sector that has witnessed unprecedented growth in recent years with a bright outlook for the future.

OOONA INTEGRATED PLATFORM



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a suite of web-based localization tools for media content.

Alex studied industrial engineering and management at Technion,

the Israel Institute of Technology, and worked previously in media content management.

He enjoys meeting people and solving technology problems, and travelled extensively in the pre-Corona world.

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NEW COLUMN

SNAP, CRACKLE, AND POP CULTURE: REFERENCES FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE POND

BY MARA CAMPBELL
BRITTA NOACK

Welcome to our brand new column, where we will strive to shed light on cultural references from the US and the UK. Films and shows are riddled with snippets of life that often influence the way we should translate innocent-looking dialogue, and, since translators are usually native speakers of the target language, they might not be acquainted with the culture, current events, or popular history of the country where the material takes place. Some are more evident and stand out enough to prompt research, but others are very subtle: a silly catchphrase, a funny accent, a hidden play-on-words or slogan, or even elements like the way a character dresses or what it means when one social group interacts with another, none of which are recorded in dictionaries.

We, Britta and Mara, are simultaneously insiders and outsiders. And sometimes having more than one culture to compare makes you more aware of certain nuances. Britta has always been glued to either a screen or a book trying to teach herself foreign languages, English in particular, and figuring out all the slang, puns, proverbs and colorful expressions that come with it.

Living in the States for almost 17 years has helped her understand the American way of life, and marrying into a family that lives and breathes baseball has deepened her love for the game and everything that comes with it. Currently, she is residing in Germany temporarily, but makes sure to get her dose of all things US on regular trips “home” several times a year. Similarly, Mara, after a lifelong fascination with cultural references picked up mostly from American coming-of-age comedies of the 80s and, later, British police crime dramas, moved from Argentina to the UK and started noticing many more elements of the British way-of-life that impregnate the screen. She quickly developed an obsession and started filling notebooks.

From the UK: London Calling!

In the UK, the expression “to call” seldom has anything to do with the use of a telephone. That would be to ring or phone somebody. “To call” refers to visiting a place or a person; it’s the British equivalent of the American “to drop by”.

Although it might sound somewhat old-fashioned, it is perfectly normal to ask someone if you can call at 3 o’clock to pick up the book they are lending you, or you can call at the bank to make a deposit. Trains and coaches (long-distance buses) call at stations, and the normal tannoy (P.A. system) announcement on a train sounds something like, “This is a train to London calling at Didcot and Reading.”

A use of “call” that might sound a bit more familiar is in the expression “a gentleman caller”. In the early- to mid-20th century, women could have a love interest or a suitor which they would refer to as a gentleman caller because he would come visit her home. Funnily enough, this expression was coined in America, but the use of “to call” as in “to visit” was discontinued there.

Although this is a definition that is easily found in a dictionary, it is important to point out the frequency and normalcy with which it is used in the UK, so as not to thoughtlessly translate it in relation to a phone.

An Argentine newspaper made this mistake when they translated the title of the 1895 painting by William Merritt Chase “A Friendly Call” as “La llamada amistosa” (The Friendly Phone Call). The painting portrays two women of the era chatting in a living room with no telephone in sight (the gadget would become mainstream three decades later).

From the US: Going, Going... Gone!

I have always been a baseball fan. Even before moving to San Diego in 2002, I played baseball in college in Germany. But back then, I had absolutely no idea how much America’s favorite pastime influences ordinary speech and how little that might make sense to someone not familiar with the game or American culture.

The following are some of my favorite phrases used in various contexts in everyday speech:

1. Ballpark Figure/In the ballpark: This refers to the huge size of a baseball field. Usually, a hit lands somewhere inside the park, so a ballpark figure is an estimate of something, a range or an approximation. Example: I had no idea how many people in the US speak a second language, but my guess was more or less in the ballpark.
2. Knock/hit it out of the park: Well, sometimes the ball does actually leave the park and since this is not something that happens too often, this phrase describes anything related to success. Example: I saw many interesting presentations at the last ATA conference, but Mara hit it out of the park with her presentation about subtitles.
3. A brand new ballgame/A whole new ballgame: When you watch a soccer game, for example, and the score is 4:0 and there are only 10 more minutes to play, the chances that the losing team will catch up are slim to none. The same is not true for baseball, where anything is possible. A team that is trailing could all of a sudden tie up the game or even take the lead. This expression means a complete turn of events or change in circumstances. It is completely different from what came before.

Example: I was really struggling to succeed at work, but now I have a new team and it's a whole new ballgame.

4. Curveball: One of many different methods for the pitcher to throw the ball at the batter. Curving unexpectedly, it is used to confuse the batter. In everyday speech, it expresses an unexpected surprise, mostly something unpleasant. Example: I was supposed to go on vacation next week, but life threw me a curveball when I broke my ankle yesterday.

5. Step up to the plate: Baseball players step up to home plate to attempt to hit a ball into the field and ultimately score. Stepping up to the plate means rising to an occasion in life. Example: It is time you step up to the plate and take responsibility for your actions.

Well, this is but a start to the many baseball references you'll hear in American speech, but I do hope it will help some of my fellow AV translators avoid getting caught off-base while working on some major league projects ;).



Mara Campbell is an Argentine ATA-certified translator based in the UK who has been subtitling, closed captioning, and translating subtitles and scripts for dubbing for the past 20 years.



She has worked at several of the largest audiovisual translation companies in Argentina and the USA. She is currently COO of True Subtitles, the company she founded in 2005. Her work has been seen on the screens of Netflix, Prime, Disney+, Hulu, HBO, BBC, and many more. She teaches courses, speaks at international conferences, and is a founding member of the ATA's Audiovisual Division.

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Britta Noack is the Mentoring Program Coordinator of the 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



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On the AUDIOVISUAL RADAR

1) The New Normal in Audiovisual Translation: Tradition, Technology, Innovation- E-Conference University of Bologna, Forlì, Italy

When: December 10, 2021

Where: Online

Description: The world of AVT is rapidly and relentlessly fast-forwarding to what, just a decade ago, we would have considered science fiction. Translation and technology have always walked hand in hand, but as artificial intelligence enters the picture more and more, this begs the question of what the role of translators will be in this ever-changing scenario and how the profession, the market and viewers will adapt to and exploit these changes.

<https://eventi.unibo.it/new-normal-audiovisual-translation>

2) 3rd Conference of the Association of Programmes in Translation and Interpreting Studies, UK and Ireland (APTIS) – Evolving Profiles: The Future of Translation and Interpreting Training E-Conference Dublin City University, Ireland

When: November 18 - 19, 2021

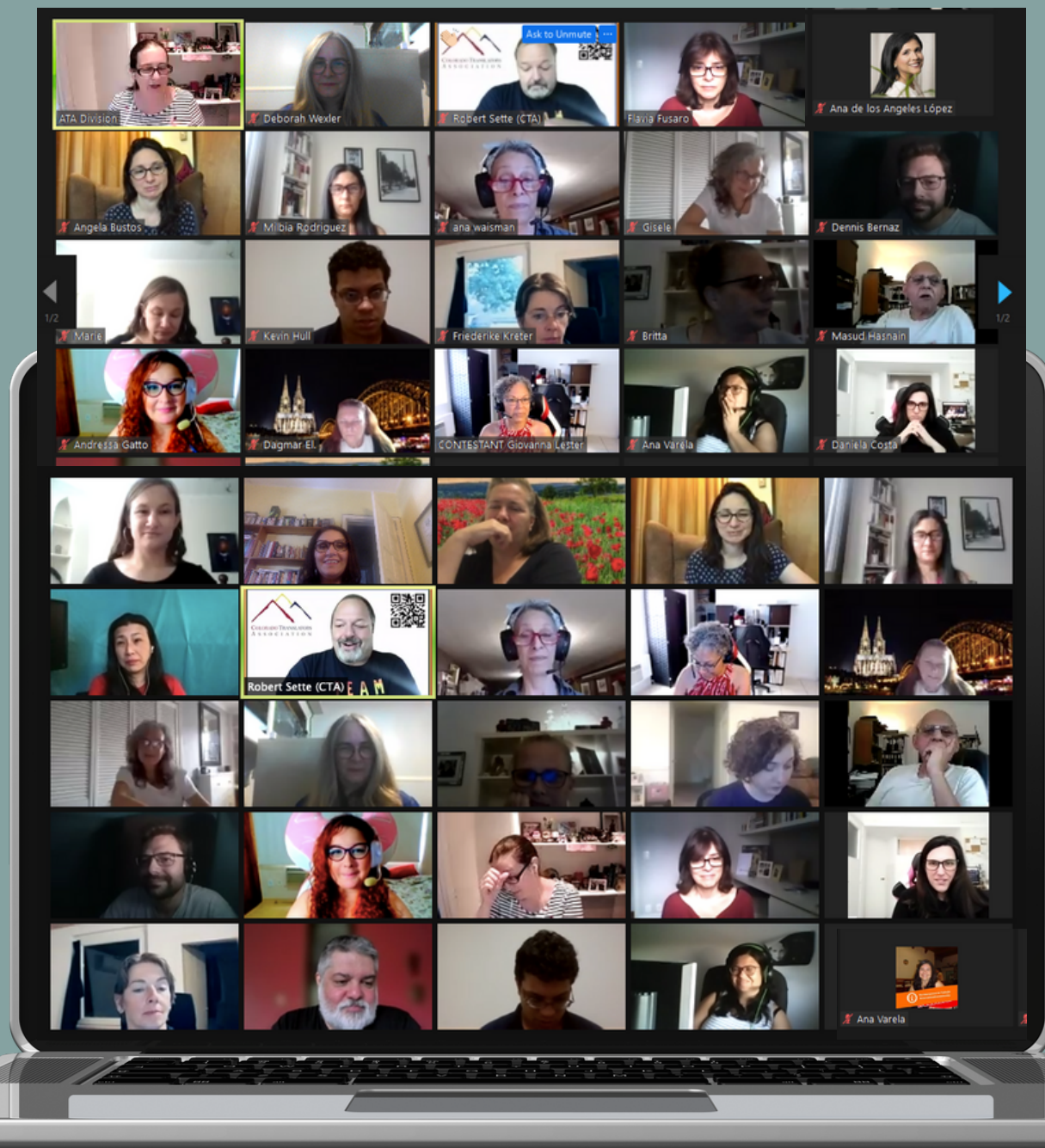
Where: Online Online

Description: APTIS 2021 is going online! Making a virtue out of the virtual, we will increase access to the conference, while continuing to ensure its trademark dynamism and interactivity.

<https://www.aptis-translation-interpreting.org/aptis-2020>

AVD'S ONLINE EVENTS

OUR LATEST HAPPY HOURS:
JULY 31ST, AUGUST 28TH, SEPTEMBER 25TH



The AVD has been bringing audiovisual translators together with happy hour meetups via Zoom, and we will continue moving forward. Unwind with friends and meet new people. Join us for our upcoming happy hour meetups for a relaxed chat among colleagues from all over the world, where we talk shop (or not!) and share our passion for audiovisual translation in a private Zoom meeting room, and then split up into smaller groups.

Follow us on social media to catch us every month!

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