

DEEP FOCUS

AVD NEWSLETTER



A division of the American Translators Association

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DEEP FOCUS

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Ana Gabriela González Meade
publicationsavd@gmail.com

PROOFREADER

Lucía Hernández
proofreaderavd@gmail.com

LAYOUT

Ana Gabriela González Meade

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TO CONTRIBUTE, PLEASE CONTACT:

publicationsavd@gmail.com

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From the Outgoing Administrator

Editorial

From the Incoming Administrator

A Bill Proposed in Brazil causes
Ripple Effects for Brazilian
Portuguese Audiovisual Translators
Across the Globe

In Search of Invisible TXT

Localizing for Streaming Media: The
Importance of Established
Guidelines in Different Countries

AI and its Implementation
in the Dubbing Process

Interlinguistic Communication in
1899: A Multilingual Approach
for a Multilingual Production

PAGE 1 BY DEBORAH WEXLER

PAGE 3 BY ANA G. GONZÁLEZ MEADE

PAGE 4 BY RAQUEL VASCONCELLOS

Do you know a Brazilian audiovisual translator who would rather work for Brazilian companies than foreign companies? Probably not. Why? Because it doesn't pay off.

PAGE 5 BY MURAT ÖNOL

An interesting three-decade long account of a seasoned Turkish translator's journey striving to seamlessly integrate subtitles with the cinematic experience in film festivals projections.

PAGE 8 BY ROSÁRIO VALADAS VIEIRA

Traditional subtitling rules in Portugal versus new guidelines. Did streaming viewers' experience around the world really improve?

PAGE 10 BY SEBASTIÁN ARIAS

Sebastián explains how AI unfolded, became relevant, and extended to become a current tool for dubbing content production.

PAGE 14 BY TATIANA LÓPEZ

1899 is a truly multilingual show involving 14 languages and an international cast and crew. Such language chaos is linked to the plot itself: when we make an effort to understand each other, we can solve any riddle. That's what this inspiring story is about. Genres, time periods and languages meld together to make it a masterpiece.



LETTER FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

DEBORAH WEXLER

When deciding on the subject for my goodbye letter as administrator of the Audiovisual Division, I couldn't help but think about transformation. Transformation of the AVD as it welcomes a new leader and transformation of our profession as artificial intelligence takes over our space.

The last few months have been a whirlwind of talks, webinars, and panels with opinions and forecasts about the effects artificial intelligence will have on the translation industry in general and the audiovisual field in particular.

As you well know, one of the things that differentiates translation of audiovisual content from translation of text is the ability to be creative. For example, when translating a furniture assembly instruction booklet, there's not much room for creativity. But when a main character sings a song in a video, your creative juices must be fully flowing to translate and adapt it for dubbing. I'm afraid, as many of my colleagues have said, that when all translation is done by machines and translators become posteditors, the first thing to die will be creativity, even if current machine translation outputs are more "fluent" and "accurate" than ever.

Even though experts warn neural machine translation isn't ready for AVT, because instead of literal translations permeated with syntactic and semantic calques, this specialized field requires natural oral communication imbued with flavor and emotion, I believe this new wave of neural machine translation descending on our creative AVT work is here to stay.

Linguists are understandably afraid, and repeatedly ask me, "If it can't be stopped, what should audiovisual translators do now?" And, although I say this with deep sadness, my response is: transform.

If we want to stay in this field we love so passionately, we must go through a metamorphosis, from translators to posteditors, and fight our instinct to avoid postediting.

To do that, we should first acquire the skills required to get over the postediting learning curve as quickly as possible. Moreover, in order to be more effective and productive, we should be systematic. I suggest creating a step-by-step process to ensure consistency while looking for and fixing all the errors in each file we postedit.

For subtitling, that could be done with the aid of error checklists: preliminary, intermediate, and final. The preliminary checklist would list errors that can be found via the find feature and fixed quickly.

The intermediate checklist would list errors found via a step-through (a speed reading of the subtitles without referencing the video or worrying about context). And the final check would find errors found while reviewing the subtitles against the video (watch-through). The first two steps would eliminate formatting, stylistic and reading speed errors (and glaring mistakes caught without checking the context) and would allow for faster postediting with fewer interruptions during the watch-through. These three passes would be followed by a spell check, of course. These checklists would need to be honed through lots of practice and collaboration across our AVT community.

Then, even though we've been avoiding it all our careers, AV translators should diversify. Even if postediting productivity gains are split in half between the client and the translator, which would make this transition better for all parties, in a world of AVT posteditors, we'll need more work to make a living, and we shouldn't just cross our fingers and hope the additional work will all be audiovisual content. I don't see how it could be.

I know this transformation will be painful, as transformations often are. But, if we want peace of mind, we must try and look at the bright side of any shift. Leaving the poems to the poets, here are my thoughts in the beautiful words of Alex Elle:

*there will be moments when
you will bloom fully and then
wilt, only to bloom again.
if we can learn anything from
flowers is that resilience is born
even when we feel like we are
dying.¹*

And on that note, I want to express my sincere and profound thanks to all AVD members, past and present alike. You have made my five years as administrator tremendously rich and fulfilling. I hope to keep supporting the division in the years to come. I have stepped down after having completed all the tasks we set out to accomplish when we founded the AVD in 2018, and many more.

And thank you to all the Deep Focus readers who have contacted me with comments, thanks, and kudos in response to my letters and articles over the years. Hearing from you has been a beautiful gift.

Sincerely,

Deborah Wexler
Outgoing AVD Administrator/AVD Assistant Administrator

1. Elle, Alexandra. Neon Soul: A Collection of Poetry and Prose, "Rebirth" (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2017), 52.



EDITORIAL

ANA G. GONZÁLEZ MEADE

Dear readers,

This has certainly been a busy year for most of us. Because the hosting server for our website was down for several months, we're publishing later than expected and trying to catch up.

This time around, I am writing not only as Deep Focus' editor, but also as the ATA's Audiovisual Division administrator. This brings me a lot of joy. As our division turns five years, I'm so proud to be part of our small group of founders and furthermore, I am thankful for having found exceptional colleagues along the way. They have joined us in this effort, making it richer and wilder. They have also become dear friends and teachers along this amazing adventure.

Recently, major changes have taken hold of our profession as an unstoppable transformative wave. Will we all be riding that wave? There is so much to discuss, analyze, and ponder on! Let's get the conversation going. I'll definitely be addressing some of the issues that are already impacting our careers and lives.

As always, we bring you specialized AVT-related content, the latest in our content localization industry, written by experienced freelancers and top-notch researchers.

We are always thinking of ways to strengthen our AVT community's connection and spread knowledge of our craft, and will continue to do so in coming years.

Please follow our different social media channels to stay on top of things in the audiovisual translation universe.

See you at ATA64!

Ana Gabriela González Meade, M.A.

Deep Focus Editor/Incoming AVD Administrator

A BILL PROPOSED IN BRAZIL CAUSES RIPPLE EFFECTS FOR BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATORS ACROSS THE GLOBE

BY RAQUEL VASCONCELLOS

In May of 2022, Bill 1376/22 was introduced by Congressman Pedro Paulo in Brazil, which is meant to support Brazilian Portuguese translators. Why does this concern audiovisual translators? Because the bill states that all Brazilian dubbing and subtitling projects broadcast in Brazil must be provided by companies and translators based in Brazil.

The reason for this bill seems to be that there is unfair competition since, according to the Congressman, these services are usually provided by foreign companies. He explains that dubbing and subtitling services carried out abroad are not subject to the rigorous regulatory and tax obligations imposed on the local industry. All of which, according to Mr. Paulo, exposes dubbing houses in Brazil to unfair competition, thus resulting in tighter operational budgets.

Besides that, Paulo alleges that these foreign companies hire translators and actors with no Brazilian Portuguese proficiency, and thus, their quality is lower than those produced domestically. This is far from the truth and beyond bizarre.

First, the statement that most dubbing projects have been done by foreign companies is not true. If the audience wants to confirm which company has dubbed a specific title, they can easily check the credits. Checking if the titles have been dubbed by Brazilian companies is a no-brainer, and it seems Paulo skipped this part while researching for his bill.

The intent of a good lip sync is for people to not notice that it was dubbed, so it should sound natural. It makes sense that features and series are dubbed in Brazil, as has happened for decades. Most major international studios and vendors only dub in specialized studios located in the target language country, which makes Mr. Paulo's argument go down the drain. This happens precisely to avoid the quality issues that are common among low-priced services. The Brazilian dubbing audience is demanding; they don't accept less than perfect accents or lip sync. Major studios are very aware of this. Even the localization agencies that provide multiple language translation services have partnerships with dubbing studios in Brazil, and this is so they can provide impeccable Brazilian Portuguese dubbing.

When it comes to subtitling, the argument is the same: that TV shows are translated by subtitlers with insufficient language proficiency based outside of Brazil. Again, this is not true. Those professionals who subtitle outside of Brazil are as suited for this position as those based in Brazil. Also, since they provide services to companies around the world, most of them work together. If this bill is approved, Brazilian translators living abroad won't be able to work with foreign or Brazilian companies. This would take their livelihood from them. They would have to look for a new job. This goes against the Congressman's proposal, which is to create Brazilian jobs. How could this be fair? A Brazilian worker is only worthwhile if based in Brazil?

Ask yourself: Do you know a Brazilian audiovisual translator who would rather work for Brazilian companies than foreign companies? I don't think so. Why? Because it doesn't pay off. Some Brazilian companies offer audiovisual translators around a third or less than foreign companies do, and Brazilian translators are heavily taxed by Brazilian law. Approval of the proposed law would lead to low-quality subtitles since translators would have to work three times as much to make a decent income.

The bill will now be analyzed by several commissions in the House of Representatives. No translators union or association has been approached to discuss how this proposed law would affect this community around the globe. It's essential that the whole translation community is aware of this outrageous bill. And if you want to support Brazilian audiovisual translators, vote here:

<https://forms.camara.leg.br/ex/enquetes/2324873>

If the real goal is to support Brazilian Portuguese translators, other actions could be beneficial. The government could help new professionals open a small business as an "MEI," an individual micro-entrepreneur. Brazilian studios could work with better rates, since some companies have not increased their rates in years. Some translators believe they pay more than their fair share in taxes, so that's another issue to consider. Also, any decision made must go through the translators' union and associations to clearly understand the needs of this tiny but strong community. Many concerns can be addressed to support individual translators and strengthen the profession.

If this bill is approved, many Brazilians around the globe will become unemployed, which should be enough reason to put this bill on ice. Brazilian linguists based in Brazil will probably change careers for better pay and not because they are stuck in a career that doesn't suit them, but because they would have to.

It's kind of strange that a congressman is allowed to dictate whom you should work for and how much you should make. Taking a walk in an audiovisual translator's shoes would make them realize that they're extinguishing a profession just as it's gaining visibility.

Raquel Vasconcellos is a freelance Brazilian Portuguese translator and quality control specialist with over 7 years of experience, specializing in audiovisual translation. She is also the territory manager for Brazilian Portuguese at Pixelogic Media, a content localization and distribution services provider.



Contact: raquelvasconcellosinfo@gmail.com

IN SEARCH OF INVISIBLE TXT

BY MURAT ÖNOL

Like many things, subtitle translation came into my life through a series of coincidences. It all started in the spring of 1991. A friend told me that the Istanbul Film Festival was looking for translators. I attended the group interview. It was the first time I was entering through the kitchen of the festival, which I had previously followed as a spectator.

Of course, I was seeing and experiencing everything like a movie: the historical building, the huge entrance, very high ceilings. In one room, a man is projecting a movie on a screen. The rhythmic sound of the rotating reels becomes the soundtrack. It was as if I were on the set of a Solanas movie.

The first meeting took place around a long table. First, the director of the festival told us that they had decided to switch from simultaneous interpretation to electronic subtitling. Then an Italian guy named Fabrizio Fiumi (the eventual founder of Softitler and DigiTitles) explained to us what electronic subtitles were. It was a very simple system: a computer connected by fiber-optic cable to an electronic display. The computer used DOS as its operating system. When you pressed a button, the translation you had made on a floppy disk would magically appear on the panel. Previously, the problem of translation at festivals was solved either by burning subtitles on films or by simultaneous interpretation. The first method was too expensive and the second one was too disturbing. This new method solved both problems very effectively.

Of course, everything is simple at first, but as you take steps, things start to get complicated. The first problem we had was with Turkish special characters, and of course we realized that even a simple dot can have a crucial importance in certain circumstances. It was terribly funny when we saw that it was impossible to write "sıkışıyordu" (i.e. "she/he was getting stuck") because we were not able to use "ı" and "ş". On the display it was written "sikisiyordu" (i.e. "she/he was fucking"). Fabrizio was creative, practical and a go-getter. They solved the special character problem, but of course there wasn't much he could do about translations lost due to blackouts, viruses or corrupted floppy disks, about optical cables eaten by cats or trampled underfoot, about displays kicked by angry spectators or blown fuses during screenings. He was magical, but he wasn't a magician. That's why he always reminded us of the importance of taking precautions.

I learned a lot during my festival period, it was an environment where practice and theory were amalgamated. We were experiencing unimaginable problems and finding solutions to them together, trying out the methods we had studied and researched in the field and seeing their effects on the audience with our own eyes. Of course, we were discussing not only translation but also working conditions. The foundations of subtitle copyrights were laid in that circle in those years and afterwards we obtained important rights about our work.

Everything was constantly evolving. In 1996 and 1997 I started working on international projects. First, a retrospective of Turkish cinema in Paris, then some festivals: Montreal, Italy. Then I started translating DVDs, again thanks to Fabrizio. We formed a group of translators in Turkey for this work. We were working from home now, but for international companies. In those years, each new company meant different experiences and a search for new methods. Of course, the Scandinavian school was different from the Greek one, but a new style was emerging from these differences. The discussions were very lively.

Working from home for DVD made me reconsider my thoughts about subtitling. I was no longer in the presence of people at festivals who were reading our translations in that moment, but I had my retired father. He was a cinema lover who only spoke Turkish. I showed him every translation I did, and it was thanks to him that I realized how important reading speed was. He wanted to understand what he was watching. Subtitling is the most important element, for people who don't speak the original language of a movie or who are hearing impaired, to understand correctly what is being watched. It is therefore essential that the text is quickly readable and immediately understandable. To understand how I should write, I started reading US and French pulp novels translated and published in Turkey in the 1960s. I realized that the translators had used incredibly effective methods for localization. Of course, I started to use these methods in my own translations.

With the advent of streaming media, countless languages and dialects from different places and cultures all over the world have met huge and unlimited audiences from different cultures. This has increased the importance of audiovisual translation. Brand new solutions have been produced to old and new problems. Some of them are correct and some are open to discussion. This is important because development depends on these discussions. If we want to improve the quality of our work, I think we should draw some conclusions about the changes that have taken place in our field over the last fifty years. And we should never forget that improving the quality of the product is linked to improving working conditions. Thirty years have passed since I started working as a subtitler and during these thirty years I have experienced both fascinating and very difficult moments. It's a great pleasure to see that you can make a person really understand a movie. But sometimes you can be overwhelmed by jobs and it's no fun at all.

It all started like a movie, and it continues like a movie. The director is still Solanas. I remember the first time I launched subtitles in a movie theatre. It's a weekday. I'm a senior in high school. I'm skipping school for the launch. The movie is called *Canticle of The Stones*. It's a movie about the first Intifada. I had translated it with a friend of mine. We were very intellectual. We were very radical. We were very young. The movie starts. I sit down at the computer to launch the subtitles. I fall down and cut my hand. I get up immediately. My blood drips on the keyboard. I launch the subtitles while trying to stop the blood. Meanwhile, a group of people from the audience starts chanting slogans supporting the Palestine Liberation Organization. After 10 minutes the police intervene. There is an incredible chaos in the theater, but the screening continues. I am still bleeding. At the end of the movie, I run to Gökhan Pamukçu, the man who was projecting a movie when I first walked into that historical building while training for my first festival.

To cheer me up, he tells me how he subtitled *West Side Story* with two movie projectors in the 1960s. Like a cowboy with two guns, he showed the movie from one projector and sent the subtitles from the other.

Thirty years have passed. More than ten thousand days. Both Fabrizio and Gökhan have passed away. And I'm still trying to make the TXT as invisible as possible. And I'm not talking about something mystical. I want the text to melt into the images like light, color, and music. I want it to complete the image in this way, not from the outside but from the inside. I want the text to be understood but not be noticed. I want the audience not to speak positively or negatively about the translation after seeing the film, because I don't want them to think it is a translation. That's why I'm still in search of invisible TXT.

Murat Öñol is a seasoned subtitle translator and artist, boasting a career that spans over three decades. His journey is an exploration of language, cultural exchange, and the nuanced



art of visual storytelling. Since 1991, armed with extensive experience, he demonstrates skill in refining subtitling techniques while advocating for the rights and working conditions of fellow translators. Beyond his dedication to translation, Murat is also an artist, specializing in poetry, installations, and performance art. This dual identity allows him to fuse the precision of language with visual expression. In 2001, Murat Öñol made Italy his home.

Contact: murat.onol@gmail.com

LOCALIZING FOR STREAMING MEDIA: THE IMPORTANCE OF ESTABLISHED GUIDELINES IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

BY ROSÁRIO VALADAS VIEIRA

In the 1960s, Portugal had only one TV channel, in black and white. Daily broadcasting was introduced on March 7, 1957, in the midst of the dictatorship. Back then, going to the movies or watching TV was the source of entertainment for adults and children alike. All foreign and national audiovisual content was censored, naturally, and subtitles were the translation format of choice. Subtitles were taken for granted by the Portuguese and were often the only reading material for a nation with a low literacy rate.

Reading subtitles and enjoying them go way back for me, back to when I was a child. From an early age I was passionate about British, American, and French films and series. I wouldn't miss a single weekly episode of *Bonanza*, *Green Acres*, *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*, *Space: 1999*, *MASH* or movies like *Ben-Hur*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Sound of Music*, and later *The Poseidon Adventure*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Saturday Night Fever*, or *Apocalypse Now*. I could go on and on.

After the revolution in April of 1974, the newly liberal context allowed for many international TV series and films to be broadcast, and again, subtitles were the go-to means for understanding foreign audiovisual content in Portugal.

Color transmission was introduced on March 10, 1980, and it was a historic event. People would stop in the streets, in front of appliance stores, to watch color television. To enjoy the full package, picture and dialogue, subtitles became even more critical for the growing audience. Dubbed content was already available, particularly for children's series, but subtitling was still the predominant form of audiovisual translation.

Because of Portugal's vast subtitling tradition, rules and standards were already established. With the emergence of two private TV channels in Portugal in the 1990s, these rules, namely, number of characters per line, italics, hyphens in dialogue, punctuation, and other conventions, were followed by Portuguese professionals. This way, the target audience was able to enjoy shows with consistently formatted subtitles on any of the national channels.

Fast forward to the 21st century, when streaming platforms began to emerge, providing audiovisual content of varied linguistic origins for audiences of equally varied nationalities, Portugal already had a vast subtitling tradition as one of the first European countries to subtitle TV content. A Japanese or Hungarian film now needs to be translated into numerous languages to reach viewers around the world. Subtitles or dubbing have become necessary and demand for translators has increased exponentially, which in turn has led to large fluctuations in rates. Unfortunately, instead of increasing, they have decreased. To take part in this frantic race, many translators, with or without experience or even specialized training, accepted lower rates, not realizing this would be detrimental to all translators in the long run.

Given subtitling have predominated in Portugal since 1957, audiovisual translation rules and standards were already implemented. As I am probably one of the professionals with most years of experience in the field, and since I have been providing training in subtitling since 1997, I was careful to gather these pre-existing rules in a more systematized manner, so that students and future professional translator-subtitlers would have a set of standards to follow.

In 2015, when Netflix entered the Portuguese market, Portuguese translators and translation agencies were flooded with requests for subtitling and dubbing. The volume of content was massive, so we received the good ol' offer "higher quantity, less pay." The problem is that what we produce is not exactly "sausages", which should also be of good quality, obviously, but our product, translation, requires specialized knowledge, I would even say encyclopedic knowledge, and very specific techniques, including the ability to synthesize within character limit and spotting while considering scene and shot changes. A Timed Text Style Guide was made available for each language, but Portuguese guidelines clashed, in some respects, with what had been practiced in Portugal for decades. This, unsurprisingly, affects the viewer experience.

In some European countries, Portugal being one of the first, subtitling audiovisual content was always done, as opposed to countries where most TV shows and films are dubbed, such as England, the United States, Spain and Brazil. When a country has established rules for over half a century, and the audience is used to them, it is unsettling, to say the least, for different rules to be imposed, even if these rules are more appropriate.

A few examples of the discrepancies include the use of quotation marks, the positioning and format of songs, and capitalized OST.

In Portugal, if a one-sentence quote is broken down into three subtitles, the first two subtitles have quotation marks at the beginning and the third has quotation marks at the end, closing the quote. According to Netflix's rules, the first subtitle needs quotation marks at the beginning to open the quote and the last one needs quotation marks at the end to close the quote.

The subtitles in between do not need quotation marks. This may mislead the viewer to think the phrase was said by the character, and not quoted. As for the positioning of songs on the screen, in Portugal, subtitles with song verses or poems are aligned to the left and not italicized. This change has caused unease and confusion among professionals and trainers. Because of this influence, now songs or poems in shows aired nationally have inconsistent alignment and italicization. Also, it is odd for Portuguese audiences to see OST in capital letters, as they take up a lot of unnecessary screen space, yet it is now common to see the screen occupied by giant letters, even when OST is not plot pertinent.

There are also differences in timing/spotting. An appropriate reading speed is important to give the viewer enough time to read the subtitles.

However, the minimum duration of a subtitle which used to be 1 second, is now 20 frames. This is quite fast for some viewers, even if it's only for one small word. It takes time to gaze at subtitles. Not seeing subtitles during shot changes is also important for readability. But having to set precisely 2 frames before or after shot changes sometimes is not easily feasible.

These issues have been raised in other countries, not only in Portugal. In Spain, for instance, names of ships, which used to be written in italics, are no longer. Viewers have complained about this.

If Portuguese professionals, specifically those who are in the audiovisual market and linked to academia and university training in AVT,

and are therefore more up-to-date on current standards, had been consulted before the Portuguese Style Guide was created, perhaps these discrepancies would have been avoided and viewers would not have been affected. It's a matter of respect for Portuguese consumers, an audience with a history of reading subtitles for more than half a century.

Rosário Valadas Vieira, a passionate linguist with over 30 years of experience in AVT. She started her professional career in Asia, Macau, in the 80s. She then relocated back to Portugal in 1988 to work for the TV channel RTP. She founded Sintagma, a Lisbon-based audiovisual company with a Sound Studio, in 1993. Rosário teaches Media Translation - Subtitling at Lisbon University, and translates from English, Spanish, and Italian into Portuguese.

Contact: rosario.vieira@sintagma.pt



AI AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN THE DUBBING PROCESS

BY SEBASTIÁN ARIAS

TRANSLATED FROM SPANISH
BY LUCÍA HERNÁNDEZ

AI's popularity has grown in recent years, and one notable example of its potential is AlphaGo, software developed by DeepMind Technologies. This software uses a neural network to learn to play the game Go by analyzing moves made by professional players. If you're unfamiliar with Go, it's a strategic boardgame developed in China over 2,500 years ago with black and white stones on a grid.

Once AlphaGo understood the game mechanics, its abilities improved so much that it began to play moves that followed the logic of the game but had never been considered by a human, ultimately leading it to beat the South Korean world champion, Lee Sedol, in 2016.

Other Applications of AI

While AlphaGo offers an early example of AI's potential, the ability of neural networks to use large amounts of data to learn independently is now being used to solve more and more complex problems in diverse arenas. This has enabled innovative changes and previously unimagined applications, leading to meaningful advances in task automation and real-time decision making.

Over the past two years, many use cases for AI have been developed. AI technology is advancing so quickly that it's likely the information in this article will be outdated by the time you finish reading it.

We've all heard of ChatGPT, which has captured headlines the world over for months, but what's it all about? Rather than defining it, let's let GPT-3 describe itself:

In this type of dubbing, commonly used in documentaries and reality shows, the original language track is played at a low volume and overlaid by a target language track.



How would you define this GPT chat in a few words?



GPT-3 chat is a large language model developed by OpenAI that answers questions and provides information in text form. It employs natural language processing and machine learning techniques to generate accurate and coherent responses to questions in various languages.



In addition to its ability to converse, AI has been used to generate hyperrealist imagery, design graphics from scratch, edit videos, write research and journalism, code and more. The list is constantly growing.

Despite its varied use cases, this article will set aside machine translation and post-editing, which have been discussed at length, and focus on recent innovations for dubbing.

The Dubbing Process

Before diving in, let's review the main features of the dubbing process, as compared with subtitling. Subtitling only requires the creation of a text file that is superimposed onto original content. While production time can vary depending on the content's runtime and complexity, subtitling can be carried out by a single translator.

Dubbing, on the other hand, is more involved, as it requires the recording of voice actors working closely with a dubbing director, a translator and a sound engineer. In practice, any audiovisual content can be dubbed in voice over (aka UN style).

Synchronized dubbing, on the other hand, is a bit different. Here the aim is to ensure that the translation is synchronized to on-screen characters' lip movements. Dubbing doesn't require reading, thus increasing its accessibility, especially on mobile devices. Due to its complex nature, dubbing usually takes longer and is more costly than subtitling. Well, that is until recently.

Things are Changing

Papercup, a London-based company, uses text-to-speech technology with a focus on voice modelling to make synthetic voices sound more natural and expressive. This means, when dubbing UN style, rather than using a group of actors to record dialogue, the software "reads" translated lines using surprisingly natural-sounding synthetic voices, to create a target language audio track that is superimposed on original voices.

This naturalness is achieved through deep learning. Just as AlphaGo "learned" to play Go from professional players, Papercup used thousands of hours of people speaking to learn prosody, intonation, tone, accents, etc. Interestingly, the data used was more than 47,000 hours of podcasts made available for research and development on Spotify. Source:

<https://engineering.papercup.com/posts/interseech2022-tts-overview/>

This innovative production model has enabled unprecedented turnaround times. Conventional dubbing of 100 minutes of video, including translation, adaptation, recording, and mixing, takes three to four weeks. Papercup can do it in one week.

But that's not the only difference. It costs significantly less. In the previous example, conventional dubbing would cost approximately \$20,000, while Papercup can do it for 80% less. Source: <https://www.papercup.com/blog/why-now-is-the-time-to-adopt-ai-dubbing>

While their technology is emerging, its results can already be seen on two YouTube channels: Bloomberg en español, a news channel, and chef Jamie Oliver's Spanish-language channel.

Does it really sound natural? While there's room for improvement, it seems that it's only a matter of time.

Another company using deep learning and AI algorithms to disrupt the dubbing process is DeepDub.ai. Their focus is on making voices have the same timbre as the original, even in different languages. So, for example, you can make Pedro Pascal speak Croatian without having him learn the language and record the lines. [deepdub | Global entertainment experience, reimagined.](#)

Other Related Apps

In a recent post, GPT itself declared, "AI will not steal your job. A person who is comfortable using AI will!" So, the least we could do is familiarize ourselves with this new technology. To this end, we're sharing a brief list of game-changing apps that can streamline the dubbing production workflow in ways previously unimagined.

TrueSync

Dubbing is a post-production sound service, meaning we "work" on the sound track and adjust it as required by the image. For example, so on-screen characters actually look like they're saying what you hear, we change the order of utterances or modify grammar in the translation to achieve synchronicity with onscreen mouth movements. Now, this is changing.

TrueSync goes about this another way. Their technology modifies video so that lips sync with a sound track in any language. The software digitally changes mouth movements so that Pedro Pascal's lips synch perfectly to Greek dubbing, for example. The result is a convincing image of an actor speaking the language of your choosing. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQ10Ppj8gPA>

Lalal.ai

When content reaches a dubbing studio, its audio is usually on two separate tracks: 1. dialogue and 2. music and effects (M&E). M&E contains music, ambient sounds, and foley (sounds made by footsteps, objects, clothing, etc.). Dubbing replaces the original dialogue track with target language voice actors. This track is then mixed with the M&E track so that when an actor says, "Prepare to die," a gunshot can be heard right on cue.

Usually, for recent big-budget movies, a track is created during audio postproduction for dubbing into several languages. While being provided this separate track is ideal, for low-budget films or ones where this wasn't considered when the film was first produced, this is often not the case. This complicates matters.

But this is also changing. If we don't have access to two separate tracks, Lalal.ai can separate and erase dialogue from sound tracks like non-musical karaoke. Then, we can mix target language dialogue on this track to achieve professional dubbing.

Vocalremover.org

Vocalremover.org is similar to Lalal.ai, but for music and songs. This free online application allows you to remove vocals from a song to create a karaoke track.

You upload a song from your computer. Then AI separates the vocals from the instrumentals. You get two tracks: a karaoke version of your song (no vocals) and an acapella version (isolated vocals). This process usually takes about 10 seconds.

Respeecher

While Papercup uses text-to-speech technology to disrupt the conventional dubbing process, Respeecher converts speech to speech by transforming spoken content with different characteristics. It applies a filter to the voice, not unlike Instagram filters that rejuvenate and beautify images. This technology takes a voice and makes it sound younger, older, like another gender, or even another person. This technology could be disruptive to documentary dubbing production as one actor could voice all lines, and this filter would round out the rest of the cast.

Abigail Savage works ADR magic with Respeecher's Voice Marketplace

This technology has been used on The Mandalorian to create a younger version of Luke Skywalker. Before the voice was "rejuvenated," it had to be "cloned." On their website, they explain that their system can "learn" a voice with one or two hours of high-quality recordings. But, clearly progress has been made, because Anna Bulakh, Head of Ethics and Partnerships at Respeecher, stated at Media & Entertainment Services Alliance (MESA)'s ITS: Localisation! event that a 30-minute or even two-minute sample was sufficient.

<https://www.respeecher.com/case-studies/respeecher-synthesized-younger-luke-skywalkers-voice-disneys-mandalorian>

Synthesia

This app creates videos of a hyperrealist AI avatar with lips that synchronize to text in more than 120 languages, as if they were really reading your script. With a script of your own making, you can make a video with an AI speaker saying whatever you need to communicate. This technology is ideal for how-to videos and e-learning. It's best understood by seeing it, so check it out at:

How are Synthesia AI Avatars created?

Another company, SignAll, uses similar technology to generate sign language interpretation.

Reverso

While this app doesn't work with voices, it could be invaluable to a dubbing translator. Reverso is a multilingual thesaurus that contains all the usual resources found in a dictionary, and using AI and its Rephraser tool, also offers analogies, reformulates phrases, offers alternatives and improves the flow of poorly written sentences.

Is the future synthetic?

Deep Blue's victory over Kasparov in 1997 made us question the limits of professional chess players. Nevertheless, some 20 years later, computers are used to train players to get better and be more creative, and chess is more popular than ever.

Perhaps dubbing will go through similar changes. In some genres, the use of synthetic voices is no longer science fiction, but reality. The fact remains, though, that for film, while some aspects can be improved, voice acting still cannot be replaced by a machine. Nonetheless, with the speed at which technology is advancing, this could change. For example, in the time it took to write this article, Vox News, Sky News, and even the BBC, The Guardian and The Washington Post started to localize their content using Papercup.

AI is a powerful tool that can change the world. When integrated into content production, it can streamline and improve many limitations inherent to the multilingual dubbing process. By automating tedious tasks so we can focus our time and resources on our strengths as humans—creativity, problem solving and teamwork—, AI can help dubbing better deliver on its goal: to make information more accessible to greater and more diverse audiences.

Sebastián Arias is a freelance dubbing director. He teaches adaptation for dubbing at TalleresTAV.com, which he founded, and Sofía E. Broquen de Spangenberg Higher Education School. He holds a degree in Audio-vision and from 2006 to 2018, he worked as a dubbing director for Civisa Media where he recorded over 1,700 hours of documentaries, films, and series. He also works as project advisor and QC specialist of LatAm Spanish dubbing for different studios. Instagram: [@sebastian_arias_doblaje](https://www.instagram.com/sebastian_arias_doblaje)



Contact: doblaje.arias@gmail.com

INTERLINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION IN 1899: A MULTILINGUAL APPROACH FOR A MULTILINGUAL PRODUCTION

BY TATIANA LÓPEZ

2022 was the year creators of the Netflix show *Dark* finally came back with their exciting new series *1899*, an amazing journey and a complete revolution in terms of language treatment that I'd describe as an incredible undertaking.

A MULTILINGUAL PROJECT

From the very beginning, we see a show with more than one original language, something which may be quite shocking, especially because there aren't just two or three languages, but 14! No doubt we are about to enjoy a highly multilingual project.

Though the original language is set as English, here is a rough breakdown of all languages involved:

- o English: 42%
- o German: 18%
- o Danish: 16%
- o French: 9%
- o Spanish: 7%
- o Cantonese: 4%
- o Portuguese: 2%
- o Polish: 1.5%
- o Norwegian: 1%
- o A few lines of Japanese
- o One line of Italian, Romanian, Greek, and Serbian.

As translators, we always avoid originating from pivot languages, but this case is more than justified as finding an audiovisual translator who works with 14 languages seems a bit unrealistic. That is why using an English template (for subtitling) or an English dialogue list (for dubbing) is certainly the best solution.

SUBTITLING OR DUBBING?

When choosing whether to sub or dub an audiovisual product, usually plot and languages don't come into the discussion. Anyway, both are suitable solutions, and we all choose what we enjoy more, according to our preferences.

Nevertheless, this particular case is a tricky one because if the showrunners decided to create a multilingual environment, would the fully

monolingual and immersive experience that dubbing provides make any sense? While I think the original intention was to highlight the language diversity, dubbing is available for many languages even though the impact is obviously going to be absolutely different.

We should all bear this in mind because such effort on the part of the showrunners deserves all our respect. Imagine all the complications for shooting on set with an international crew of interpreters, language assistants and accent coaches because not all the actors are proficient in English. I think if the show, cast and crew are international, viewers shouldn't miss out on such language variety because dubbing could affect the impact on the viewer.

On the show, sometimes characters don't understand one another but they just get on with the situation by exploring other communication channels. And the way they run with it turns out to be truly natural. They speak their native language with someone who doesn't understand, so other kinds of non-verbal communication, such as body language, take over to express their intention. It is just a matter of breaking through the language barrier by finding other ways to communicate. The way one expresses oneself has to adapt to these new situations.

There are plenty of instances like this throughout the show. In the dubs, since everyone speaks the same language, the translator needs to tweak the dialogue in order for it to make sense, while fortunately, this can be faithfully portrayed in the subs.

SUBTITLING 1899: A REAL CHALLENGE

We all know every translation project involves multiple challenges, but in terms of the use of language in story telling, *1899* is a delightful jumble. The plot is a puzzle full of riddles and mysteries, just like the languages themselves, which are simply a reflection of this wonderful mess.

In *1899*, sometimes language seems to be an obstacle, but I think it is just another way to

challenge the audience by showing a specific mood, background, or social status. Characters are not what they seem, and language must express this.

For example, Ramiro always speaks in Spanish with Ángel, but when he feels anxious or frightened, he turns to his mother-tongue, Portuguese. Ling Yi speaks Chinese with his mother, but she is learning Japanese to put on an exotic appearance. Elliot doesn't speak in the first episodes, so we have to guess his origin.

There are many more examples, but in an effort to avoid spoilers, let's just say formal and informal registers, polite and harsh tones, and fluent or broken languages are used for different purposes. For a language enthusiast, it is mind blowing when we realize that we need to pay attention to these subtle aspects of language to be able to decode a hidden message. The show is a very complicated puzzle not only in its plot, but also in the use of language. This is present right from the very beginning. It seems the purpose of the use of different languages is to reflect confusion. I remember when I saw the first episode. I was absolutely shocked because, to me, the language seemed quite modern for the setting. That was the first hint the language code needed to be deciphered as the story went on. Appearances can deceive but so can language, which constantly tricks us throughout such a mind-bending masterpiece.

By using tricky language to show different intentions, language itself defines the show's genre. Is *1899* a period drama, a horror series, or a sci-fi show? What is clear is that we see different and strange worlds as one, and different languages are used to communicate in a strange way. Everything seems chaotic, and genres and languages are melded to create that confusion. It seems that future, present and past are connected. In the show, everything is connected by language, and this is one of the many reasons it is an absolutely brilliant linguistic experience.

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Even the English requires close attention, because register, tone, and intention, are as important as usual, but so are fluency and accents.

On the show, native speakers communicate with non-native speakers, so the natural imperfections of broken English lend the dialogue authenticity, and thus must be replicated in subtitles. Also, quite often characters switch to their mother tongue when they cannot express themselves properly. In these cases, fluency increases.

Also, many characters speak more than one language, so subtitles must reflect when they are using their mother tongue and when they aren't. Sometimes this is difficult, especially when certain characters are quite fluent in a second language, but one always expresses oneself more fluidly in their mother tongue. This is the case of the captain, who uses German to talk to the crew but English to talk to the passengers. Other characters, usually lower-class ones, struggle to speak English. Subtitles must reflect this because when non-verbal communication and body language overtake verbal communication, it is remarkable for a viewer to see that the combination of the two works and serves as an analogy for the plot resolution. Only when characters succeed in understanding each other are they able to make decisions and draw conclusions. They'll survive if they work together. No one can live on their own. Thus, everyone must make an effort to understand each language.

There are rather interesting situations when someone is not quite fluent in English and must translate into their mother tongue, or when two characters who don't speak a common language express themselves by using their mother tongue. Communication, once again, works and subtitles must reproduce this perfectly in order for the scene to be as powerful as the original.

I really think subtitlers have to adapt to all of these different situations because we cannot forget that language embodies cultures, feelings, backgrounds, intentions, and actions. *1899* touches on brain connections and language is part of who we are as individuals, just exactly as our brain.

Integrating so many original languages is inspiring and ground-breaking, but also quite challenging and complicated. The representation of so many languages is a beautiful tribute to the importance of native tongue communication as a way of being faithful to ourselves, as we all express ourselves better in our mother tongue. Watching *1899* is like traveling to different places through language, exactly what such a stimulating story does across this wonderful adventure.

Tatiana López is a freelance English to Spanish subtitle translator, QC specialist and closed captioner based in Madrid, Spain. She is a member of both ATRAE, Asociación de Traducción y Adaptación Audiovisual de España, and DAMA, Derechos de autor de Medios Audiovisuales. She has subtitled over 300 TV series and films. Her latest publication is one chapter in: Botella, Carla, and Agulló, Belén. *Mujeres en la traducción audiovisual II. Nuevas tendencias y futuro en la investigación y la profesión.* (Editorial Síndéresis, 2022), 139-152.



Contact: : cadianalobec@outlook.com

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/tatianalopezperez/>

Portfolio: <https://basededatos.atrae.org/profile/>

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**(080) From Intertitles to Machine Dubbing:
A Journey through the History of AVT**

**Audiovisual Division Distinguished Speaker
Frederic Chaume**

3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Friday, October 27

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**(094) Understanding Translation Tests
to Become a Subtitled**

Ana Gabriela Gonzalez Meade

4:45 p.m. - 5:45 p.m.
Friday, October 27

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**(103) What's in a Title?
The Amazing World of Title Localization
in the Audiovisual Industry**

Paola Medrano

4:45 p.m. - 5:45 p.m.
Friday, October 27



(108) The Particularities of Annotating Spanish to English Subtitle Pivot Language Templates

Molly Yurick

8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.
Saturday, October 28



(163) Translation and Adaptation for Dubbing in the Streaming Era: Quality Standards, Workflows, and Technology

**Audiovisual Division Distinguished Speaker
Frederic Chaume**

2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Saturday, October 28



(122) Inclusive Descriptors in Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Deborah Wexler, CT

8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.
Saturday, October 28



(177) Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: Legal Language in Subtitling

Daniela Costa

4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Saturday, October 28



**(140) When an Accessibility Tool Becomes a Tool
for Amusement: Brief Insights
into the Unconventional Techniques
of Audio Description**

Monika Zabrocka

11:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Saturday, October 28



**(009) Gender and Sexuality Representation in Audio
Descriptions: A Contrastive Study of The Danish Girl
and Tracey**

**Amanda Hiu Tung Chow
Jackie Xiu Yan**

11:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Thursday, October 26



**(077) From the Booth to the Screen:
The Magical Combination of Live Captioning
and Simultaneous Interpreting
in Practice!**

Paula Ianelli, CT

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Friday, October 27

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ATA'S AUDIOVISUAL DIVISION LEADERSHIP COUNCIL:

Division Administrator

Ana G. González Meade

audiovisualdivision@gmail.com

Assistant Administrator

Deborah Wexler

assistantavd@gmail.com

Website Coordinator

Mara Campbell

websitecoordinator@gmail.com

Deep Focus Editor

Ana G. González Meade

publicationsavd@gmail.com

Mentoring Coordinator

Britta Noack

mentoringavd@gmail.com

Forum Moderator

Milbia Rodríguez

avdforummoderator@gmail.com

Professional Development Coordinator

Marie Winnick

audiovisualprodev@gmail.com

Deep Focus Proofreader

Lucía Hernández

proofreaderavd@gmail.com

Social Media Coordinator

Sijin Xian

socialmediacoordinatoravd@gmail.com

Live Events Coordinator

Daniela Costa

liveeventsavd@gmail.com

Public Relations Coordinator

Marie Winnick

publicrelationsavd@gmail.com

Deep Focus Submissions Coordinator

Aniella Vivenzio

submissionsavd@gmail.com

LinkedIn Moderator

Isabel Asensio

avdlinkedin@gmail.com