

AVT

Audiovisual
Translation

AV (audiovisual) text

- a communication act involving sounds and images

AVT

encapsulates different translation practices used in the audiovisual media – cinema, television, VHS – in which there is a transfer from a source to a target language, which involves some form of interaction with sound and images.

Main Types of AVT

dubbing, subtitling,
voice-over

Types

- partial-dubbing
- the translation of live performance
- surtitling for the opera and the theatre
- subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing (SDH)
- audio description for the blind and the partially sighted (AD)

Subtitling

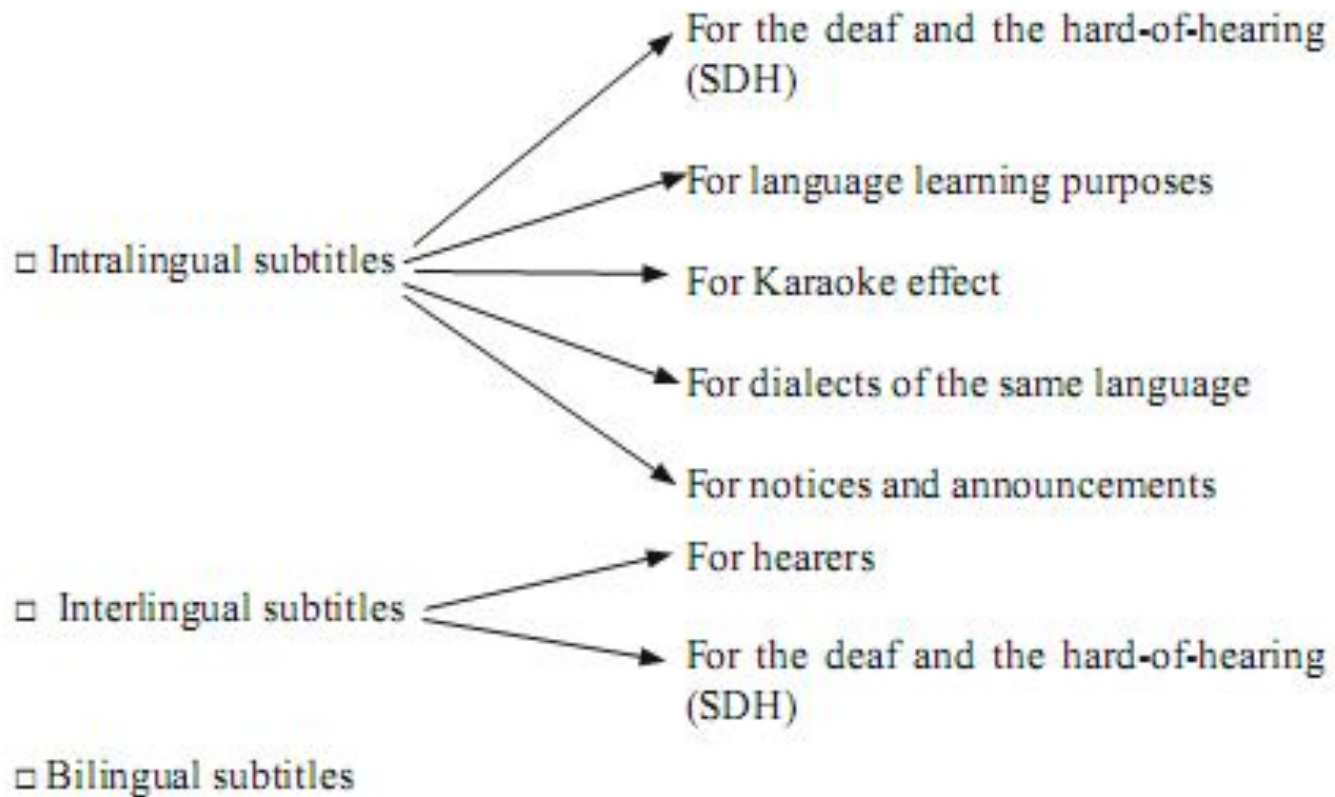
- a translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, placards, and the like), and the information that is contained on the soundtrack (songs, voices off).

Classification of Subtitles

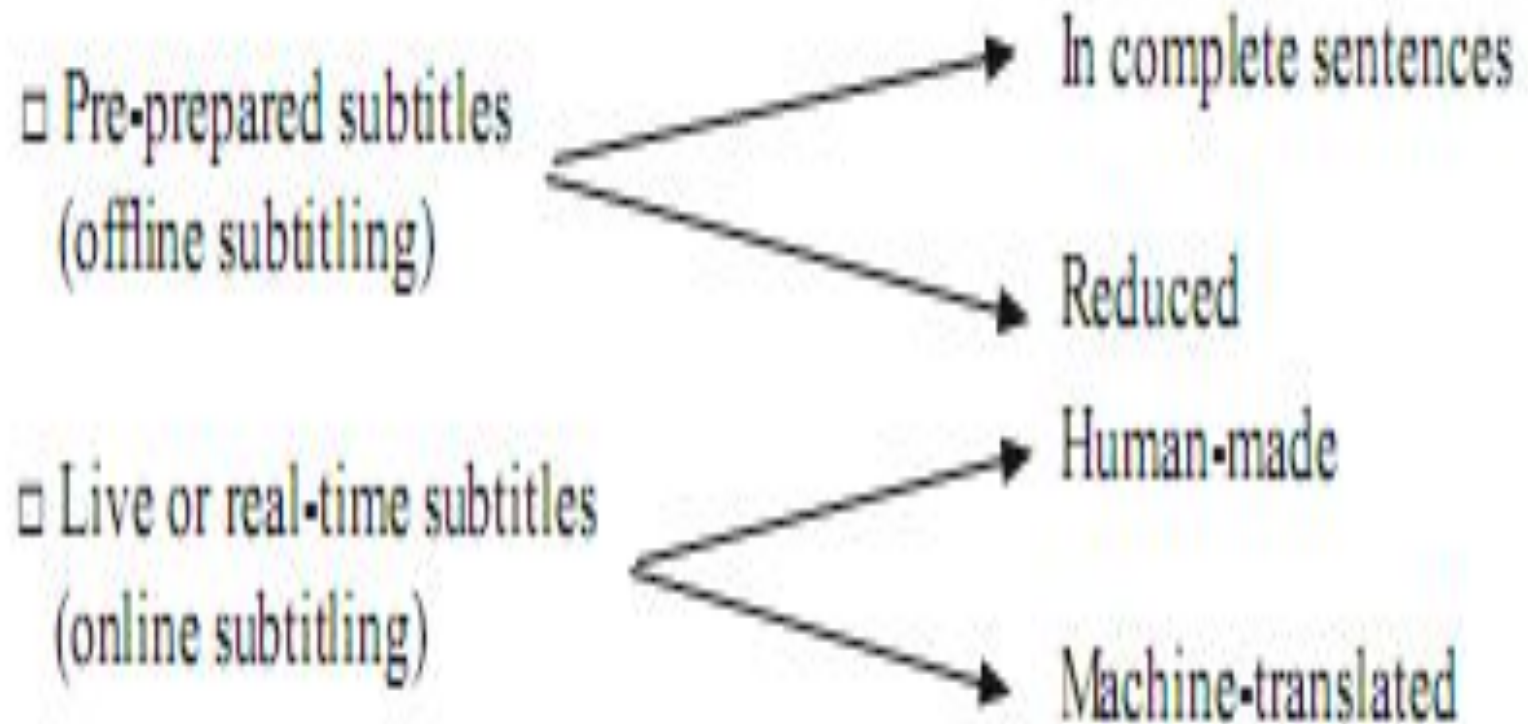
Criteria

- linguistic parameters
- time available for preparation
- technical parameters
- methods of projection
- distribution format

Linguistic parameters



Time available for preparation



Technical parameters

- Open subtitles
- Closed subtitles

Methods of projecting subtitles

- ❑ Mechanical and thermal subtitling
- ❑ Photochemical subtitling
- ❑ Optical subtitling
- ❑ Laser subtitling
- ❑ Electronic subtitling

Distribution Format

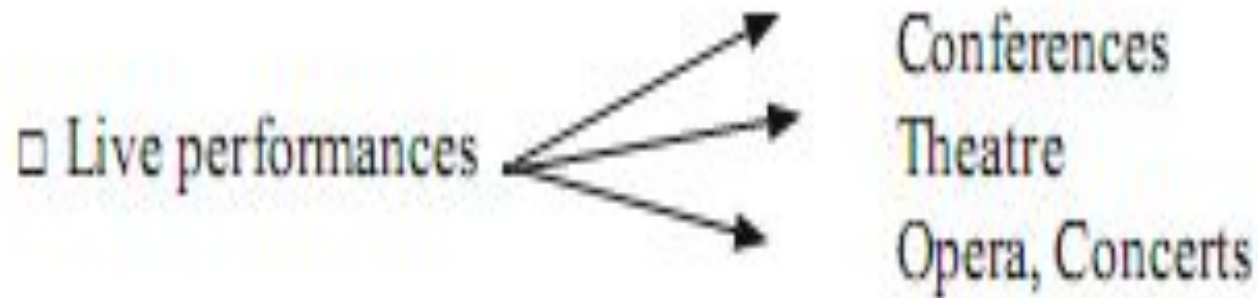
- ❑ Cinema
- ❑ Television
- ❑ Video, VHS
- ❑ DVD
- ❑ Internet

Surtitle

At an opera or play that is being performed in a foreign language, **surtitles** are a translation or summary of the words, which appear on a screen above the stage.

Surtitle образовано с помощью приставки sur (= above — над) и слова title (заголовок, титр), так же как и слово subtitle (субтитр), в котором приставка sub = below (под). К концу 1980-х гг. слово surtitle укоренилось в Англии и стало использоваться как в связи с постановкой пьес на иностранных языках, так и в связи с постановкой опер. В американском варианте surtitle = supertitle .

List of events where surtitles can be used



Intertitles

Intertitles are at the origin of subtitles and can be considered their oldest relatives, the first experiments with intertitles having taken place in the early 20th century. They are also known as 'title cards' and can be defined as a piece of filmed, printed text that appears between scenes. They were a mainstay of silent films and consisted of short sentences written against a dark background, usually white on black. Their main functions were to convey character dialogue and descriptive narrative material related to the images. Although communicative in essence, some directors also used them as an artistic and expressive device.

The arrival of the soundtrack largely eliminated their usefulness, and when they are used in contemporary films they tend to be called inserts.

Fansubs

The origins of fansubbing go back to the 1980s, when it emerged as an attempt to popularize the Japanese cartoons known as manga and anime.

American and European fans wanted to watch their favourite programmes but were faced with two main problems: on the one hand, the linguistic barrier and on the other, the scant distribution of these series in their respective countries. The alternative option was to subtitle these programmes themselves.

The translations are done for free by aficionados of these programmes and then posted on the Internet so that anyone who is interested may watch them.

This new form of subtitling 'by fans for fans' lies at the margins of market imperatives and is far less dogmatic and more creative and individualistic than what has traditionally been done. Some of its defining features are the use of colours to identify speakers, the incorporation of explicative glosses and metalinguistic notes in the subtitles themselves or on the top of the screen, and the use of cumulative subtitles. In fact, some aficionados prefer to use the term subbing, instead of subtitling, in order to emphasize the peculiar nature of the activity.

Subtitling process

1. REGISTRATION

- of programme information

2. VERIFICATION

- of master and dialogue list

3. PRODUCTION

- of a time-coded working copy

4. SPOTTING

- marking the time of the beginning and the end of an utterance

5. RAW TRANSLATION

- the dialogue list is rewritten in TL with no or only minimal reference to lip movements

6. ADAPTATION

– of the first version of the translation, paying attention to the lip movement, intonation, gestures and mimics

7. CASTING

– of the actors, who will perform in the dubbed version

8. RECORDING

9. PRELIMINARY MIX AND EDIT

– of the soundtrack

10. FINAL MIX

11. APPROVAL

12. TRANSMISSION

– admission to distribution

Professionals

The spotter – known by some companies as subtitler – is responsible for the technical task of deciding the in and out times of the subtitles, and increasingly for creating templates and master titles with relevant annotations for the translators.

The translator, on the other hand, is in charge of the language transfer, should have an excellent command of the source and the target languages and cultures, and know the intricacies of moving from speech to written texts.

Adaptors are experts in the media limitations that constrain subtitling and are familiar with condensation and reduction strategies in the target language. Their role is to fit the rough translation into the subtitle lines, searching for shorter synonyms and altering syntactical structures without sacrificing the meaning of the original, although in some cases they might have no knowledge of the source language.

Dubbing

- Example of the invisibility of translation, an artistic and technical exercise which consciously erases the original dialogue track and substitutes it for another track in which target language (TL) dialogue exchanges are recorded. Contrary to voice-over, for example, emphasis is placed on matching the translation with the soundless mouths of original actors. The result is that viewers watch and hear foreign actors speaking in their own domestic language, a paradox which has been naturally accepted in all dubbing countries.

Types of synchrony

- lip-sync
- kinesic synchrony
- isochrony

Quality standards that help to maintain the impression of reality

- Observance of the three kinds of synchronisation mentioned above, especially of isochrony.
- Avoidance of overacting or underacting performances.
- Elaboration of credible and natural dialogue, believable and convincing sentences, gestures and intonation that give the illusion of watching a 'real' story.
- Semiotic coherence between words and images.
- Technical accuracy – fine sound, appropriate volume and voice quality, absence of noise and interferences, clear voices, etc.
- Fidelity to the source text (ST), in the sense of trying to preserve its relevant features, so that target culture viewers watch the same film that source culture spectators had the chance to watch.

Translation techniques

- *Repetition*: keeping the same term or word order used in the ST.
- *Change of word or information order*: syntactic, informative – topic / comment –, etc.
- *Substitution*: using synonyms, antonyms, general terms, hyponyms, metaphors, metonymies, expressive resources.
- *Omission* of a relevant element / *addition* of a new, irrelevant element.
- *Reduction* or synthesis of information / *gloss* or periphrasis, explicitation, reiteration.

Synchronisation

consists of matching the TL translation with the articulatory and body movements of the screen actors, as well as matching the utterances and pauses in the translation with those of the ST.

Lip-sync

- a type of synchronisation, which consists of adapting the translation to the articulatory movements of the on-screen characters, especially in close-ups and big or extreme close-ups.

Kinesic synchrony

- a type of synchronisation, which consists of making the meaning of kinesic signs explicit, either because understanding them is essential (a functional need), or because missing them would result in waking up from the cinematographic dream consciously agreed between the film and the viewer.

Sometimes, kinesic signs are accompanied by (redundant) words which make their meaning explicit. Some other times they appear alone, with no spoken word, caption, sound or some other icon that explains them.

Isochrony

Mouth articulation movements are directly related to two kinds of synchronisation: **isochrony** and **lip-sync** proper. In dubbing, isochrony means equal duration of utterances, i.e. the translated dialogue must fit exactly in the time between the instant screen actors open their mouth – to utter the ST dialogue exchanges – and the instant in which they close their mouth.

- Strategy:
 - To fit a (rough) translation into the duration of the screen characters' utterances, following their mouth articulation movements and their pauses and silences.

Techniques

- In the case of amplification, expansion of the target text by means of translation techniques such as repetition, gloss, periphrasis, anacoluthon (when a sentence abruptly changes from one structure to another),² paraphrase, synonyms, antonyms, hypernyms or general terms, hyponyms or words or phrases whose semantic range is included within that of another word, etc. Most of these techniques also confer a fresher and more oral touch to the translation, another of the agreed dubbing standards.
- In the case of reduction, ellipsis of performative verbs, modal verbs, interjections, markers of the phatic function, expressions just performing social tasks ('hello', 'good morning', 'yes', 'no', 'thanks', 'sure', 'certainly'), vocatives, surnames and proper names; omission of redundancies with the images; use of deictics instead of nouns and phrases, of all-purpose words, of (shorter) synonyms, antonyms, hypernyms, hyponyms, metaphors, and metonymy.

A second type of synchrony related to mouth articulation is known as 'phonetic synchrony' or 'lip synchrony'. As discussed above, the term lip-sync is used in real practice as a general term including isochrony and phonetic synchrony. For academic purposes, though, a difference must be made between equal duration of utterances, isochrony, and imitating certain phonemes in close ups, phonetic synchrony. That is why I shall highlight the difference between both of them, and consider lip-sync as a synonym for phonetic synchrony.

- Strategy:
 - Choosing words in the TL containing the same or similar phonemes as those found in the ST, taking into account that this will be only required in close-ups, extreme close-ups or detailed shots of mouths.

- Techniques:

- *Repetition* of the word or words of the source language, when the words at stake are identical or very similar in both source and target languages: 'football' and Spanish *fútbol*; 'morning' and German *morgen*; 'table' and French *table*.
- *Change of word order* (syntactic or informative - topic/comment -) so that the word containing the marked phoneme coincides with another word in the TL containing similar or identical phonemes: 'the parson had

- *Substitution* of the target word, which is in principle the literal translation of the source word, for a synonym, antonym, hypernym, hyponym or any other stylistic resource respecting the original meaning. So, *The Pancake Day*, the title of a rap song repeated by the singer in a close-up in an American TV series, was translated into Spanish by *martes de carnaval* ('Mardi Gras', 'Pancake Tuesday'), fitting the Spanish /m/ into the English /p/. There are also cases in which professional actors, dubbing directors or dialogue writers completely change the meaning of the ST in order to attain phonetic equivalence. In other words, phonetic equivalence is perceived in professional practice as a first order priority.
- *Reduction* or *amplification* of the word, phrase or sentence, a technique which can be combined with those mentioned above.
- *Omission* of a word or sentence constituent or *addition* of a new element, techniques which would be considered to be translation errors in written translations, but which can be permitted in AVT, especially in dubbing.