

Introducing Audiovisual Translation Review

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Abstract: There is a gap between the theoretical understanding and practical application of audiovisual translation^[1], mainly manifested in the limitations of research objects, the singularity of research methods, the limitations of theoretical application, and the absence of a social and cultural perspective, which makes it difficult for practitioners to fully integrate the theory and practice of audiovisual translation. As an introductory material for audiovisual translation (AVT), "Introducing Audiovisual Translation" provides a detailed overview of all audiovisual translation modes, including subtitling, audio description, and live subtitling. It adopts diverse research methods for different research objects, applies various audiovisual translation theories in practice, and introduces the industry development trends of audiovisual translation from different cultural perspectives, providing support and assistance for beginners in audiovisual translation.

Keywords: Introducing Audiovisual Translation; Audio-Visual Translation Models; Audio-Visual Translation Types

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly changing world, the demand for multilingual content across various media platforms is constantly growing, driving the rapid development of audiovisual translation (AVT) and media accessibility (MA). From the intertitles that became popular in the early 20th century (first seen in the silent film "Uncle Tom's Cabin" in 1903) to the rise of dubbing, subtitling, and audio description in the late 1920s with the advent of sound films (first seen in "The Jazz Singer" in 1927), technological advancements have greatly propelled the development of the AVT industry. The integration of artificial intelligence into translation technology has further accelerated this progress. Despite the existence of some books dedicated to training in various AVT

modes, such as dubbing ("Practical Guide to Film and Television Dubbing"), subtitling ("Audiovisual Translation: Subtitles and Subtitling"), audio description ("Audio Description and Interpreting Studies: Interdisciplinary Crossroads"), voice-over ("Screen Narration"), and subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, there is still a lack of a comprehensive introductory resource for beginners. Therefore, "Introducing Audiovisual Translation" (to be published in 2024) aims to bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application of AVT^[2], helping readers navigate the various challenges in the field, including time constraints, cultural factors, and language characteristics. This book is co-authored by Agnieszka Szarkowska and Anna Jankowska. Agnieszka Szarkowska is a leading scholar in the field of AVT, holding an academic position at the University of Warsaw where she conducts research on AVT, with a particular focus on how AVT can serve deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. Her research achievements in subtitling and media for the deaf and hard of hearing are significant. Her work mainly covers machine translation in subtitling, audio description for deaf audiences, and the automation of AVT workflows, which are of great importance for making audiovisual content more accessible worldwide. At the same time, Szarkowska collaborates extensively with international researchers and professionals, contributing to interdisciplinary research at the intersection of linguistics, media studies, and accessibility, influencing methods in both AVT research and industry, and significantly enriching the field. Anna Jankowska, who is an academic teacher, also serves as the co-manager of the OPEN Expertise Centre for Accessible Media and Culture and the editor-in-chief of the Journal of Audiovisual Translation. She is a highly respected scholar in the field of audiovisual translation, particularly excelling in research on accessibility, subtitling translation, and audio description. Her contributions to media accessibility for the hearing-impaired audience

have been widely recognized. These academic achievements have had a lasting and profound impact on the educational practice and accessibility policies in the AVT field. The book consists of seven chapters. This article will briefly introduce the main contents of the seven chapters and comment on their academic contributions and implications.

2. Content Introduction

Chapter One introduces the basic development history of audiovisual translation and its application in the industry and academia. During the silent film era, films were translated by inserting intertitles in the target language, but intertitles had certain drawbacks and often led to basic translation errors such as "unforgivable spelling mistakes and errors caused by insufficient understanding of English idioms". The release of the first sound film, "The Jazz Singer", marked the arrival of the sound film era and the end of the silent film era. Subsequently, dubbing, subtitles and voice-over developed rapidly. Dubbing and voice-over convey information through platforms such as films while maintaining the original language.

Chapter Two delves into pre-recorded subtitling, classifying subtitle types based on preparation time, language composition, display mode, and degree of specialization. It also explores the characteristics, limitations, development potential, and typical translation strategies involved. The chapter notes that pre-recorded subtitling is a professional practice with certain challenges and corresponding standards. It mainly includes two types: monolingual and bilingual subtitles, which can be produced either pre-recorded or live. Both professionals and amateurs can participate in this field.

Chapter Three mainly focuses on dubbing. It replaces the original language dialogue of source audio-visual content with the sound track of the target language. Taking the internationally renowned actors Al Pacino and Nicole Kidman as examples, if you live in a country where dubbing is the dominant form of audio-visual translation, you would have long been accustomed to hearing these international actors speak in German, French, Spanish or Italian. However, each character's voice in dubbing is different. One notable feature is lip-syncing, which requires the dubber to match the text with the lip movements of the actors in the original content to create the illusion that the actors are

speaking the target language. The ultimate goal is not to deceive the audience, but to "induce the audience to have an illusion of seamless integration". This chapter not only studies the characteristics of dubbing, but also its popularity in different countries and its related advantages and disadvantages. At the same time, it offers insights into the dubbing process, team dynamics, quality standards and translation strategies, discusses the impact of technological progress and automation on dubbing, and carefully examines the evolution of British dubbing as well as the management of accents and multilingualism in the dubbing process.

Chapter Four introduces voice-over, which is defined in the book as a translation method where the translated voice is superimposed on the original audio track. It is usually classified as a form of revoicing, alongside dubbing mentioned earlier, and is commonly used in both fictional works (such as films and TV series) and non-fictional works (such as documentaries, news programs, interviews, etc.). This chapter not only provides an overview of the relevant terms of voice-over but also classifies the different types used in its initial production stage and post-production stage. It also covers practical techniques for synchronization technology, translation strategies, and script preparation, and finally explores the future impact of voice-over and its automated solutions.

Chapter Five discusses audio description (AD for short), which is a type of accessibility service aimed at helping visually impaired audiences better understand and enjoy various audio-visual content. In the United States, AD is also known as video description and can be simply summarized as a service that provides visual information through language. The application scope of this service is constantly expanding, covering various forms such as cinemas, video games, and online media, as well as live events like theaters, dance performances, and concerts.

Chapter Six focuses on subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH), which aims to assist people with hearing impairments and provide them with media access services. It mainly serves the deaf community, including those who are deaf from birth, those who become deaf later in life, and those who communicate through spoken language. Regarding the quality standards of SDH, the author points out that different countries and regions have different

views on its definition and measurement. For instance, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) of the United States has set four quality standards for SDH: accuracy, synchronicity, completeness, and "viewability" (captions should be "viewable"); while the Canadian Association of Broadcasters advocates for the establishment of universal standards.

Chapter Seven introduces live subtitling. Among all types of subtitles, it is the most challenging one because it must be created and displayed on the screen in real time. It is most commonly seen in live programs, broadcasts, and conferences. In this chapter, the author studies and introduces methods such as stenography, retelling, and automatic speech recognition for its creation, and explores the challenges and corresponding quality standards faced in the field of natural language processing, such as named entity recognition (NER).

3. Brief Comment

As an important work in the field of audio-visual translation, this book comprehensively and deeply explores the content of audio-visual translation and media localization, featuring the following characteristics:

First, the content is detailed and rich, unfolding the description in a panoramic view of past and present. The book provides a comprehensive overview of the development and application scenarios of audio-visual translation (AVT). It begins by tracing the evolution of AVT from silent films to the era of sound films, highlighting the profound impact of technological advancements on film translation methods. Subsequently, it introduces how the advent of sound films ushered in a new era of dubbing, subtitling, and voice-over, each with its own characteristics, providing audiences with a diverse range of viewing experiences.

Secondly, the book is vivid and specific with pictures and texts, presenting the content through scenario reproduction. It conducts an in-depth and comprehensive exploration of pre-recorded subtitles, systematically classifying subtitle types and elaborately analyzing their characteristics, limitations, and development trends. Through a combination of pictures and texts, it vividly presents the technical details of subtitle production and translation strategies, enabling readers to intuitively understand the challenges faced by subtitle translators in actual operations and the methods they adopt to deal with them.

Thirdly, the examples are appropriate and relevant, with empirical evidence provided through cases closely tied to reality. The book successfully builds a three-dimensional and vivid world of dubbing for readers through appropriate examples and in-depth analysis, enabling them to better understand the essence of dubbing and its significance in audio-visual translation. The book conducts a detailed discussion on dubbing as a form of audio-visual translation, vividly demonstrating its application in different language environments through examples of the dubbing of international renowned actors Al Pacino and Nicole Kidman. Through these specific examples, the author successfully simplifies the complex dubbing process into easily understandable concepts, enhancing the readers' sense of immersion.

Fourth, the text is coherent and smooth, with a well-structured narrative that echoes at the beginning and end. The content of each chapter in the book is not confined to merely describing the chapter's own subject matter; instead, there is a proper connection between the preceding and following chapters. For instance, Chapter Four provides a comprehensive and detailed introduction to voice-over from its definition, classification, synchronization requirements, translation techniques to its future development, enabling readers to have a systematic understanding of this form of translation. Meanwhile, it also lays the groundwork for the subsequent Chapter Five in between the lines.

Fifth, the logic is meticulous and rigorous, expressing viewpoints with clear and coherent thinking. For instance, when discussing deaf and hard-of-hearing people's subtitles (SDH) and live subtitling, the author first clearly defined the definition and purpose of SDH, which is to serve the deaf community and provide comprehensive media access services. Subsequently, the chapter elaborately discussed the controversy over the simplification of SDH text, pointing out the potential problem of information loss caused by simplification. These overviews are well-organized and progressive, intuitively demonstrating the author's meticulous academic thinking. Moreover, the author maintains logical coherence and rigor throughout the discussion, enabling readers to clearly understand the complexity and significance of each topic.

Of course, this book is not perfect and still has some shortcomings that need to be improved. The entire book describes audio-visual

translation from the perspective of Western countries, especially detailing the rise and rapid development of AVT in the West over the past 20 years. The development process of AVT and the examples cited are mainly from Europe and America. The development of audio-visual translation in China and other countries in the Eastern Hemisphere has not been fully integrated and analyzed. The perspective is somewhat limited. Therefore, for scholars studying the development process of audio-visual translation in China and the West, the reference value of this book is limited and it is not conducive to further academic communication and dissemination.

4. Conclusion

As an important bridge for cross-cultural communication, audio-visual translation not only promotes understanding and communication among people with different language and cultural backgrounds, but also plays an irreplaceable role in global information sharing and the protection of cultural diversity^[3]. "Introduction to Audio-Visual Translation" can serve as a comprehensive guide in the field of audio-visual translation, and is worthy of study and reference by researchers and enthusiasts in this field. At the same time, it also helps to promote the development and progress of translation practice and the renewal and innovation of translation theory.

In this discussion, we have delved into the application of audio-visual translation in various fields and explored the current challenges and

future development trends. Although audio-visual translation technology has made significant progress, there is still room for improvement in terms of accuracy, cultural adaptability and timeliness. At the same time, ethical issues and copyright issues in the translation process should also receive more attention.

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