Research on Audiovisual Translation in Finland: Features of Subtitling and Dubbing

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Disposition

1. Introduction: audiovisual translation in Finland
2. The field of research on audiovisual translation
3. Characteristics of subtitling and dubbing
1. AV Translation in Finland

- Various kind of AV translation is rapidly growing worldwide.
- There are every year more and more tv programs, movies and software supplied and demanded.
- New technology also enables new means to produce AV translations. One of the most rapidly growing eras, ”fan subbing”, takes place on Internet.
Transferring data from v22.lscache3.c.youtube.com...
In various countries and various language families the need of the mediation of foreign language programs is operated with various techniques.
In Scandinavia, Benelux countries, Greece, Portugal, Australia, China and Arab countries, the television subtitles all of the foreign programs.

In German speaking countries, Romanic countries, Russia and largely Eastern Europe, dubbing or voice over is used in television; however, in movie theaters, subtitling is an option, too.
The force of habit of the AV technique is strong, for instance, in Finland dubbing is felt as negative and alienated in programs for adult audience.

In Finland, movies and programs for children are mostly dubbed (in television, also voice over is used).

In German, for instance, although expensive, full dubbing with actors and actresses holds its ground firmly by the force of habit and by actors' trade union.
2. Research on AV Translation

- Internationally, the empirical research on AV translation was launched during the 90s'.
- Jääskeläinen (2009) has reviewed the research and divides it on three:
  - The needs of the language form
  - The reception of AV translations
  - The needs of AV labour market
- Here, the two first mentioned will be reviewed.
1. The needs of the language form

- Limits on space and timing of subtitles
  - > everything that is said on program cannot be translated
  - > needs to condensate information
- How do professional translators solve the problem of condensation? < Background information, when training AV translators.
- The knowledge and skills of professional translators are often implicit or tacit > the need to explicate conventions.
2. Research on the reception of AV translations

- How aware of subtitles/dubbing television viewers are?
- What kind of issues disturb them, or prevents them to follow translations?
- Are there various kind of viewers, or readers of subtitles? What kind of readers are they?
3. Needs of the labour market

- In Finland, for instance, AV translators have experienced recently the deterioration of their working conditions and salary, although at the same time, there is a need for new translators on labour market.

- On the DVD market of subtitling, there are plenty of free lancers, even amateurs.

- The quality of subtitles? < Finnish children learn to read fast, when compared internationally; partly due to subtitles?
3. Features of Subtitling and Dubbing

- Technical demands of subtitling:
  - From speech to writing
  - Loose synchronization with speech
  - Synchronization with sequences and cuts
  - Reader's reading pace; capacity of the working memory

- Technical demands of dubbing:
  - Dubbed speech must be synchronized with the actor's speech
  - Lipsynchronization
  - Limits of timing, no limits of space
  - In Finland (only) the translator also directs the dubbing
Linguistic features of subtitles:
- Standard written Finnish
- Written taboo words moderated
- The illusion of spoken language

Linguistic features of dubbing:
- Spoken language
- Written taboo words prohibited (for children)
- Compared to subtitles, detached further away from the original
The illusion of spoken language, for instance, BEV in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* (Moisio 2003):

Ya father ain’t no real father.
> Isäsi ei ole mikään oikea isä.

How you be?
> Mitä jäbä?
I be. Living large, bro.
> Hyvin pyyhkii, veli.

The illusion is created largely by lexical means, only.
In the Finnish subtitles of the animated film *Shrek*, Donkey uses standard written Finnish, however, in the dubbed version he uses the slang of southern Finnish (although there's no slang in the original):

**Original:** Wow, only a true friend would be that cruelly honest.

**Subtitled:** Vain tosiystävä olisi noin julman suora.
only true+friend be+COND that cruelly straight

**Dubbed:** Vau, vaan tosiystävä on noin *streitti*.
vow, only true+friend is that straight.
A study on reception (Paakkinen 2006) asked, how do children in eastern Finland understand the two versions of translation of *Shrek*?

Two test groups of 10 years old school children: one that looked at the dubbed version, and another that looked at the subtitled version.

Test of comprehension with statistical analysis.
Examples of subtitled vs. dubbed version:

- suora 'honest' : streitti
- haista 'smell' : döfätä
- nenä 'nose' : klyyvari
- pitää 'to like' : digata
- toimia 'work' : skulata
In the dubbed version, the children largely missed the meaning of the slang words.

Those slang words that they did understand had a context that focused the meaning of the word, for example, a loving couple with male saying

\textit{Mä diggaan susta. (digata colloquial for pitää)}

I like+SG1 you

Notice, here, the interplay between the subtitle and the picture.
Features of Subtitling and Dubbing

- Research on reception (Lång 2010, Mäkisalo & Lång 2009)

- Method
  - Tracking viewers' eye movements when they look at a subtitled television program
  - A questionnaire

- Objectives
  - The automaticity of reading habits
  - The effect of various kind of convention breaks and translation errors in subtitling
Results:

- Reading subtitles is automatic for Finns.
- Synchronization errors are consciously most detected.
- Translation errors are not easily detected, especially, if they match with the picture or the plot.
Features of Subtitling and Dubbing

- **Similar features:**
  - Reading subtitles is as automatic cognitively as listening speech.
  - The importance of synchronization.
  - The relationship between picture and text (subtitle/speech) is crucial for understanding.

- **Dissimilar features:**
  - Subtitles are standard written Finnish, whereas dubbed speech is colloquial.
  - The illusion of speech in subtitles is created by lexical means.
  - In translation, dubbing is detached further away from the source text.
Finally

- More research will be needed in
  - Linguistic and stylistic features
  - Cultural pumbs
  - Interplay between the picture and the translated text
  - Reception
- Reception, especially, requires more attention: the true effects in various kind of viewers remains unknown without empirical survey.
References


