



Presentation

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Presentation

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One of the basic assumptions of translation studies is that the practice of translation involves taking a source text and carrying out some kind of transfer operation to produce a target text. Like a race car driver, the translator goes from *texte de départ* to *texte d'arrivée*. Yet this is one of several binary oppositions in translation studies—along with, for example, national/international and monolingual/multilingual (see Meylaerts, 2009)—that are now being criticized as too reductive. The contributions to this issue of *TTR*, each in their own way, call into question the idea of a clear-cut delineation between source and target text and indeed, between the cultures from which they emerge and to which they are linked. Instead, they posit translation as a complex semiotic encounter involving the interaction of multiple channels of information (visual and auditory) and types of signs (verbal and non-verbal).

As we move from a print culture to an electronic one, the very idea of text and the vocabulary used to refer to it have undergone change. Bertrand Gervais notes that while some definitions of text emphasize language and writing, others—like the one he proposes—take a broader stance: “an organized ensemble of signifying elements for a given community” (2008, n.p.). He points out three key aspects of this definition: a text is constituted as such because it draws on a set of conventions known to its interpretive community; it exists not on its own but in relation to a reader; and it requires some sort of material support in order to be transmitted. But there is a further aspect to this definition that is particularly relevant to the theme of this issue: a text is not a single element but an ensemble or assemblage of elements. This is especially true in the digital environment, where texts are becoming increasingly complex and hybrid, with the Internet being characterized by

hypertexts—texts that are displayed on electronic devices and contain links to multiple levels of content that users can access in a non-linear and non-sequential manner—and by iconotexts—in which writing, images and sounds are interwoven to various degrees and share the same space, like on a web page. Clearly, such an environment creates challenges for translation: the process no longer involves producing an entirely new text that in some way mirrors the original, but instead is concerned with assembling old and new elements into a cohesive whole.

For audiovisual translation techniques, it may be fruitful to draw on the notion of assemblage as a way to go beyond the traditional thinking of translation as performing a substitution (in dubbing, of translated lip-synced dialogue for the original dialogue) or as being an addition (in subtitling, of written text on the screen to translate the dialogue) while leaving the rest of the film intact. An audiovisual whole constructed from light and sound is disassembled and put back together as another, different audiovisual whole. In the first contribution to this issue, **Sari Kokkola** points out that subtitlers tend to focus on the linguistic features of audiovisual documents—the spoken words and occasional onscreen written information like letters and street signs—while overlooking ways in which the acoustic and visual dimensions interact to create meaning. Drawing on phenomenology as a method to study the role of sound in film translation, Kokkola presents the concepts of *embodiment* and *materiality*. Film viewing is embodied in the sense that films are not only looked at but perceived by the body as a whole, experientially. And before viewers can understand the meaning of a film, they engage with it at the material level, encountering its physical characteristics. Speech, for example, conveys not only a verbal message but also the sound of the human voice, which relates to the music, noise and silence also present in the soundtrack.

Kokkola goes on to analyze the English and German subtitled versions of Aki Kaurismäki's film *Laitakaupungin valot* (*Lights in the Dusk*) (2006) to demonstrate her understanding of the role of sound in film translation. The film tells the story of Koistinen, a Finnish security guard who becomes caught up in burglary, but the plot is less important than making the film viewer feel what life is like for the socially isolated, struggling Koistinen. To achieve this, the filmmaker uses “relativized speech,” in which the

materiality of the dialogue is emphasized over its content. In one scene, Koistinen's loneliness is conveyed when several Russians, immersed in animated conversation, pass by him. Viewers of the original film experience the non-subtitled speech as sound and feel what it's like to be on the outside, but the decision by the English and German subtitlers to subtitle the conversation changes that experience. Kokkola observes that rather than seeing subtitles as information that is added to the unchanged image and sound tracks of the original film, we should see them as transformative in terms of the audiovisual whole. Her research has relevance for both translation studies, in proposing new methods of analysis, and subtitling, in providing tools for understanding how the practice affects cinematic expression.

If the audiovisual text can be seen as a multimodal whole of which linguistic aspects are only one part, we can also view the film itself as only one element in the vast audiovisual production process. Whereas “[m]ost spectators probably assume that film translation starts and ends with subbing and dubbing,” translation is present “at each stage of a film’s life: preproduction, principle photography and editing, distribution, and exhibition” (Nornes, 2007, p. 29). Like Kokkola, **Hugo Vandal-Sirois** believes that both audiovisual translators and translation studies have paid too much attention to language, focusing for example on the constraints involved in lip-synchronized dubbing and the reduction of dialogue required in subtitling. In his contribution, he provides an original viewpoint on the “audiovisual whole” by considering the translation of scripts as an overlooked aspect of audiovisual translation. As information and communication technologies develop rapidly, increasing the need for multilingual content, the role of the translator is evolving such that he or she acts not only as a language professional but also as a negotiator and cultural agent. Script translation has some commonalities with theatre translation in that the translator produces a written text in the target language that will then be performed by actors in a play, film or advertisement. In order to ensure the *performability* of a translated play, the translator may attend rehearsals and discuss lines with the actors; similarly, the audiovisual translator may contribute to the production process as a “target-culture expert.” Script translation also generates working documents for international co-productions, to assist in fundraising and help cast and crew members who speak other

languages. Moreover, it is script translation that makes possible the practice known as double shooting: two distinct productions are made from two scripts, an original and its translation, with separate sets of actors but often shared shooting locations and crew members.

Although double shooting is infrequent in feature filmmaking, it is a common strategy in advertising. Rather than produce distinct ad campaigns for each market, global corporations may adapt a commercial by translating the script and shooting with local actors. The practice is more costly and time-consuming than dubbing or subtitling, but has the advantage of being highly flexible: working from a script, the translator is not constrained by an existing multimodal whole. Vandal-Sirois points out that in such cases, the translator may be involved in the pre-production stage and, for example, in an ad with a celebrity spokesperson, may suggest local celebrities to the ad agency. He gives examples in which differences between the English and French ads go beyond dialogue to include music, choice of celebrity, company logo and slogan. The translator, he concludes, plays an expanded role and must assume greater responsibility in decision-making as part of the production process.

The contribution to this issue by **Gert Vercauteren** examines another partial text that contributes to a larger audiovisual whole comprising acoustic and visual dimensions: audio description (AD), a kind of intersemiotic translation in which verbal descriptions of a film's visual and other elements are inserted in the spaces between dialogue to render the film accessible to blind and visually impaired viewers. Vercauteren suggests that while the practice of audio description as a form of media accessibility has been incorporated into the field of audiovisual translation, research in this area can be framed within translation studies, more particularly the functionalist paradigm. Because this paradigm sets out well-defined steps in the translation process, such a positioning helps to systematize audio description research by drawing parallels with the steps in the AD process—including the key step of source text analysis. Given that the purpose of AD is generally to tell the story in such a way that it can be followed and enjoyed by visually impaired viewers, but that existing dialogue, music and sound effects impose constraints on the amount of description that can be included, the question of what to describe and what

to leave out—content selection—becomes crucial. Vercauteren focuses on one element of content selection: the problem of identifying and describing characters in AD. He presents three models of character analysis used in narratology that set out the properties of characters, the complexity and development of characters, and the construction of characters through traits and relations with others. Taken together, these models provide a tool for audio describers to analyze the characters in a given source text in order to decide in a systematic manner what information about them can and should be described.

In “La *bande animée* coréenne peut-elle rester animée en français?” **Guillaume Jeanmaire** echoes the call for translators to consider not only the linguistic features of an audiovisual whole but also the visual and acoustic information contained therein. He focuses on a different kind of text: the Korean *manhwa*. Like comic books, storyboards, and the now-familiar Japanese mangas, *manhwa* are two-dimensional texts that tell stories through drawn images and written dialogue. But to a unique extent, they also make use of what are known as *ideophones*, graphic representations of mimetic words for movements, states of mind, emotions and sensations. Jeanmaire analyzes various ways that ideophones are translated into French to reproduce sounds and sensations, and the musical, rhythmic, and graphic effects they create. He proposes the term *iconoterme*—after *iconotexte*, the unit formed by image and writing on the Internet and elsewhere—to refer to an indissociable and interrelated unit with verbal and visual elements.

What translation strategies may be employed? Jeanmaire examines several, starting with omission of the graphic element and “direct transfer” (Delisle’s *report*), in which the iconoterms are simply left in Korean, even though they may be incomprehensible to readers of the translation. Some publishers have the iconoterms translated and redrawn, but Jeanmaire shows through examples that translators tend to focus overly on the meaning of the Korean term to the detriment of its musicality and rhythm, the very qualities that give *manhwa* a kinetic feel. The various solutions to the challenge of rendering iconoterms in Korean comics draw on the translator’s creativity and cultural knowledge, necessitating an enlargement of the translator’s role like that discussed by Hugo Vandal-Sirois with respect to script translation for the double shooting of advertisements.

The contribution to this issue by **Matthieu LeBlanc** focuses on written texts in the context of pragmatic translation. Yet even here, we find a challenge to the traditional separation of source and target text, as LeBlanc, studying the impact of translation technology in professional translation environments, poses a key question: What happens to the task of the translator when the source text is operated on segment by segment, or in a non-linear, discontinuous manner, or when parts of the target text already exist when the translator sits down to work? The translator is no longer composing a target text on a blank screen, but creating a collage of old and new material. LeBlanc's article forms part of a larger research project on the impact of translation tools, especially translation memory systems, on the translator's working methods, job satisfaction and professional status. He adopted an ethnographic approach that involved direct observation of translators in the workplace, with a focus on how they interacted with their tools, combined with semi-structured interviews and data collection.

One of the recurring comments that emerged from the interviews was that the segmentation of the source text represents a major inconvenience to translators because it forces them to proceed sentence by sentence, in a non-natural manner. What was once a straightforward operation—moving sentences around within the text, splicing some parts together and breaking others up—becomes more complex when tools are involved. Without an overview of the entire source text, some translators find it hard to maintain the cohesion of the target text. These are among the findings, drawn from his interviews and observations, that LeBlanc discusses. He believes that the widespread adoption of translation tools in the industry has numerous implications that have thus far been insufficiently considered in the profession and in translation studies.

One final way in which the articles in this issue question assumptions about the relation between source and target text is through the strange case of pseudo-translations. In her article, which received the Vinay and Darbelnet Prize for best article related to the 2012 CATS Conference, **Katrien Lievois** sheds light on the phenomenon by examining the first two novels by Andreï Makine. In pseudo-translation—generally through some kind of trickery, disguise or invention—original texts are

purported to be translations or, more rarely, texts that are actually translations are purported to be original works. Lievois sets out several typical situations: the author claims to be the translator and invents a fictional author; the author invents both translator and author; or the author presents the work of the translator as anonymous, upholding the common practice of rendering the translator invisible. The case of Makine, however, is singular in that he acknowledges his own role as author but invents a translator. Unable to find a publisher for his first novel, *La fille d'un héros de l'Union soviétique*, he submitted it as the French translation by Françoise Bour of work he had originally written in Russian. To position the novel as a translation and ensure it would be received as such, Makine peppered it with translator's notes that explain cultural references and define terms left in Russian. Such notes serve to continually remind the reader of the text's status as translation—even though it was not a translation! As David Bellos points out, the very existence of pseudo-translations disproves the adage that “a translation is no substitute for the original”: “In the absence of such giveaways [as the title page, back-panel copy or copyright page], are readers in fact able to distinguish, by the taste on their linguistic and literary tongues, whether a text is ‘original’ or ‘translated’? Absolutely not” (Bellos, 2011, p. 36). In some cases, pseudo-translation goes hand in hand with other literary hoaxes like writing under a pseudonym, veiled references, and falsely attributed works. Makine's mystification was carried out essentially for commercial purposes, as he was so desperate to have his work published, but it points to broader issues regarding the relation between source and target text, author and translator.

Indeed, throughout this issue, the contributors have opened up ways of looking at the translation process that don't rely on traditional binaries. They recognize that viewers and readers experience texts as complex wholes, and when translators act on elements within them they create new objects in which written text, sounds and visuals are assembled and reassembled in intricate ways. And why would it be otherwise, in this era of the remix, the collage, and the mashup? As the digital environment continues to transform our ways of communicating and consuming culture, we can expect that translation practice will evolve and some of the assumptions of translation studies will change accordingly.

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