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Subtitling Documentary Films: “Why do Languages Die?” and “Dying Languages”

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INTRODUCTION

In the field of translation studies (TS), audiovisual translation (AVT) has occupied a peripheral position due to the lack of consideration of the scholars. In recent years, this branch of TS has been gaining popularity in the academic area and more research has been done. Audiovisual translation has played an important role in the distribution and the accessibility of audiovisual products for different audiences around the globe. Every minute, people start watching films and TV series in a foreign language which are most likely to be dubbed or subtitled. The spread of new streaming platforms has led to the recognition of such translation modes as subtitling and dubbing.

Audiovisual translation involves the knowledge of a set of rules such as time and space constraints for subtitling or lip synchronisation for dubbing. However, it allows translators to exploit their potential in terms of creativity and imagination: by omitting, paraphrasing or condensing information, translators can manipulate sentences to convey the message of the original speaker. After attending my specialized translation courses, I was fascinated by this field of TS and decided to explore the ‘world’ of subtitling to discover all the strategies and the techniques used by professionals. Before entering this ‘world’, I was not aware of the effort and work that stood behind a subtitled product.

The primary aim of this dissertation is to present the field of subtitling by applying it to the documentary film genre. After an introductory description of the AVT discipline and the classification of the various types of subtitling, the dissertation continues towards a more practical approach thanks to the analysis of the subtitles of two documentary films which I personally chose. The topic of these videos is language loss that I consider really important as I am a foreign language student.

In Chapter One, a historical and terminological overview of AVT is provided, with particular focus on the various definitions and classifications of AVT modes, especially of subtitling. Furthermore, a geographical and historical comparison between dubbing and subtitling is made. Chapter Two starts discussing subtitling process by describing technical and linguistic features of subtitles. Then, the chapter continues investigating technical parameters – time and space – of subtitles. The last part of the chapter shows the diverse translation strategies adopted when subtitling, including the most widespread

translation issues that might be faced. I also propose some examples of the strategies in order to identify myself in the work of the subtitler.

To conclude, in Chapter Three the emphasis is given on the practical approach. Since my translation work concerns two documentary films, “Dying Languages” by *National Geographic* and “Why do Languages Die?” by *The Economist*, the first sections contain the definition of documentary genre, its history, its classification, and its role in the AVT field. Unfortunately, even documentaries have had little consideration in the field of audiovisual translation since great space has always been given to fiction films and TV series. For this reason, some myths about documentary film translation have arisen and later debunked. The chapter continues with the analysis of the Italian subtitles created for the two films, and all the issues encountered in the translation are explained, giving special attention to the aspects of fixed language – idioms, word combinations and collocations. The last section of Chapter Three is devoted to the topic of the two videos: language loss. The two documentary films aim to sensitise to the problem of endangered languages, which is frequently underestimated. It is important to understand the value of languages and how can influence cultures, traditions, and idea. After all, language is fundamental to shape people’s identity.

CHAPTER ONE

AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Nowadays, the value of image is of invaluable importance and our society frequently faces reality through a screen. People spend considerable time watching television, films and videos in order to entertain themselves, to solve their problems or to improve their abilities and acquire more educational knowledge. Díaz-Cintas and Anderman (2009: 1) affirm that “in the twenty first century the media is omnipresent: to inform, arguably sometimes to misinform, to sell, to entertain and to educate”. Globalisation has strongly impacted the audiovisual industry and the distribution of audiovisual products have drastically changed with the advent of DVD technology and of the new service media providers such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Disney+. These new developments in TV and film industry had led to a diversification of target audience which inevitably required the translation of audiovisual contents.

Audiovisual Translation was not highly considered by scholars of translation studies. Initial research studies on AVT date back to the mid-fifties but increased exponentially in the nineties of the twentieth century. According to Karamitroglou (2000: 10), “audiovisual translation has always been considered inferior to (written) literary translation, most probably because of the lack of cultural prestige in audiovisual mass media, compared to canonised literature”. However, the rapid evolution of new multimedia technologies, the rise of digitization, the increasingly varied offer of multimedia products and the growing demand of translation of audiovisual products “help to account for the so-called revolution experienced in the field of audiovisual translation during the last couples of decades” (Díaz-Cintas & Anderman 2009: 3).

At present, AVT can be regarded as one of the emerging and potentially most productive sectors of TS and it is being consolidated as an academic discipline with numerous research projects, international conferences and published studies. Newmark includes AVT among the eight translation modes deemed of considerable attention by placing it under the category of ‘Later modes of translation’ and regrets that despite being

a particularly visible area of translation, "systematic training has been largely neglected" (Anderman & Rogers 2003: 8).

1.1 Audiovisual translation in the field of Translation studies: a controversial terminology

Before examining the problems related to 'label' this type of translation, it seems necessary to identify what kind of texts AVT deals with. Audiovisual texts fall under the category of the audio-medial texts described by Reiss. The audio-medial text represents a textual typology, whose entirety is generated by the combination of different semiotic components – images, sound and words. According to Reiss' classification (1989: 105) of text types, an audio-medial text can be defined as:

[...] written text co-existing with other sign systems with which they must contain a constant link [...] a superstructure that takes into account the special characteristics of the spoken language and oral communication and sits above the three basic communicative situation and corresponding text types.

She includes in this category films, visual and spoken advertisement. Moreover, she suggests a 'supplementary' translation method: "supplementing written words with visual images and music" (Munday 2016: 117). Concerning the polysemiotic nature of audiovisual products, Chiaro (2009: 142) affirms that:

Translating for the screen is quite different from translating print. Books, newspapers and other written products are simply meant to be read. Although they may contain illustrations, these generally serve to complement and/or enhance the verbal content. [...] Conversely, products for the screen are completely audiovisual in nature. This means that they function simultaneously on two different levels. Screen products are polysemiotic; in other words, they are made up of numerous codes that interact to produce a single effect.

In audiovisual texts, the sound and visual spheres, the verbal and non-verbal components combine to create a complex multi coded text whose translation can be problematic.

	VISUAL SPHERE	SOUND SPHERE
NON-VERBAL COMPONENTS	Actors: Gestures, facial expression, body movement etc. Environment: scenery, lightning, props etc.	Actors: crying, moaning, body sounds (cough, breath). Environment: music, background noise, sound
VERBAL COMPONENTS	Signs of any type (road, street, shops), newspapers headings, letters, diaries	Dialogues, songs etc.

Table 1.1 The polysemiotic nature of audiovisual products

The simultaneity of the acoustic and visual channels, when conveying the message of the audiovisual product, complicate the translation process. It becomes quite evident that images and sound, in a certain way, constrain the translation of words. Due to the difficulty of the challenge imposed by constraints, some scholars perceived AVT as not a translation practice, but as a mere case of adaptation. Therefore, for long time this type of translation did not receive academic attention. Perego in her book *La traduzione audiovisiva* (2005) seeks to give a general historical overview of the process of choosing an appropriate term for the translation of audiovisual texts. According to her, the first studies in this field favoured the labels ‘film translation’ and ‘screen translation’ indicated by Delabastita (1989). The former was mainly used in the period when the cinema dominated the mass media landscape and the television did not yet have its current popularity. Consequently, the dialogue of the film was the subject of the translation. The latter instead clearly indicates the screen as the means of distribution of the audiovisual product, not placing differences between the cinema screen or the television one, including in this way other types of programmes such as sitcoms, documentaries and cartoons.

During the 1980s and 1990s the words ‘constrained’ and ‘subordinate’ were usually associated to AVT. Despite the negative connotation conveyed by these two words, it is undeniable that the audiovisual translator must face limits and restrictions. The technical nature of these restrictions depends on the medium itself. In the case of subtitling, the TV or cinema screen will affect the position of subtitles, the space they can occupy, their length and the exposure time. Luyken and Herbst (1991) suggested the term ‘audiovisual language transfer’ to underline the verbal component of the audiovisual product, which is integrated by non-verbal elements – sounds and images.

In the article “Introduction – Screen Transadptation: Perception and Reception”, Gambier coined the new term ‘transadaptation’, which merges the two words ‘translation’ and ‘adaptation’, in order “to go beyond the usual dichotomy (literal/free translation, translation/adaptation, etc.) and take target audiences into consideration more directly” (Gambier 2003: 178). He believed that the new translation techniques combined with the new technologies had dissolved the traditional boundaries between translation and interpretation, as well as between oral and written code. This label was unsuccessful and harshly criticised by most of the scholars because a similar terminological choice underrated the semiotic complexity of AVT, raising the assumption that it was purely adaptation and not translation. Despite the criticisms, another author has used this term. Neves (2009) found the word ‘transadpatation’ adequate when referring to subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing. She states that the combination of the two words is a proper balance to:

[...] refer to a subtitling solution that implies the translation of messages from different verbal and non-verbal acoustic codes into verbal and or non-verbal visual codes; and the adaptation of such visual codes to the need of people with hearing impairment so as to guarantee readability and thus greater accessibility. (Neves 2009: 151)

Recently, by overcoming a static perspective of translation and by acknowledging its ever-changing nature, academics have endeavoured to search a suitable “generic term that can encompass all the different manifestations in the audio-visual realm” (Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007: 11). Two more all-encompassing definitions have emerged: ‘multimedia translation’ and ‘audiovisual translation’ properly emphasise the composite nature that distinguishes audiovisual products, whose principal feature is the combination of numerous semiotic elements. However, ‘multimedia’ has become a term that distances itself from the linguistics and translation world, approaching the Information Technology field. The term ‘audiovisual translation’ is used to express the different translation practices used in the audiovisual media – cinema, television, VHS and the Internet – where the transfer from a source to a target language involves an interaction with sound and images. In the current state of research, the term ‘audiovisual translation’ seems to recur more than the label ‘screen translation’, ‘film translation’ and ‘multimedia translation’ in the field of TS.

1.2 Audiovisual Translation: various definitions

In the second edition of the *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, the following definition is indicated for the entry AVT: “Audiovisual translation is a branch of translation studies concerned with the transfer of multimodal and multimedial texts into another language and/or culture” (Pérez-González 2009: 13). Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 13) give another definition: “Audiovisual translation refers to the translation of products in which the verbal dimension is supplemented by elements in other media”. In their opinion, the message can be conveyed: 1) solely auditorily as in radio programmes, podcasts, songs; 2) exclusively through the visual channel as in published advertisements, comic strips; 3) both through sound and visual channels as, for example, in films or documentaries.

They also suggest that with the shift from analogue to digital television, the meaning of AVT “will expand, and will no longer refer to a unique translation mode, but rather to an array of possibilities being delivered synchronically”(Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007: 3). Chiaro (2009: 141) in *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies* defines AVT as:

[...] one of several overlapping umbrella terms that include ‘media translation’, ‘multimedia translation’, ‘multimodal translation’ and ‘screen translation’. These different terms all set out to cover the interlingual transfer of verbal language when it is transmitted and accessed both visually and acoustically, usually but not necessarily, through some kind of electronic device [...] (audiovisual translation) is specifically understood to refer to the translation of films and other products for cinema, TV, video and DVD.

According to Zacchi and Morini (2002: 76), audiovisual translation represents a particular case of translation with more constraints than the literary one and also compared to the translation of a written text, of a spoken discourse, or to the translation of a written text into a spoken discourse and vice-versa. The constraints are imposed by the multimedia nature of the subject of the translation.¹ Fong and Au state that AVT is “much more than mere interlingual transfer [...] as non-verbal elements are also involved in the process, making it a kind of multi-semiotic transfer” (Fong & Au 2009: vii). It is not definitely possible to apply the same judging parameters between the translation proper² and the audiovisual one.

¹ In their own words, AVT is “Un caso particolare di traduzione, con alcuni vincoli in più rispetto alla traduzione letteraria e comunque alla traduzione da scritto a scritto, da scritto a parlato, da parlato a scritto, da parlato a parlato, vincoli posti dalla natura multimediale dell’oggetto delle trasposizione”.

² This term is used by Jakobson to indicate the interlingual translation. In this case the term is used to give a general sense of the word ‘translation’ to distinguish it from the audiovisual or the literary one.

In translation the target text or discourse is generally assessed according to the parameters of equivalence of the message, aesthetic beauty and linguistic fidelity at lexical, metric, sound and rhetorical level. In audiovisual translation levels of signification might be not exclusively linguistic; indeed, the message conveyed is not only verbal, but also includes visual and acoustic codes. AVT is thus linked to the language transfer strategies that are adopted. Language transfer itself is a form of translation although it only modifies one aspect of the entire 'audiovisual message', the verbal one. When the language transfer is oral, the original voice of the film is replaced through dubbing, while if the transfer is visual, the text is shown on the image through subtitles.

1.3 Classification of AVT modes

In the current state of research on AVT, there is not a fixed classification of the language transfer techniques. Gambier (2003) proposes a classification in which it is possible to distinguish 13 types of language transfer modalities in AVT. He divided them in two groups: dominant types and challenging types, which are more difficult but stimulating. The dominant types are: interlingual subtitling, dubbing, consecutive and simultaneous interpreting, voice-over, free commentary, sight (or simultaneous) translation and multilingual production. The challenging types are: scenario (or script) translation, intralingual subtitling, live (or real-time) subtitling, surtitling and audio description. In *Table 1.2*, AVT modes are shown according to different recent classifications. In order to avoid redundancy, only Gambier's techniques will be analysed, since he is the one who classified the largest number of AVT modes.

Luyken and Herbst 1991 Agost 1999	Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007	Gambier 2003	Chaume 2004
Dubbing	Dubbing	Dubbing	Dubbing
Subtitling	Subtitling	Intralingual subtitling	Subtitling
		Interlingual subtitling	
	Live subtitling	Live or real-time subtitling	
	Surtitling	Surtitling	
Voice over	Voice over	Voice over or half dubbing	Voice over
			Half dubbing
Simultaneous interpreting	Consecutive interpreting Simultaneous interpreting	Consecutive interpreting Simultaneous interpreting	Simultaneous interpreting
Narration (not in Agost)	Narration		Narration
Free commentary	Commentary	Free Commentary	Free commentary
		Simultaneous or sight translation	Sight translation
			Animation
Multimedia translation (only in Agost)			Multimedia Translation
		Scenario or script translation	
		Audio description	
		Multilingual production	
	Multilingual broadcasting		

Table 1.2. Different modes of AVT in recent studies.

A brief overview of some modalities will follow, but subtitling, in all its forms, will be presented in section 1.4.

1.3.1 Audio description

Audio description is a form of AVT aimed at the blind and visually impaired: its purpose is to describe what appears on the screen. A voice off-the-screen provides detailed descriptions of actions, facial expression, clothing and scenery which may help to understand the development of the plot or of the programme. This kind of narrative is

integrated to the original soundtrack without any interference from sound and music effects.

The main problem of this mode of translation is to evaluate the amount and the accuracy of the missing information to be conveyed, ensuring that it is neither too limited and poor in detail, nor vice versa too redundant. Furthermore, audio description must also vary according to the textual genre to which the program belongs (Petillo 2012: 28-29). In this regard, Gambier (2003: 177) writes:

Some genres such as drama, movies, wildlife programmes and documentaries benefit more from the provision of audio-description than news and game shows which have sufficient spoken content to allow the blind and visually impaired to follow what is happening without assistance.

Audio description does not strictly concern films and Tv programmes, it is also used in art galleries, museums, city tours and live events.

1.3.2 Consecutive and simultaneous interpreting as revoicing

Some scholars, as Gambier (2003: 174) and Pérez González (2009: 16), indicate the term 'revoicing' to refer to a set of oral language transfer modalities. Consecutive and simultaneous interpreting belong to the group of these modalities. Consecutive interpreting can be performed in three ways: live, in case of interviews on the radio or television; pre-recorded, which must not be confused with voice-over; link-up, for long distance communication (Gambier, 2003:172). Simultaneous interpreting is used during political debates and speeches, but also during film festivals, where the limited budget and time represent an obstacle to more sophisticated modes of language transfer.

1.3.3 Free commentary

Along with simultaneous interpreting, also free commentary is used by interpreters, presenters, or commentators. By superimposing their voice on the source soundtrack, they adapt its content for the target audience instead of reproducing it exactly (Pérez González 2009: 17). The target soundtrack may present omissions, additions or clarifications and it is synchronised with images rather than with the source soundtrack (Gambier 2003: 174).

Commentaries are particularly effective in documentaries and short films, where a strong cultural distance is present between the country of the source audiovisual product and the target country. By adapting the original content of the product, commentaries avoid the shock that a faithful and alienating translation would entail. The language of commentaries is based on criteria of maximum simplicity and fluency, preferring short utterances (Petillo 2012: 26).

1.3.4 Narration

Similar to free commentary, narration is a further modality of oral transfer which provides a faithful summary of the source speech. With this mode, it is possible to select, reduce and adapt the original linguistic material. According to the needs of the receiving audience, the source text/audio undergoes a series of simplification, condensation or clarification procedures.

The direct speech inside the source version will be transformed in reported ones because the narrator recounts what happens in detached style (Perego 2005: 30). The final style of the target text will be formal and syntactically complex. The target version is read by a speaker/narrator, usually a professional such as journalists or actors, it is pre-recorded and then synchronised with the images.

While narration is applied to fiction genres, commentary is generally used in non-fiction genres. Furthermore, they differ from voice-over because the target audio in narration entirely replaces the source audio, while in voice-over the source soundtrack is still audible.

1.3.5 Voice-over

Technically, voice-over consists of overlapping one or more voices to the original soundtrack. After few seconds that original audio has begun, a narrator starts speaking the target language following the first original utterances. The target recording slightly diverges with the original soundtrack. Thus, the target audience can partially access the original soundtrack, which remains however largely indecipherable (Díaz-Cintas &

Anderman 2009). The volume of target soundtrack is lowered to facilitate the reception of the translated version.

Voice-over is performed by professionals, whose voice is suitable to present the TV or film genre concerned. Due to its peculiar nature, this language transfer mode – also known as ‘half dubbing’ – is placed by some academics in an intermediate position between dubbing and subtitling, by others near the simultaneous interpreting. It is considered ‘half dubbing’ because there is no claim to hide the real nature of the audiovisual text as translation. Franco (2010: 26) states that “voice-over translation has to be a faithful, literal, authentic and complete version of the original audio”. Voice-over is a translation modality which does not require lip-synchronisation. Those few seconds of non-synchronisation between the original audio and the recorded translation contributes to the authenticity of the work, providing viewers “the impression that what is being told in the translation is what is being said in the original” (Franco 2010: 27).

This modality quickens the translation and eliminates the work of adaptation of texts. Consequently, it has low labour and production costs. Voice-over is generally used for documentaries, advertisement and shopping channels. In Italy some TV channels such as *Real Time* or *TV8* have implemented voice-over for foreign reality shows or everyday life shows, for instance *Embarassing bodies*, *Extreme couponing* etc. Nowadays in some Eastern European countries such as Poland, Russia, former Soviet republics, voice-over is also used for cinema due to the high levels of illiteracy and the fragile situation of the media in these areas.

1.3.6 Dubbing and its history

Dubbing or lip-synchronisation, next to subtitling, is one of the most widespread modes of AVT and consists of “replacing the original soundtrack containing the actors’ dialogue with a target language recording that reproducing the original message” (Díaz-Cintas 2003: 195). Thereby, the translation of the dialogues is total and always takes place through the oral channel, i.e. eliminating the original speech to introduce that of the target language. This mode requires great precision in synchronisation, scrupulous attention in adapting the new dialogue in order that the text heard in the target language and the lip movements of the actors coincide as much as possible. By replacing the original voice,

the impression given to the new audience, through a ‘game of illusions’, is that the actors are speaking their language (Perego 2005: 25-26). Thereby the audience is deceived about the real linguistic and cultural origins of the audiovisual product they are seeing. Another definition which considers the elements cited above is given by Luyken and Herbst. In their opinion dubbing involves the “replacement of the original speech by a voice track which attempts to follow as closely as possible the timing, phrasing and lip-movements of the original dialogue” (Luyken & Herbst 1991: 31).

Pavesi, considering Herbst’s studies (1994) on synchronisation, split the different types of synchronisation in two groups: articulatory synchronisation and kinetic synchronisation. The former involves the simultaneity and the compatibility of the sounds emitted in speech with the beginning and the end of visible articulatory movements. The groups of sounds that traditionally match in the dubbed version are the vowels and the labial consonants. The latter, which is also called expressive synchronism, requires that speech must be compliant to paralinguistic elements such as the movements of the body or the gestures of the actors (Pavesi 2005: 13-15). Synchronisation will also influence at linguistic level such as in the translation of culturally connoted terms, puns, the transposition of humour, foul language and swear words, the reproduction of regional accents and dialects. For instance, in the TV series *Big Bang Theory* one of the characters, Rajesh Koothrappaly, speaks English with a strong Indian accent. This characteristic was likewise rendered by the Italian dubber, who gives a strongly Indian brogue to the dialogues.

This AVT modality appeared in the USA, and only since 1936 it began to spread in Europe. The first attempts at dubbing involved only one dubber, who was the translator himself/herself, for all the characters of the film. However, the dialogues sounded unnatural and the synchronisation was almost non-existent. From those attempts, dubbing progressed in another form: live dubbing. In this case the dubbers were the actors of the film. The main problem of this type of dubbing was that the dubbers-actors could not change or adapt the lines, consequently translation errors were really frequent. The dubbers had to alternate their lines, using only one chair and one pair of earphones. Consequently, background noises as movements of the chair, footsteps or noises made with the earphones ruined the sound quality of the dubbing. From 1964 a new era of dubbing, the so-called loop (or takes) dubbing started. The film was divided in several

takes or loops, and all the actors together dubbed their part of the film until the director was satisfied. Although better quality results were obtained with this method, it was very time-consuming. Another method appeared in the early nineties of the twentieth century: the unlinear dubbing. It allowed actors to dub their character for all their lines of the film. If the film director was not satisfied, they could repeat the parts where there were mistakes or problems. This method is faster and cheaper than the loop one (Fong & Au 2009: 22).

Traditionally, the dubbing process is composed of four stages. Firstly, the script is translated literally, word to word not considering the synchronisation. After the literal translation, the translated script is passed to the so-called dubbing translators. They seek to modify the translation to make it appear more natural in the target language and furthermore, they manage the synchronisation by focusing on the lip-movements and facial expression of the actors. While the translation process is underway, the dubbing director – the one who coordinates the whole process – is responsible for finding the dubbers. The dubbers may be chosen for the characteristics of their voice compared to the ones of the original actors; or with famous actors, it is common practice in Italy that the dubber will dub the same actor for his whole career. In the third step, the dubbing assistant arranges the takes, which divides the film in short passages for the organization of the dubbing shifts. After the recording stage, finally, the takes are joined to form the target soundtrack that will replace the source one (Chiaro 2009: 145). This process was considered too expensive due to the phases and all the people involved. Nowadays, technology has facilitated the process. Dubbers generally record their part on their own and with support of editing software the various pieces of recording can be merged, improving the lip-sync and the voice quality (Chiaro 2009: 146).

Dubbing can be considered as the “most effective method to translate programs addressed at children or viewers with a restricted degree of literacy” (Pérez González, 2009: 17), especially when the process is accomplished well and the audience does not perceive the foreign origin of the audiovisual product. The audience can watch it in its entirety and for this reason dubbing does not require any type of condensation or reduction of the source dialogue. However, dubbing still remains the less-cost effective technique due to the people involved and the technology used. Translators must often sacrifice the faithfulness of source texts in order to guarantee the lip-synchronisation and to ensure fluently and uniform dialogue. Sometimes political and moral censorship may

also change the content of text. According to Ivarsson (2009), another disadvantage is that the voice of the original cannot be heard by the audience. In the past, some scholars talked about dubbing as ‘dubbese’, i.e. a derogatory expression to underline that the simplified and banal translation choices of some dubbers may sometimes lead to an impoverishment of language of film dialogues.

Film language can be considered as “[...] a prefabricated, artificial, non-spontaneous oral register; in other words, one which does not exactly imitate the spontaneous oral register, but echoes many of its characteristics” (Chaume 2007: 77). From a linguistic point of view, features of film language are the tendency to single-clause sentences and the extremely homogeneous distribution of types and degree of subordination. Lexically, terminological choices are distant from literary terms, jargons, dialectisms and technicalities with some exception (Rossi 2002). For instance, in some TV series such as *Grey’s Anatomy*, *How to Get away with Murder*, *Suits*, *Fringe* the use of technicalities from the medical, legal and scientific lexicon often recurs. Dubbing is also considered a ‘total translation’ as it deals not only with the semantic and pragmatic values of lines, but also with the phonological ones, such as intonation, word length and prosody (Bollettieri Bosinelli *et al* 2000: 76).

1.3.7 Surtitling

Surtitling of opera, theatrical work and musical performances has gained great popularity at the end of the twentieth century, even though it was occasionally used in the past. Surtitles are one-line subtitles of sequences of translated or adapted lyrics/dialogue. They are displayed on special luminous screens placed generally above the stage but sometimes also on small screens installed on the back of each spectator’s chair. They are shown non-stop throughout the performance of the opera arias or theatrical performances. In opera singing, surtitles are also used in the source language of the libretto (booklet), allowing the audience to understand better the text, whose intelligibility could be made difficult or even compromised by all the musical elements.

In Italy, for the 37th traditional opera season, the managers of the *Pergolesi Theatre* in Jesi have endowed each opera in the program with a surtitling service. This decision was taken to attract a segment of the public, which is unfamiliar with the opera, but also

for a linguistic reason, linked to the difficulty of the modern audience to understand the Italian language of a few centuries ago (Petillo 2012: 45). The language used in the libretto, which is adapted to the melody for rhythmic reasons, still belongs to the literary tradition of a few centuries ago. Therefore, modern viewers consider this language foreign to their linguistic universe. The theatrical audience has begun to require a tool to better understand the sung text. When well synchronized with tempo and rhythm, surtitles act as a bridge between verbal content and stage action. In surtitling, after the condensation and the reduction of textual units, only a third of all the lexical units present in the entire libretto survive in the respective surtitles (Virkkunen 2004: 89-97). They must necessarily be interpreted in the specific context of the opera performance. Virkkunen (2004: 92) writes:

Surtitles come to life in the performance and are a situational text by nature: they are only created for the performance, and without it they lose their intended meaning. It is inappropriate to read them without the performance.

1.4 Subtitling

Subtitling, together with dubbing and voiceover, is the most widespread AVT mode. In the past, scholars have always considered it as an inferior technique of language transfer. Nowadays, on the contrary, it is considered the less invasive methodology of translation because it respects the source language, which survives on the translated product, and it is genuinely helpful to foreign language learners.

1.4.1 Subtitling: various definitions

According to Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 8), subtitling is defined as:

a translation practice that consist 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, inscription placards, and the like) and the information that is contained on the soundtrack (songs, voices off).

Spoken words, images and subtitles are the three components, which constitute the subtitled programmes. The synchronisation of subtitles with images and dialogues, their rendering of the source language soundtrack and the time of exposure are the main factors

to consider during the subtitling process (Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007: 9). The *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation studies* gives the following definition:

Subtitling consists of snippets of written text (subtitles, or caption in American English) to be superimposed on visual footage – normally near the bottom of the frame- while an audiovisual text is projected, played or broadcast. (Baker & Saldanha 2009: 14)

Subtitles have to adhere as closely as possible to images and convey an impression of linguistic authenticity, despite the passage from the oral to the written code. In the past, due to their nature, subtitles were considered by some scholars as a form of adaption. For instance, Pommier states that “it has to be understood that the subtitled text is not a proper translation, but rather a simple adaptation that preserves the general meaning of the original” (1988:22). In their book *Subtitling*, Ivarsson and Carroll (1998: v) affirms:

[...] it was a book about subtitling, not translation. Translation is a different art. [...] subtitling, when it is done to high standard, includes so many of the elements essential to art and above all demands so much skill, imagination and creative talent that it is indeed an art.

According to Gottlieb (1992: 162-163), five parameters distinguish subtitling from other forms of translation: “Subtitling may be defined as a translation a) *written*, b) *additive*, c) *immediate*, d) *synchronous* and e) *polymedial*”. By virtue of its written nature, subtitling represents a unique AVT mode, as oppose to other types of translation which are essentially oral, such as dubbing. From a technical perspective, it is additive, since the translated and written text, displayed on screen, is added to source dialogues and coexists with them, conveying the same original message through a different semiotic channel. With the term ‘immediate’, Gottlieb underlines the peculiarity of subtitles of flowing on the screen along with images without considering the audience’s control in reading them. Besides, subtitles are synchronous because they are shown simultaneously with the source soundtrack. When he states that subtitling is polymedial, the author wants to specify that original message of the audiovisual product is conveyed in its entirety when the visual and the auditory channels are used. Later, in other academic articles, Gottlieb (1998: 246) adds the adjective ‘contemporal’, which substitutes the terms synchronous and immediate, repeating that subtitles are connected to the original version in space and time. In 2005, in a new research paper, he gives another definition of subtitling as “a *prepared* communication using *written* language acting as an *additive* and *synchronous* channel, as part of *transient* and *polysemiotic* text” (Gottlieb 2005: 16). The term ‘prepared’ indicates

that preparation process of subtitles occurs before their use. The word ‘transient’, instead of ‘immediate’, emphasises the natural flow of subtitles along with the images.

1.4.2 A brief historical overview of subtitling

After the first famous experiments of Auguste and Louis Lumière in the late 1800s, the cinema initially delivered only silent films. The audience was not able to hear the voice of actors and so the message of films was totally conveyed through the visual channel. A kind of forerunners of subtitles, the so-called intertitles first appeared in 1903 in Edwin S. Porter’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. They were texts, drawn or printed on pieces of paper, filmed usually on a dark background and placed between sequences of the film. Translating intertitles was easy: the original ones were removed, translated, written on new pieces of paper, filmed and placed again.

A great change in this field was the introduction of sound films in 1927. The viewer could hear the dialogue and consequently intertitles disappeared. It was also possible to have different language versions of the film post-synchronised (dubbed). However, dubbing process was a complex and expensive technique, which not all the film directors and producers exploited. They decided to replace intertitles by positioning them directly into the picture. People started to call them subtitles quite early, as subtitles in newspapers were used in the same way.

The first patent for subtitling tool was already registered by Topp during the silent film era in 1909. He invented “a device for the rapid showing of titles for moving pictures other than those on the film strip” (Ivarsson 2009: 4). This technique, which was cheaper, began to be used in small language areas such as in the Netherlands and the Scandinavian peninsula. Ivarsson retraces the first historical stages of this technique: “in 1929 Al Jolson’s film, *The Singing Fool*, was shown in Copenhagen with subtitles” (2009: 4).

This author also classified the different techniques of subtitling. The first one was the optical method which consisted in copying the photographed titles directly on the film negative copy. The main problem of this technique was that the film negative was not always accessible. It was thus necessary to photograph again the whole film to have the negative copy “with a consequent loss of focus and substantial increase in the noise level” (Ivarsson 2009: 5).

In 1930, in Norway, Eriksen registered a patent for another technique which superimpose subtitles through a mechanical and thermal process. The titles were stamped directly on the images of the film strip. First of all, he moistened the emulsion layer to soften it, then he typeset the titles, printed them on paper. He subsequently produced each subtitle by using small letterpress type plates, created through a photographic process.

In 1935 Turchányi, a Hungarian inventor, had the idea to heat the plates, reaching a temperature such as to “melt away the emulsion on the film, without the need for a softening bath” (Ivarsson 2009: 5). The main problem of these both processes was to control them, and the letters were poorly defined. Hruska, a Hungarian inventor, patented a further technique for impressing subtitles through a chemical process in 1932. A thin layer of wax or paraffin was spread on the emulsion side of film copy. The printing plate, which were placed in a sort of printing press, were heated up to 100°C and then pressed against the paraffin layer. By melting the paraffin, the emulsion was exposed. The process was repeated for all the frames of the film, which needed subtitles. After this step, the film was dipped in a bleach bath to dissolve the emulsion and leave the transparent nitrate or acetate film. The remaining paraffin was washed away. This process was the first to produce clearly legible white letters. Later, with new technologies this process was automated, and it still used today in some countries.

The most widely used and efficient modern technique in subtitles production is laser subtitling, which uses lasers to vaporise the emulsion of the film copy while printing the subtitling. The time code of the videotape allows the exact synchronisation with the actor’s speech. This technique, which was developed by Auboyer, has been in commercial use since 1988. A laser beam, controlled by a computer, writes two line of subtitles in less than a second without damaging the acetate film. The equipment is expensive, but once it has been purchased, this process turns out to be cheaper than the chemical process (Ivarsson 2009: 6-7). A further contemporary method, called electronic subtitling is identified by Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 22-23) and it is often proposed as an alternative to laser subtitling. It allows subtitles to be superimposed instead of being engraved on the image. A character generator produces the subtitle and then a projector beams them onto the screen. A time code system is used in order to ensure perfect synchronisation of the projected text with the film. Besides being cheaper than laser

subtitling, electronic subtitles are independent of the audiovisual programme, in the sense they can be changed from projection to projection.

With the advent of TV, films were shown on television. The first movie to be broadcast in a subtitled version was Arthur Robinson's *Der Student von Prag* by the BBC. However, the subtitles intended for the cinema are difficult to read on the television screen. One reason may be that the reading speed of the TV audience, which is not the same of the cinema one. Another reason is that the image on TV has a narrower contrast range. Soon, a new technique was developed: the optical subtitling process for television. With this method the titles were written on paper and then:

[...] one-frame stills of each title were made with a film camera. Put the resulting film negative in a scanner and then either the translator feed in the titles manually, one at a time, synchronizing them with the programme, or an automatic system was used to feed in the titles[...] on the edge of the film. (Ivarsson 2009:8)

Nowadays, it is possible to install complete subtitling systems on personal computers, and subtitlers can thus work on their own.

1.4.3 Audiovisual Europe: dubbing or subtitling?

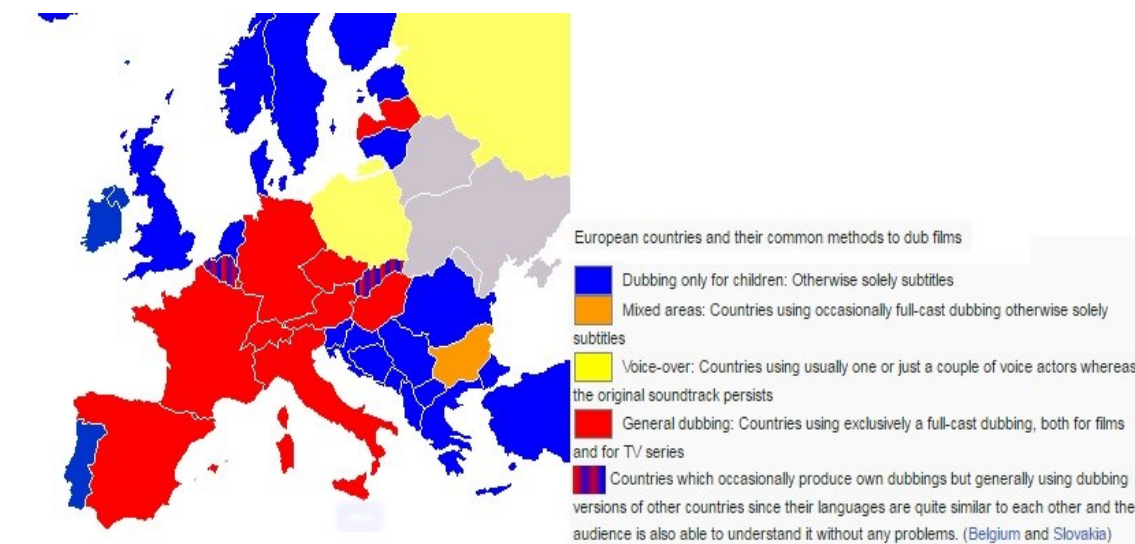


Figure 1.1 Audiovisual Europe: map of dubbing and subtitling countries.
Source: Termometro Politico 2017.

European countries have always had different opinion on dubbing and subtitling. On the one hand it is possible to find the so-called dubbing countries such as France, Germany,

Italy and Spain, which traditionally used dubbing to translate foreign audiovisual products. On the other hand, there are subtitling countries such as the United Kingdom, Belgium, Luxemburg, The Netherlands, Portugal, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Portugal which traditionally subtitled foreign audiovisual products (Chiaro 2009:143; Perego 2005: 15-16; Petillo 2012: 26; Pedersen 2011). Countries such as Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary use subtitling for cinema and dubbing for television.

By analysing the reasons of this split and considering the conditions of the choice of one mode over another, it is noticeable that countries which historically are used to subtitled continue to prefer subtitling over dubbing and vice versa. Size of the countries and economic reasons are two important elements when choosing between dubbing and subtitling. By being an expensive procedure, dubbing is used in large countries where the population is large enough to recover the costs. Subtitling is preferred in countries with small audience and limited investment opportunities, it “costs the tenth or the twentieth less than dubbing” (Koolstra *et al* 2002: 324)

A linguistic reason might also influence the choice: dubbing is usually found in monolingual countries, while countries with bilingual cultural background selects subtitling over dubbing. Despite being small countries with not so large population, Wales, the Basque and Catalanian regions can be considered as exceptions, because they choose dubbing in order to promote and standardize minority languages.

Social and cultural events have also influenced the choice of the countries. For instance, after the World War I big countries of central Europe decided to dub all foreign films, which came from the American movie industry, in order to protect their language and nationality. Introduced as a form of protectionism, later totalitarian regimes made dubbing a means of propaganda and censorship, controlling the content of audiovisual products screened. Germany, Italy and Spain have historically been considered the strongholds of dubbing. It is not so simple now to change the habits of the audience.

The multimedia product genre is a further aspect that influence the choice of dubbing or subtitling. During film festivals or in art and cultural films subtitles are preferred, while action film and TV series, such as comedies and soap operas, are usually dubbed. However, scholars have noticed that people of countries used to subtitles do not consider it as an element of disturb, indeed they would not accept a dubbed product. On

the contrary, the audience used to dub would refuse subtitles, because they want to listen and watch images without concerning about reading.

Fortunately, nowadays, it is almost always possible to find dubbed and subtitled versions of the same audiovisual product. The European film market, in terms of production and distribution, is not at the same level of the American one. Despite this, the European film industry excels in the number of users of film products, but the linguistic fragmentation and autonomy of the film market, rich in local productions, could be a threat to its development.

1.4.4 A comparison between dubbing and subtitling: pros and cons

Pros and cons	
SUBTITLING	DUBBING
Cheap	Expensive
Respect for the integrity of the original text	Loss of the source dialogue
Fairly rapid procedure	Slow and complex procedure
Promotion of foreign languages learning	Its results are presented as local and indigenous products
Actors' original voices remain unchanged	Dubbers' voice may be sound repetitive, since they can be reused for same original actors, or also for different actors
Advantageous procedure for the deaf, immigrants and learners of a L2	Advantageous procedure for children and illiterate people
Images are partially ruined.	Total respect for the source images
Larger number of reductions compared to the source text	Less number of reductions compared to the source text
It does not allow to maintain overlaps of turns	Overlapping of turns can be maintained
The attention is dispersed on three levels: sound, images and words	The audience can focus on images
Original dialogues might be hardly manipulated	It allows manipulation of original dialogue
It can convey less sociolinguistic variants of the original version	More sociolinguistic variants of the original version can be conveyed
If the audience gets distracted and do not read subtitles, they might lose fundamental information to understand the message	Less problems in following the plot, also not watching the screen
Space and time constraints	Constrained to lip-synchronisation
Two languages involved: the audience may feel disoriented	One language involved
Poor cinematic illusion	It allows greater cinematic illusion

Table 1.3 Pro and cons of dubbing and subtitling.

Source: Gottlieb (1994:272); Perego (2005: 27)

On the one hand, dubbing is usually selected over subtitling because people think that reading the subtitles while watching a film may represent an element of distraction to

follow the story or the plot. On the other hand, the subtitling method is preferred by other people because it is a more natural and realistic way of translation, which does not change the original voices' actors.

According to Koolstra *et al* (2002), subtitling and dubbing also differ in the information processing, in the relationship with images, in the learning effect. Concerning the information processing, space and time constraints imposed by the medium lead to a need for condensation in subtitling. Subtitles must be a maximum of two concise lines, but they also have to contain equal information as the source text. The most important constraint in dubbing is the speech duration. For instance, it may happen that one sentence in the source text has to be spelled with more or less words and this may lead to lip-sync problems (Koolstra *et al* 2002: 327-328).

The information processing may also concern redundancy. For instance, in the case of intralingual subtitling, what has been said by the actors and what people can read from the subtitles can create a sort of redundancy, which can bother the audience. Most viewers have a good knowledge of foreign languages, especially of English, which has become a *lingua franca* all over the world, and so the redundancy is really frequent in audiovisual products in this language. On the contrary, dubbing does not have this problem because the source dialogue is entirely removed. Nevertheless, this AVT mode can be easily manipulated by censorship (Koolstra *et al* 2002: 329-330). With dubbing the audiovisual translator does not have many problems to adapt or change untranslatable jokes, puns or culturally connoted terms because the viewer will not see any difference since there is not any source dialogue. In subtitling the translation of jokes, puns or culturally connoted terms may be a problem since the source dialogue is present and the viewers may notice differences.

Watching audiovisual products with subtitles requires a greater mental effort because the audience must concentrate on both images and what is written in subtitles. On the contrary dubbing is not very demanding mentally since the viewers have only to listen to audiovisual products. With reference to information reception, it seems more productive to read subtitles, because reading is faster than listening especially in adults. However, a research has shown that adults recall the same quantity of information from subtitled and dubbed programmes, while children had some problems with subtitled products (Koolstra *et al* 2002: 331-333). As to familiarity, dubbed products may seem

more familiar than subtitled ones. What happens on screen may look normal to viewers because the actors are speaking their language.

One disadvantage of subtitling related to images is that subtitles overlap picture. Film directors and producers want to present aesthetically attractive images and that is why they criticise this type of translation. Moreover, the artistic unity of images and sound may not be respected with subtitles, because the audience's attention has to be split. This aspect does not concern dubbing.

Due to lip sync, the translation work for dubbing may become harder than the one for subtitling. The respect of the turn and of the congruity with the lips movement of speakers are of absolute importance in dubbing. Therefore, sentences sometimes are shortened or lengthened, and the rhythm of words is also adjusted to the lip movements (Koolstra *et al* 2002: 336-338).

While watching audiovisual programmes people can acquire information related to the message that producers and film directors wanted to convey, but also other types of skills may be developed. Rice and Woodsmall's studies (1988) have shown that young children (3-5 years old) learn two to five new words after watching a 15-minute subtitled television programme. For instance, subtitles may strongly improve reading skills and since the original spoken language is heard, there is a good possibility to improve pronunciation and learning new vocabulary, idioms, sayings etc. Foreign language knowledge can greatly benefit from watching subtitled programmes. Another study in Belgium has proved that after watching subtitled cartoons, some word meanings were learnt by students. It is noteworthy to consider that the languages used in the study were common such as German, and English but also unfamiliar such as Chinese and Hungarian. In the Netherlands another study was conducted on children from grades 4 and 6, who watched a documentary about bears in three versions: a) in English with Dutch subtitles; b) in Dutch without subtitles; c) in English without subtitles. With the first method they learned many new words and then they have also understood some words with the last method (Koolstra *et al* 2002: 342). Despite the results of these studies, which prove the benefits of subtitled programmes for language learning, some language purists believe that this type of programme may contaminate their mother tongue. In the Basque region in Spain, the local television dubs all the foreign programmes (Koolstra *et al* 2002: 343). It is difficult to assess and to establish which method, between subtitling and dubbing, is

better. Each foreign audiovisual product, which a country wants to broadcast, has to be analysed individually to understand which audience it is aimed at, which message must be transmitted, the aim to be achieved. Only then, the right method of translation and adaptation can be chosen.

1.4.5 Classification of subtitling

Various classifications of subtitling may be proposed according to the criteria used. Díaz-Cintas and Remael distinguished five criteria: linguistic, time available for preparation, technical, methods of projection and distribution format. Since the various methods of projection were already discussed in the paragraph about the history of subtitling, now it will not be examined. These classifications cannot be fixed in time, as technologies are constantly developing (Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007:13)

1.4.5.1 Linguistic parameters

Traditionally, one way of classifying subtitles is based on the linguistic criterion. This type of classification includes interlingual subtitling, intralingual subtitling and bilingual subtitles as shown in *Table 1.4*.

INTERLINGUAL SUBTITLING	INTRALINGUAL SUBTITLING	BILINGUAL SUBTITLES
For hearers	For the deaf and the hard of hearing (SDH)	
	For language learning purposes	
For the deaf and the hard of hearing (SDH)	For karaoke effect	
	For dialects of the same	
	For notices and announcements	

*Table 1.4 The different types of subtitling according to the linguistic parameter.
Source: Díaz-Cintas & Remael (2007)*

Intralingual subtitling, considering Jakobson’s (1966) definition of intralingual translation, does not require a shift from a language to another one, but from oral to written code. Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 14) write “intralingual subtitling involves a shift from oral to written but stays always within the same language”. Some scholars are reluctant to consider this subtitling in the field of translation since source and target

languages are the same. This type of subtitling is also defined as “vertical translation”, which involves the change of the mode from speech into writing.

Subtitles for the deaf and the hard of hearing (SDH) are an evident case wherein subtitling is used not only for commercial purposes of film companies, but also to respond to specific needs of a homogeneous and limited audience represented by the deaf or people with hearing impairment. In Italy and in most European countries, these subtitles – also known as closed captions – are displayed on TV screen by accessing to the page 777 of teletext. Intralingual subtitling for the deaf mainly convert the oral content of the dialogue into written speech. Petillo (2012) claims that closed captions profoundly differ from subtitles for normal hearing people. The reading difficulties of the deaf audience must be considered during the subtitling process. SDH are characterised by a further simplification process of the original content, by using unmarked lexical or syntactic forms and by inserting additional information.

Through a proper use of graphic sign, all the missing sound element should be restored in order to provide a correct interpretation of the audiovisual product. Non-verbal components and all paralinguistic information, usually not accessible to the deaf, but which are significant to the development of the plot or to create the atmosphere must be reproduced into the subtitle. For instance, animal sounds, knocks on the door, gunshot fires, telephone ringing or also the irony of a statement with background laughter of a hidden audience must be incorporated into these subtitles (Gottlieb 1998: 247).

Concerning the technical features, closed captions generally switch colour depending on who is talking or when some words must be emphasized. Their position is usually at the bottom of the screen, but they can be moved to the left or right of the screen to identify the speaker (Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007: 14-15). Differently from the past, TV channels are now required to broadcast their programmes with SDH. As reported on the Italian website of Teletext, “One of the main Teletext missions, required by the public service obligations, concerns subtitling for the deaf and audio descriptions for the blind” (my translation) (Servizio Televideo Rai 2020).³ In England, the BBC managed to broadcast the 100% of their programmes with closed captions in 2008. SDH are one of the many examples of intralingual subtitles. A second group that is becoming popular

³ “Una delle principali missioni di Televideo, iscritte negli obblighi di servizio pubblico, riguarda la sottotitolazione per i non udenti e le audiodescrizioni per i non vedenti”

nowadays is known as subtitles for karaoke effect. They are use with songs or movie musical in order to engage the audience in singing along at the same time as the characters. Films such as *Grease*, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *La La Land* or the Tv series *Glee* are some of the most striking examples of this category.

Another example of intralingual subtitling is the use of subtitles in films, TV series or programmes where the actors' dialects are too difficult to comprehend for the audience who share the same language. For instance, in Italy, in the TV series *Gomorra* produced by TaodueFilm company, the dialogues in Neapolitan dialect between the actors are subtitled in a more correct Italian. Díaz-Cintas takes as example the film *Trainspotting*, where there are actors speaking English with a strong Scottish accent. This movie in the U.S. was distributed with subtitles in English.

Intralingual subtitling is also adopted as didactic tool for teaching foreign languages. Dollerup (1974: 197) states that “many people must [...] be using foreign be using foreign programmes as a means for keeping up, possibly even improving their command of foreign languages”. Audiovisual products are presented as a privileged tool to improve the intercultural competence among learners, who are thus exposed not only to linguistic inputs but also to cultural stimuli from L2, i.e. the second language (Petillo 2012: 40). Furthermore, the use of audiovisual products also has the undeniable advantage of lowering the threshold of cognitive-emotional effort to which learners are subjected, since “audiovisual material, with its rich context is a powerful instructional tool known to have a motivational, attentional, and affective impact on viewers, which in turn facilitates auditory processing” (Danan 2004: 68). Caimi (2006: 90) believes that the use of intralingual subtitles as teaching tool may help:

[...] viewer-learners in the language acquisition process by providing them with written comprehensible input, which adds confidence and security, thus creating a low affective filter. This motivates them to continue watching and encourages them to extend their intake of the language.

Many scholars affirm that watching and listening to subtitled films and programs in L2 help the audience to improve their language skills but also to get in touch with foreign cultures and traditions. In English where there is not exact coincidence between pronunciation and writing, intralingual subtitles can be useful for the graphic recognition of words. Learners familiarise themselves with vocabulary, intonation and pronunciation

of L2 through the soundtrack, while images show the mannerism and the way of behaviour of people from a foreign culture such as gestures, habits, traditions, way of dressing, geographical spaces (Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007: 15).

Gambier (2007: 97-113), thanks to the results obtained from his many empirical studies, shows that the benefits of intralingual subtitling for didactic purposes involve all the four language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing). Subtitles can strengthen comprehension skills in the reading and listening phase and they can improve written and oral performances. Learners can try to establish the relationship between a word and its meaning and also to infer the meaning of an unknown word on the basis of linguistic hypotheses justified by the context. Previously used with tapes, intralingual subtitles with didactic purposes has been consolidating with the introduction of DVD and of the new media service providers. A further category of intralingual subtitling is the one for notices and announcements, seen on monitors in underground stations and other public areas. These subtitles allow the broadcasting of news and advertisement without the sound, so as not to disturb the public.

Interlingual subtitles, besides involving a shift of the code – from oral to written – also translate from a source language to a target one (Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007:17). Gottlieb (1994) defines interlingual subtitling as a form of “diagonal translation” due to its dual shifting nature. There is a belief that intralingual subtitling is merely for the deaf, while interlingual subtitles are used for hearers. However, thanks to new technologies, SDH have also become interlingual, especially in England, Germany and Italy (Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007:18). As intralingual subtitles, interlingual subtitles may also be applied for didactic purposes. By reproducing and adapting the dialogues in the language of the learners, these subtitles contributes to the comprehension of the foreign audiovisual product in such a way as to formulate linguistic hypotheses about what is heard. Furthermore, at more advanced levels of learning, viewers will be able to critically examine what they read and they listen to, comparing the two versions on the screen, realizing any change or misunderstanding of the source text. Petillo (2012: 43-44) describes another example of interlingual subtitling for didactic purposes called “reversed subtitling”. In this case the dialogues of audiovisual products are dubbed in L1 and subtitles flow on screen in L2. In the first stages of language learning, these subtitles may be helpful for the acquisition of precise grammatical structure, which the viewer can see

in written form. Another purpose is to ensure the long-term memory fixation of the L2 lexicon.

Finally, according to the linguistic parameter, the third type of subtitles are bilingual subtitles. They are used in countries or geographical regions where people speak two different languages such as in Belgium, where audiovisual products are subtitled both in Flemish and in French. These subtitles are always screened in two lines, each of which in a different language. Bilingual subtitles are also adopted during international film festivals such as in Cannes or Venice, where films are subtitled both in English and French (or Italian) in order to be easily understood by an international audience and jury.

1.4.5.2 Time of preparation

With reference to the time of preparation, subtitles can be classified in pre-prepared subtitles (offline subtitles) and live or real time subtitles (online subtitling). Online subtitling was born for the translation of interviews, last-minute news, sport events. For instance, Clinton's hearing at the Supreme Court had live subtitles (Gambier 2003: 176). Since the complexity to perform this type of subtitling in real time during the broadcasting of a programme, it is hardly applied in the context of the film translation. However, online subtitling is drawing the attention of the deaf, consequently it may be included among the intralinguistic subtitling forms. It is characterised by very short production times and it is based on the collaboration between a subtitler – usually an interpreter or translator – and a technician. The subtitler condense the translation of the source text in a reduced version for the technician, called the typist – also known as stenographer – who is responsible of writing rapidly the subtitle that the viewer will see. (Perego 2005: 23-24). This kind of subtitling requires specific supporting technical devices such as special keyboards which allow to write syllable instead of single letters.

In respeaking, the use of voice recognition software is increasingly frequent. This software 'translates' the speech into written lines (Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007: 7, Petillo 2012: 32-33). However, this type of subtitling is a very complex activity and it is made in very stressful conditions, which can lead to mistakes, lack of synchrony between source and target versions. Pre-prepared subtitles are realised after the making of film/program and before its release, so subtitlers are given more time to produce them. The lexical density of these subtitles depends on the medium used. Complete sentences will be used during films or

TV programs; while sentences in a reduced version will be adopted in news, interviews or documentaries in order to allow the viewer to focus only on the gist of what is being said.

1.4.5.3 Technical parameters

From a technical perspective, Díaz-Cintas and Remael identify two types of subtitles: open and closed subtitles. Open subtitles are burned or projected onto images and cannot be separated from the audiovisual product. These subtitles are a physical part of the product, consequently people do not have possibility of choice on their presence on screen (Gottlieb 2005). Closed subtitles are instead optional: these subtitles “are hidden and can only be seen with an appropriate decoder or when the viewer activates them on dvd.” (Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007: 21). Nowadays, with Netflix and other platforms of this type, the audience can choose among subtitles of many different languages available and further they can decide whether and when to use them. Closed subtitles can also be adopted intralingually by accessing to the teletext, allowing the deaf and the hard of hearing to watch the audiovisual product.

1.4.5.4 Distribution format

The last category which Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) established in their classification of parameters regards the medium used to distribute the audiovisual product. Subtitles can be adopted for cinema, television, video, DVD and Internet and these media can affect the way of subtitling production. One of the most striking differences among the media is the exposure time of subtitles. This element is linked to the audience’s reading speed. Some subtitling companies have applied the “six-second rule”, which refers to the time conventionally it takes an average viewer to read 70 to 74 characters – two lines of subtitles. However, this calculation seems right when the media involved are cinema, video, DVD or internet. The reading speed applied in television is faster.

Concerning line length, in cinema the maximum amount of characters allowed is 40-41 per line, since professionals has found that viewer easily and quickly read subtitles on a cinema screen than on a television one. The reason may be linked to “the better

definition and larger screen dimensions, the greater concentration that movie theatres afford viewers” (Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007: 24). DVDs also adopt long lines of subtitles since users can simply rewind the programme when they do not have entirely read the subtitle. Television allows a maximum of 28-37 characters per line.

With the development of new technologies, the debate on the amount of characters to be used in television is bound to disappear. Professionals have realised that letters do not occupy the same amount of space. Some letters as ‘l’ or ‘i’ occupy less space than an ‘m’ or ‘o’. In cinema subtitling the tendency is to use shorter lines and centre them. It does not condense the source dialogue as much as television in order to respect shot changes and cuts in the spotting. DVD is quite similar to cinema, but it does not consider much cut changes and prefers to use longer lines. Overall, in a film of approximately 90 minutes, there are about 900 subtitles in the cinema, 750 on DVD and 650 in the television. In the next chapter, technical considerations about subtitling process will be examined.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SUBTITLING PROCESS: TECHNICAL FEATURES AND TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

Although audiovisual translation does not strictly follow any normative-prescriptive rule, it is still possible to determine general parameters that help subtitlers in their difficult mediation between linguistic needs and technical constraints. Scholars like Ivarsson and Carroll (1998: 157-159) propose a *Code of Good Subtitling Practice* to offer some guidelines and parameters for a high-quality subtitling. This code is nothing but a sort of catalogue of rules that wants to promote uniformity and tries to erase national idiosyncrasies. These guidelines, which consider punctuation, spatial and temporal dimension, seek to set some minimum standards.

Subtitling depends to a great extent on a series of technical-visual features that also affect linguistic aspects, especially the syntax. The way in which subtitles are organized, projected and displayed on the screen might facilitate or hinder the viewer in understanding the contents of the audiovisual product. In this chapter some technical aspects about the subtitling process will be explored.

2.1 Technical and linguistic features of subtitling

A good subtitler has to offer a product based on the criterion of maximum readability. Petillo (2012: 116-118) provides the following list of technical requirements aimed at guaranteeing proper subtitling:

1. the subtitler must calibrate the flowing speed of subtitles, remembering that on television the speed must be lower than the cinema.
2. The type of font chosen must be as readable as possible. It should vary according to the type of background on which subtitles appear. It should be as dark or light as possible to bring out the words by contrast.
3. There must be enough space between characters and words.
4. Subtitles must be presented with an appropriate layout on the screen, it is preferred to distribute the text on one or two lines, leaving a space between the two lines.

5. The subtitler must use any typographic sign properly in order to transmit the paralinguistic shades of the source text such as intonation, hesitations, emphasis.
6. Subtitles should be minimally invasive. They should not cover images, especially in the case of close-up shots, where it would not need to interfere with actors' expressivity.
7. If possible, subtitles should be aligned on the left rather than on the middle since visual details of images tend to occupy the centre of the screen.
8. Although it is not necessary to achieve as strict a synchronisation as in dubbing, it is important to establish an appropriate correspondence with the audiovisual material, so that the viewer perceives a certain congruence between soundtracks, images and text.
9. The subtitler must pay attention to syntactic structure of subtitles, avoiding the use of long sentences that must necessarily be extended for more subtitles.
10. Breaking the logical or grammatical connection between words should be avoided. A reformulation of the entire subtitle is more appropriate, so that it will appear complete, compact and cohesive from a semantic and grammatical point of view.

The standards of accuracy of subtitling should be very high since the source dialogue is always present on the screen and it is decipherable especially by viewers who have acquired some knowledge of the source language. In the case of naturalistic-scientific documentaries aimed at an educated segment of audience, it becomes essential to avoid negligence or blunders. The subtitler should correct any mistakes already present in the original despite this correction may represent an element of distraction for viewers, who will have to dwell for a moment on the incongruity that derives from what they listen to and what they read, losing the subsequent subtitles. The omissions of the source version must be kept to a minimum, and justified only for: 1) time limits, i.e. to avoid subtitling so fast as to be annoying; 2) reasons of space, in order to avoid covering large part of the screen and the face of actors. Subtitling does not allow translators to implement strategies which give wider creative adaptation margin, which might be useful to retrieve missing information or to render puns. Consequently, most of the time there is not any possibility of exploiting textual expansion strategies and so the puns are eliminated.

2.2 The subtitling process

The creation of subtitles involves different phases, tasks and professionals in its process. In the late 1990s, each step was clear and defined since professionals involved in the process were responsible only for a specific task. Nowadays, the new technologies and techniques have slightly changed the process, sometimes reducing the difficulty and the number of professionals involved.

First of all, who requests subtitles? Usually the main clients are production and distribution companies of films, television stations, advertising agency, companies working in the game or entertainment industry, firms working with audiovisual products (Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007: 36). Traditionally, the process commences when a subtitling company is commissioned to translate an audiovisual product by one of the agents cited before. The subtitling phase begins after watching the product in its entirety, ensuring that there is not any damage in the copy of the film and that the dialogue list is complete. Sometimes due to the absence of the dialogue list, the first step is to transcribe the dialogue exchanges *ab initio* from the soundtrack.

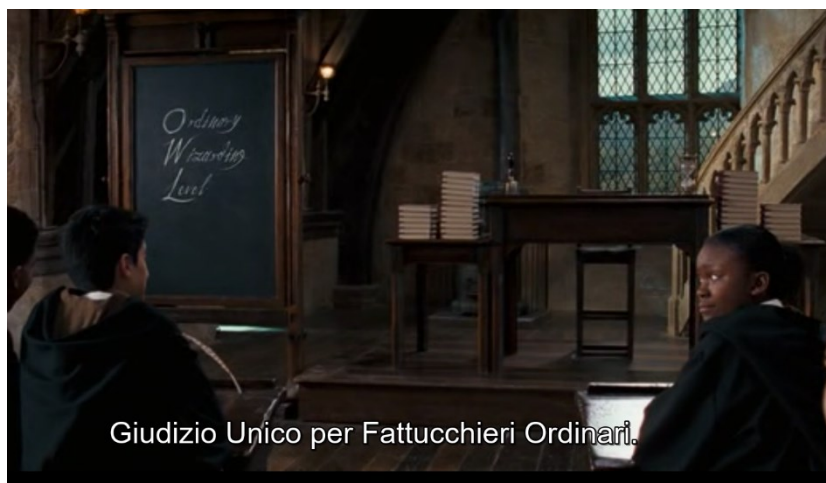
The next step is known as spotting, where in-time and out-time of subtitles are determined, i.e. the moment when subtitles appear and disappear from the screen according to space and time constraints (Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007: 30). The spotting – also known as timing – should be performed by a technician, called spotter, who has an appropriate knowledge of the source language (Chiaro, 2009: 149). Sometimes the spotting list with the segments of dialogues is already present and so this phase does not occur.

After the spotting phase, the dialogue list is given to a professional translator. As already said above, it is highly advisable to watch the audiovisual product in its entirety, taking notes for issues and points that may become problematic during the translation phase. According to Torregrosa (1996), Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007:31-32), five areas should be considered during the first viewing of the audiovisual product:

1. vocabulary which may have a polysemous reading in the source version. A word or a phrase may have different meanings according to the context. For instance, in English the word *date* may refer to the fruit, to the specific day of the calendar, to the social or romantic appointment.

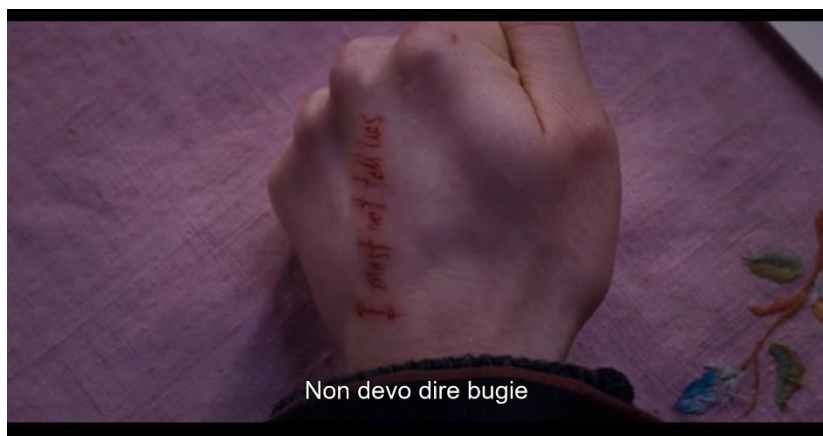
2. The gender and numbers of words (nouns, verbs, adjectives etc.) are not marked when translating from English. This aspect can be problematic for languages in which inflection is used to express differences in gender, number, tense *etc.*
3. Politeness among characters may be expressed with different pronouns or forms between two languages. The English *You* might be rendered in Italian with ‘Tu’, ‘Voi’ or ‘Lei’, depending on the degree of familiarity. In some regions of southern Italy ‘Voi’ is still used as highly formal pronoun to refer to elderly people. In Russian the pronoun ‘Вы’ (You) is capitalized when addressing one person on polite terms in formal letter.
4. Deictic expression (such as this, that, here, there etc.), whose referents appear on screen, may not require a translation. However, deictic expression is used to translate obscure or long terms which refer to objects that appear on screen.
5. Exclamations and swear words as “oh my God”, “geez” and “Christ” must be considered according to the given context.

Besides focusing on the actors’ dialogue, the translator does not have to forget to translate other acoustic and visual elements as songs, newspapers headlines, or voices from radios. Some examples of visual elements translated and subtitled from the film *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* will be shown in the pictures below. In the scene of *Figure 2.1*, professor Umbridge writes on the blackboard “Ordinary Wizarding Level” (O.W.L) in order to introduce the standardized exam that Hogwarts students will have to sit at the end of the fifth year. This text is subtitled in Italian with “Giudizio Unico per Fattuchieri Ordinari” (G.U.F.O) to literally render the acronym.



*Figure 2.1. The text on the blackboard is subtitled.
Source: Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (2007).*

In the scene of *Figure 2.2*, Harry Potter is in detention in Professor Umbridge's office and he has to write a sentence on a paper sheet with a quill pen given by the professor. However, when Harry starts writing, the sentence "I must not tell lies" appears on his hand as an incised wound.



*Figure 2.2 The sentence that appears on the hand is subtitled.
Source: Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (2007).*



Figure 2.3 A newspaper headline in background is subtitled.
Source: *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2007).

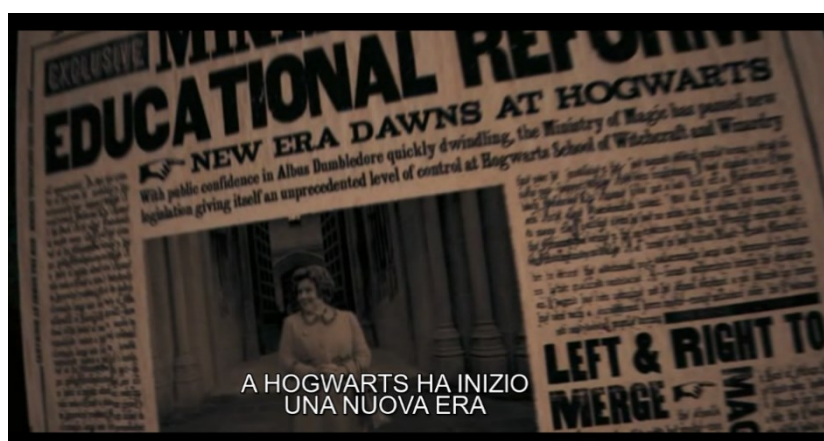


Figure 2.4 A newspaper headline in foreground is subtitled.
Source: *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2007).

According to Petillo (2012: 119) the essential moments for the elaboration of subtitles are:

- the textual reduction;
- the diamesic shift;
- the actual translation phase.

The textual reduction is a delicate and fundamental passage for the subtitler, who selects what to translate and what to omit. Subtitles cannot be a complete and detailed rendering of source dialogues unless the audiovisual programme is extremely poor in dialogue exchanges between characters. Since subtitles interact with other semiotic codes, a complete translation is not required. What are the reasons which push the subtitler to reduce the source dialogue? Elisa Perego (2005:73-75) identifies these objective reasons:

the space and time limits which are linked to the reading speed of the audience; the type of editing of the audiovisual programme and the cut shots of the camera; the synchronisation with images and dialogues; the immediate nature of subtitles and their intersemiotic redundancy. The subjective reasons are the judgment, taste and competence of the translator/subtitler, needs of interpretative nature linked to the comprehension and reception of the message. If there is essential information, the subtitler should be able to make it appear at the most appropriate time. A subtitling work is considered optimal when the viewer has the impression that no information has been left out. Among scholars there is not a fixed idea of the amount of the reduction. It should be approximately between 30-50% or 40-70%.

According to Kovačič (1994:245), subtitling in a target language, which has similar characteristics and average word length of the source language, may require a reduction. Reduction means depriving a text of unnecessary information. It should be understood not as repressive strategy that limits the validity of subtitling. On the contrary, it means recognizing the functional and cultural differences between two languages and two codes – oral and written. In order not to lose significant elements, subtitlers should first carefully analyse the original audiovisual programme in its entirety, considering the different degrees of coherence and the global thematic cohesion of the programme. After understanding and interpreting the original programme, they should hierarchise the information to identify the dominant one and then re-express and translate only elements that are necessary for the comprehension of the message. Hatim and Mason (2000: 345; 430-431) believe that the subtitler's task is to make the target text fluid and legible, in order to guarantee a certain linearity that facilitates the identification of the textual links, defined by Hatim and Mason as connectivity. The subtitler should also maximise what Hatim and Mason call retrievability, i.e. the possibility of retrieve meaning in a reduced text.

Total reduction is achieved through the deletion of entire text strings and lexical items. These eliminations are determined by the function and the degree of relevance and pertinence of the elements. Various studies show that the linguistic elements to be firstly eliminated are marks of emphasis, proper names previously mentioned, discursive signs, hesitation marks, fillers, repetitions, interjections, vocatives, courtesy marks etc. According to Kovačič (1994) the partial reduction does not involve the total loss of

information, which is only reformulated and condensed at a linguistic level but not at an informative one. For instance, a sentence like “I woke up three minute ago” can be condensed in “Mi sono appena svegliato”.

The diamesic shift is the passage from oral to written code. Discourse markers typical of orality which could be unusual in written text are eliminated from the target version. In order to facilitate the transformation, Perego (2005: 90) affirms that it is fundamental:

1. to consider the communicative purpose of each subtitle;
2. to keep in mind that subtitles are supporting texts;
3. to focus on the meaning that certain expressions have in the context in which they are used;
4. to maintain the conventional features of the language of cinema;
5. to remember that the user is aware of the reduction of the dialogue in subtitles.

Due to their written nature, subtitles are more organised, synthetic, formal, standardised and regulated by the conventions of punctuation, spelling, syntax and grammar. Subtitles should achieve the right balance between the rigidity, clarity and coincidence typical of the written word and the flexibility, freedom, redundancy and implicitness typical of the speech. Since after the first two steps the text has already been considerably reduced, it will be expected that the actual translation phase will not lead to additional semantic losses. These losses would penalize the global understanding of the message of the product. The translation strategy must be clear, effective and it should give the impression that nothing fundamental has been omitted.

In some cases, the translation is followed by an adaptation phase. The adapter adjusts the translation to a proper subtitling length according to the time and space constraints and the reading speed. Nowadays this figure is disappearing, and the translator usually adapts the text. Moreover, the current tendency of subtitling companies is to employ a professional – the subtitler – who can perform all tasks: spotting, translation and adaptation. Luyken and Herbst (1991:57) believed that “ideally the translation and subtitling functions should be combined in one person which will reduce the risk of error due to the inaccurate communication of concepts”. Nowadays, the subtitler can receive

the dialogue list or its transcription with time code, through which they can translate and then produce subtitles on electronic files (Chiaro 2009: 149).

According to Díaz-Cintas and Remael a subtitler should have “the technical know-how to do the timing of the original dialogues, and the cultural and linguistic background to carry out the language transfer, condensing the message if and when necessary” (2007: 35). A further phase is the revision and proofreading of subtitles in order to avoid mistranslations and spelling mistakes. A revision would be useful to ensure that the exchanges in the translated dialogue list are synchronized with the images on the screen. In this way, a more accurate final product is guaranteed. The presence of misspelled words might irritate the viewer. Once the production of subtitles is complete and revised, they can be finally projected.

As already mentioned in the previous chapter (cf. section 1.4.2), until recent times, laser subtitling was the most widespread method of projecting subtitles. Sometimes, before superimposing subtitles on the celluloid, the client may require a simulation of what the audiovisual product is going to look with the subtitles. If the client is not satisfied, adjustments have to be made. Enríquez and Yague (2001:319) write that:

[...] it is important not to forget that both translators and subtitlers do nothing more than come up with a subtitling proposal for the client, who at any moment can change delete, substitute... Whatever s/he wants, in terms of text or spotting (...)

Nevertheless, with new developments in the digital world, electronic subtitling is taking hold by using digital subtitling programs such AEGISub. Subtitlers can be part of the permanent staff of subtitling companies or they can work as free-lancers. Nowadays, the audiovisual translator is a professional figure who needs adequate preparation, solid theoretical skills and experience on the practical side. Concerning the copyright, according to the Berne and World conventions the name of subtitlers must be shown on their published works. The point five in the section II of UNESCO’s *Recommendation on the Legal Protection of Translators and Translations and the Practical Means to improve the Status of Translators* claims that:

The name of the author of the translation should appear in a prominent place on all published copies of the translation, on theatre bills, in announcements made in connexion with radio or television broadcast, in the credit titles of films and in any other promotional material. (UNESCO 1976)

2.3. Temporal and spatial dimensions of subtitling

Generally, interlingual subtitles are distributed in two lines, which occupy a maximum of two twelfth of the screen. All text should be usually centrally positioned within a safe area because if it appears too close to the edges of the medium, it may get distorted. According to Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 82) “this safe area is usually 10% with each frame edge, e.g. 72 pixels in from the right and left edges and 57 pixels from the top and bottom”. Subtitles are often centred at the bottom of TV screen for two reasons: logos of TV broadcasting companies are positioned in the lower left or upper left corner of the screen; the eye has to move less from images to the subtitle; the bottom of the screen is usually of lesser importance and in this position, subtitles do not obstruct images. Subtitles are sometimes moved from the bottom of the screen when:

1. the background is so light that it hinders the reading of subtitles;
2. important actions are occurring at the bottom of the screen;
3. essential information of the audiovisual product is shown at the bottom of screen while dialogue exchanges continues between actors.

Subtitles should not be moved around unnecessarily since viewers expect to see them at the bottom. In the case of TV documentaries or interviews, information about the speaker or interviewee are usually moved to the top of the screen in order to leave the position of subtitles unchanged. When this data appears, the exposure time of subtitles must be reconsidered since the viewer may feel disoriented due to the amount of written text.

In which way do subtitlers decide between one-line or two-line subtitles? There is a general rule “if a relatively short subtitle fits in one line, do not use two” (Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007:86). However, due to aesthetic reasons some subtitling companies tend to use two shorter lines rather than extremely long one up to 39-40 characters. Two-line subtitles are more appropriate for long sentences, which are composed of various clauses. A one-line subtitle is split over two lines in order to reduce its length or to underline syntax and intonation. The consistency – meant as same position of subtitles – becomes fundamental since the viewer’s eye instinctively goes to the same place on the screen when a new subtitle appears. With two-line subtitles, for aesthetic reasons it is more pleasing, whenever possible, to keep the top line shorter than the bottom one in order not

to 'foul' images. In this case symmetry is not a predominant feature, more priority is given to readability. The position of one-line subtitles may be shifted to the right or left of the screen in order not to hide inserts or logos.

Subtitles are usually white but in black and white films they may be yellow. With this colour the contrast between text and images is sharper. The text also should have a black contour or shadow. For the Roman alphabet no more than 37-41 characters are allowed on one-line, including spaces and typographical signs. For the Cyrillic alphabet 35 characters are the maximum number allowed.

The exposure time of any subtitle should not be less than one second. In this amount of time the eye of viewer can register and process the presence of subtitles. However, if a very short subtitle is on screen for too long, it might annoy viewers because they lose reading rhythm. The timing – in and out times of subtitles – should mirror the rhythm of the original speech considering pauses, interruptions and other prosodic features. Short sentences may be sometimes joined to avoid telegraphic style. The golden rule for timing is to keep temporal synchrony between subtitles and utterances, i.e. the subtitle should appear exactly when the actor commences speaking and disappear when he or she terminates. Ivarsson and Carroll (1998:73) state that maximum synchrony should be ensured whenever possible. In their opinion, it is annoying to listen to information which has already been shown in the subtitle and furthermore they believe that hearing one text while reading another in the subtitles can slow down the comprehension of the message.

Some studies demonstrate that if a subtitle remains on screen too long, there is a tendency among viewers to read it more than once. For this reason, to avoid unnecessary repeated reading, six seconds are the recommended exposure time for two-line subtitles. If the same actor or person – in case of interviews or documentaries – is talking for longer than six seconds, it is necessary to divide the utterance when there is a natural pause or at a point where the logic of the sentence can be broken.

Inaccurate timing, i.e. subtitles that appear too early or too late and leave the screen without mirroring the rhythm of the original soundtrack, might disorient viewers, not allowing them to enjoy the programme. On the contrary, accurate timing strengthens the cohesion of the translated programme and it helps the viewer to identify the speaker and what s/he is saying in the programme. However, when the source dialogue is semantically dense, and the condensation of information hinders the comprehension of the message, a

small degree of asynchrony is allowed when subtitles are presented. In these cases, subtitles are shown a few frames before actors commence speaking and then they disappear when they finish talking. Moreover, a little but clear pause normally exists between consecutive subtitles. If there is no pause, the eye cannot process the new information. In many subtitling programs, a small pause is inserted after every subtitle through an automatic delay function.

2.3.1 One or two line-subtitles?

Research on reading speed shows that if the number of words is high in one subtitle, a shorter time is spent reading these words. This means that a longer time is needed for viewers to read and process short subtitles rather than longer ones. In *Teaching subtitling routines*, Brondeel (1994: 28) asserts that:

Avoiding latency (0.35) in perception seems to make two-line subtitles possibly less demanding of the viewer than e.g. two successive one-liners, which require two onsets. Consequently, the overall “reading time” in two liners seems to offer the viewer more “reading comfort”.

These studies suggest that two-lines subtitles can be used whenever possible. There are clearly exceptions as in cases when source utterances are short or there are cuts to be respected. The use of one-line subtitles is preferred by some other scholars such as Lohmeim. He thinks that one-line subtitles are easier to read, but he adds that “if one-liners contain greatly condensed information, coupled with a high degree of implied information, it is quite conceivable that they may be more difficult to interpret than two-liners” (Lohmeim 1999: 192).

2.3.2 Six-second rule and reading time of subtitles

When the dialogue exchanges between actors or people in the audiovisual product are too fast, it might be very frustrating to read and understand subtitles since they might disappear before viewers have finished reading them. Furthermore, the audience may feel stressed because they are not able to enjoy the images as they would like since they are busy reading quickly the subtitles. In this case viewers ‘read’ the audiovisual product

rather than ‘watch’ it. To face this complicate challenge, subtitlers can control two parameters: the degree of condensation of the source dialogue and the speed of presentation of information, which is linked to the reading speed of viewers. Due to the heterogeneity of the audience in terms of age and level of education, it is difficult to determine a reading speed which is comfortable for all.

Some scholars (cf. D’Ydewalle *et al* 1987; Brondeel 1994) have tried to calculate an average speed and they have formulated the six-second rule, i.e. the time (six seconds) that an average viewer needs for reading the written text of two-line subtitles – approximately 74 characters. There is a mathematical reason behind this rule. Broadly speaking, two frames can contain a subtitle space. The convention commonly accepted is that 16 frames (a film foot) can include 10 characters – letters, spaces and punctuation marks. A second of a film corresponds to 1 foot and 8 frames. The cinema illusion involves the projection of 24/25 frames per second. With this number of frames, subtitlers can work with 12 subtitling spaces per second. In six seconds, 74 spaces are allowed for companies which use 37-character lines. By calculating the reading speed with these factors, 2.5 words can be read per second and so 140-150 words per minute. In *Table 2.1*, the equivalence between frames/seconds and spaces is shown:

Feet : Frames	Spaces	Feet : Frames	Spaces	Feet : Frames	Spaces	Feet : Frames	Spaces
0:01	1	1:01	11	2:01	21	3:01	31
0:03	2	1:03	12	2:03	22	3:03	32
0:05	3	1:05	13	2:05	23	3:05	33
0:07	4	1:07	14	2:07	24	3:07	34
0:09	6	1:09	16	2:09	26	3:09	36
0:11	7	1:11	17	2:11	27	3:11	37
0:13	8	1:13	18	2:13	28	3:13	38
0:15	9	1:15	19	2:15	29	3:15	39
0:16	10	1:16	20	2:16	30	3:16	40
(=1:00)		(=2:00)		(=3:00)		(=4:00)	
Feet : Frames	Spaces	Feet : Frames	Spaces	Feet : Frames	Spaces	Feet : Frames	Spaces
4:01	41	5:01	51	6:01	61	7:01	71
4:03	42	5:03	52	6:03	62	7:03	72
4:05	43	5:05	53	6:05	63	7:05	73
4:07	44	5:07	54	6:07	64	7:07	74
4:09	46	5:09	56	6:09	66	7:09	76
4:11	47	5:11	57	6:11	67	7:11	77
4:13	48	5:13	58	6:13	68	7:13	78
4:15	49	5:15	59	6:15	69	7:15	79
4:16	50	5:16	60	6:16	70	7:16	80
(=5:00)		(=6:00)		(=7:00)		(=8:00)	

Table 2.1 The equivalence between frames and spaces
Source: Castro Roig (2001: 279)

Derasse claims that “the reading time cannot be assessed on an absolute basis. It is conditioned by such factors as vocabulary and the presence or absence of action” (Derasse 1987:12). The use of complicated syntax and obscure vocabulary might influence the reading speed, by confusing and slowing viewers. Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007:95-96) maintain that subtitles are not a ‘tool’ for a reading exercise, but they are fundamental for the viewer to assimilate the message of the audiovisual material in a brief span of time. The distribution channel is a further factor to be considered and professionals in this field think that subtitles ought to be displayed on TV screen for longer than on cinema or DVD. The reason is that viewers at the cinema have an active approach since they have consciously decided to pay for watching a subtitled movie or they have bought DVDs with subtitles.

2.4 Punctuation and other conventions

After examining the temporal and spatial dimensions in the previous sections, some aspects of punctuation will be explored. As already mentioned in the introductory remarks to this chapter, punctuation is one of the elements analysed by the guidelines of the *Code of Good Subtitling Practice*. Being a form of written text, subtitles observe the standard rules that regulate punctuation. However, a subtitle is an isolated item, disconnected from the previous and the following ones since the forced segmentation contributes to its fragmentary nature. Punctuation rules can sometimes slightly change. Commonly they differ to large extent from one language to another one. Subtitlers should avoid copying the punctuation of the English dialogue list provided by customer. In Russian, for instance, the comma is compulsory before expressions which introduce subordinate clauses such as “, потому что (because)”, “, что (in the meaning of ‘that’)”, “, чтобы (in order to)”, “так, будто (as if)” and “больше, чем (bigger than-comparative form)”. In the list below, various types of punctuation will be analysed in the field of subtitling according to Díaz-Cintas and Remael’s analysis (2007: 105-134):

1. Commas (,) and semi-colons (;): their primary role is to divide the structure of a sentence to facilitate its comprehension. They separate parts of the same statement which are related to each other and they indicate that a small pause is needed when reading. In subtitling, commas are used to avoid the “risk for misunderstanding

what the original is saying” (Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007: 105). For instance, “I want to thank my parents, Kylie and Chris.” is different from “I want to thank my parents, Kylie, and Chris”. The former sentence may be interpreted as stating that you are grateful to your parents, who are Kylie and Chris. The latter sentence, instead, means that you are thanking your parents and two other people called Kylie and Chris. In Italian “Mentre Mario stava saltando, l’ostacolo è caduto” is different from “Mentre Mario stava saltando l’ostacolo, è caduto”. The former sentence means that while Mario was jumping, the hurdle fell. On the contrary, in the latter sentence Mario fell while he was jumping the hurdle. Commas are also required with vocatives and can change the meaning of two sentences too: “Sarah and Jacob, come with us to the beach” is different from “Sarah and Jacob come with us to the beach”. The former sentence is a clear invitation addressed to Sarah and Jacob. In the latter sentence the speaker informs the listener that two people, Sarah and Jacob, are going with them to the beach. In subtitling, enclosed phrases should be moved at the beginning for aesthetic reasons: “In my opinion, his behaviour was deliberately provocative” is more correct than “His behaviour was, in my opinion, deliberately provocative”. Semi-colons are really infrequent in subtitles and they have to be properly used as they are easily confused with colons.

2. Full stops (.): in subtitling, they indicate the subtitle is finished and send the viewer back to the image. According to Cerón, some subtitling companies do not use full stops in order not to create “the most confusing and even irritating situation of all, as it may mean two contradictory things: either that the sequence stops there or that it goes on. Needless to say, this makes subtitles following this style very difficult to read” (Cerón 2001: 176).
3. Colons (:): in subtitling, they usually have the same function as in standard grammar, but they are also used to keep the interest of viewers by announcing or introducing list, enumeration or explanation. It might be followed by a quotation of someone else’s words. After a colon the audience expects to receive further new information.
4. Round Parentheses () and Square Brackets []: In SDH, they are mainly used to render the sound sphere, actions, feelings and emotions. They help to express information related to prosodic and paralinguistic features. In normal subtitles,

parentheses and brackets can separate relevant supplementary information that might be eliminated without changing the meaning of the sentence. However, subtitlers tend to eliminate these punctuation marks and reformulate the sentence using commas and connectors. In the images below, some examples of subtitles with parentheses and brackets from *Harry Potter* film series are shown. In *Figure 2.5* Harry steps on a twig while is walking away from a dangerous animal, while in *Figure 2.6* Hogwarts students are chatting before the duel between Professor Lockhart and Professor Snape:



Figure 2.5 Use of square brackets in subtitles to specify a sound, the crack of a twig.
Source: Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (2004).



Figure 2.6. Use of parentheses in subtitles to indicate an action.
Source: Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (2002).

5. Exclamation (!) and question (?) marks: obviously, question marks are used with questions while exclamation ones are adopted for a wider range of sentences which convey anger, surprise, happiness or disgust. These marks emphasise that the sentence is pronounced loudly or strongly. They can also indicate irony in insults and expletives. Their use must not be exaggerated since viewers can apprehend certain emotions by the images or listening directly to the source

speech and how it is delivered. Rhetorical questions require exclamation sign instead of question one.

6. Dashes (–) and hyphens (-): thanks to them, compound word or adjectival groups can be created. In the case of a dialogue exchange, dashes are used to specify that text shown in one subtitle belong to two different speakers. Usually the first line of a two-line subtitle shall be reserved for the speaker that the viewer hears first in spotting, and the second one to the other speaker.
7. Triple dots (...): when a sentence is too long and it does not finish in one subtitle, the triple dots signal that the sentence continues in the next subtitle(s). Continuation dots generally acts as a bridge among subtitles and visually signals the viewer of the connection between two uncompleted parts of sentence. When it is used in this way, no spaces are left between dots and after them the first letter of the following word is in lower case. Another purpose of triple dots is to express prosodic feature such as pauses, hesitations. Some other uses of the triple dots are:
 - when there is a clear interruption which changes the thread of the conversation.
 - When there is a gap at the beginning of a subtitle because part of the source speech is inaudible or missing.
 - When a speaker finishes a sentence started by another character.
 - When a list of items is not consciously included.
8. Asterisks (*) are normally used to censor cursing and swear words.
9. Slashes (/) in subtitles, are part of symbol that abbreviate a word useful for the message, e.g. “the accident occurred because the car exceeded 130 km / h” which corresponds to kilometres per hour.
10. Capital letters: besides being used for the beginning of proper names or of sentences after full stops, question and exclamation marks, capital letters in the past were used to render shouting. Other words, which are written with capital letters in subtitles are:
 - titles of films or programmes.
 - Road signs, newspaper headlines, writing on computer screen which are important.
 - Words that need emphasis.

11. Quotation marks (“”) and inverted commas (‘’): quotation marks are used when speakers are reading a text out loud or when they are quoting someone else’s words. In this last case, “the quotation marks are opened at the beginning of each subtitle to remind the viewer of the citation and they are closed only in the last subtitle of the series.” (Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007:119). These marks also underline nicknames, plays on words and they express irony in statements.
12. *Italics*: the remarkable advantage of italics in subtitles is that the subtitler can emphasise words or phrases without occupying any extra space. Italics is used:
 - when the source of the voice is not present on-screen;
 - when the source of the voice is a machine such as door interphone, radio, computer, loudspeakers;
 - when voices come from within such as thoughts or interior monologues;
 - when transcribing foreign words, neologisms, lexical borrowings;
 - when another foreign unfamiliar language is heard during the film or the programme;
 - when translating an off-screen narrator’s voice as in the case of film documentaries;
 - when translating the lyrics of songs;
 - when written messages are written with petite letters.
13. Abbreviations: in English there are four types of abbreviations:
 - clippings are words with omitted syllables such as ‘celeb’ that stands for celebrity. Subtitlers should be aware that clippings are pretty informal and add a colloquial attitude to the speech.
 - Acronyms are terms formed by the initials of its component words. They usually identify institutional bodies and organizations with an equivalent in any language. For instance, the English UN (United Nations) becomes “ONU” in Italian, or the English WHO (World Health organization) is rendered in Italian with the acronym “OMS”. However, in the colloquial language many acronyms can be found: btw (by the way), FYI (for your information), DIY (do it yourself). Subtitlers must understand when the use of acronyms is justified and if the register of dialogue allows it.

- Contractions which are formed by leaving part of a word out, are typically used with jobs or honorifics. The English ‘Dr’. that stands for doctor, in Italian is translated with “Dott.” Or “Dott.ssa”; ‘Mr’ becomes “Sig.”, while ‘Mrs’ is rendered with the term “Sig.ra”.
- Blends are terms formed by merging parts of two words, e.g. ‘Interpol’ (international+police) or ‘Eurovision’.

14. Numbers (cardinals and ordinals): in English, numbers from zero to ten are generally written in letters, while decimals and number from eleven can be written in digits. This rule is also respected in Italian (Servizio Sottotitoli Rai 2016: 1). Subtitlers should remember that the decimals in English are divided by a period, but in other language such as Italian decimals are separated by a comma. Number of houses, hotel rooms are written in digits. Subtitlers should avoid writing huge number with millions, billion in digits. Concerning the presentation of ordinal numbers on screen, there is not fixed rule. Due to their length it is most frequent to find them in the abbreviated form with digits. If more than a number appears on screen, subtitlers tend to write the ordinal one in digits and the cardinal one in letter.

2.5 Semiotic aspects of subtitling

Subtitles become part of the semiotic system of an audiovisual product, which include visual and acoustic sign systems. They act as an addition to the finished product and they must interact with other channels. This means that the spoken language of an audiovisual programme is certainly the major part to be subtitled, but there are other semiotic systems that contribute to the development of the plot of the programme. By relying on the narrative function of images, subtitlers might sometimes abbreviate text to eliminate redundant information. However, images can become a complex challenge for subtitlers. From a translation point of view, it is difficult to render a phrase, which refers metaphorically to images that are culturally distant from the target culture.

By introducing the term semiotic cohesion, Frederic Chaume (2004) broadens the idea of textual cohesion, including the interaction between the linguistic and the visual

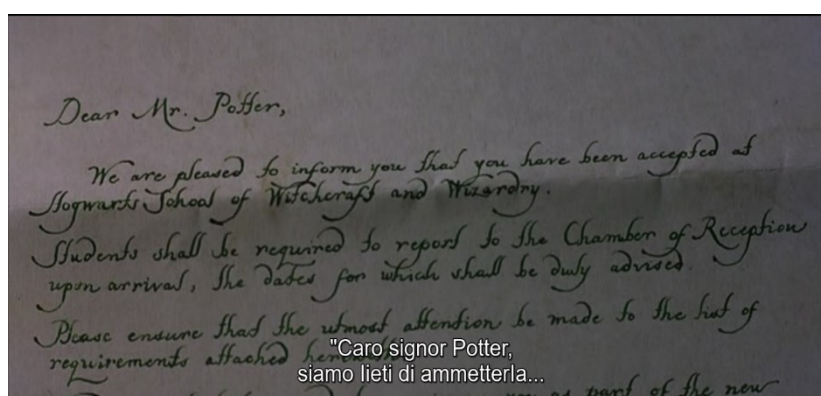
sign systems of an audiovisual product. In his opinion, a gap in the subtitles might be filled with pieces of information obtained from the images on the screen. Indeed, a noun, which refers to objects or people appearing on the screen, may be replaced by a pronoun on subtitles. Many times, when in the dialogue actors say “your parents” or “your mom and dad”, in the Italian subtitles is possible to find the expression “i tuoi”. The use of pronouns is one of the many cohesive devices, which also include anaphoric and cataphoric references, lexical repetitions, tense choice and connectives. The semiotic cohesion only works if there is synchrony between images and subtitles. Therefore, they should not be shown in advance or be ahead of the visual storytelling on screen. In documentaries, this synchrony is not so relevant.

A further form of semiotic cohesion can be identified in the interaction between speech and gestures – also known as multimodality of language. Luckmann is one of the first scholars to analyse this concept. In his opinion, a dialogue exchange is produced by using mostly linguistic code, but he adds that other “options are chosen or routinely employed, by the speaker, along with body postures, gestures and facial expression which are laden with particular meanings” (Luckmann 1990: 53-54). A subtitler must be able to detect coherence in body gestures, movements, intonation, word choice or other linguistic features defined by the narrative situation and the images. The semiotic cohesion requires subtitles to give priority not merely to dialogue but also to other information that are rendered visually. The most famous example may be the opening crawl of *Star Wars* film series, which is used to provide the backstory and the context of the events:

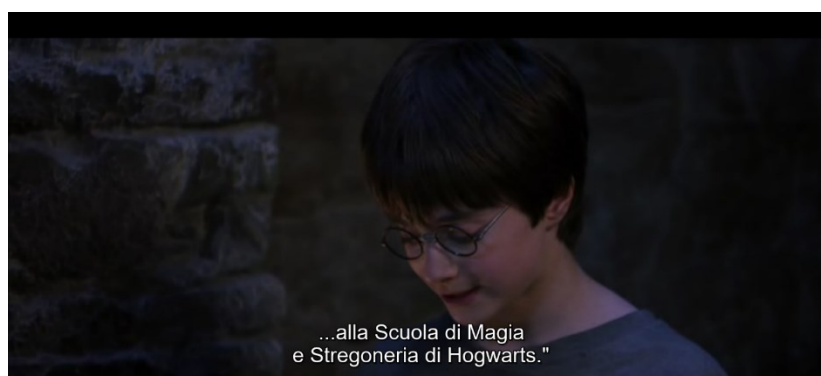


Figure 2.7 Subtitles of the opening crawl of *Star Wars*.
Source: *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015).

Other examples might be close-up shots of letters or newspapers which are read out loud by characters. In these cases, the visual-verbal and acoustic-verbal channels coincide. The solution often adopted by subtitlers is to abbreviate the text, ensuring that the essence of the message is preserved. Below, some examples from the *Harry Potter* film series, more precisely from *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* and *Harry Potter and The Order of the Phoenix* are shown. In *Figure 2.8* and *Figure 2.9*, in an iconic scene from the first film, Harry finally manages reading his much-coveted school admission letter. He reads it aloud, but the viewer can see a close-up of the letter:



*Figure 2.8 Close-up of the letter that is subtitled.
Source: Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (2001).*



*Figure 2.9 Close-up of Harry while he is reading the letter and his speech is subtitled.
Source: Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (2001).*

In the scene of *Figure 2.10* below, professor Umbridge is reading the educational decree that is hanging on the wall, but at the same time thanks to the mixture of frames, the viewer can see the decree:



*Figure 2.10 The text of the educational decree is subtitled.
Source: Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (2007).*

2.6 Translation and text reduction strategies in subtitling

In section 2.2, while considering the subtitling process, reduction and translation have been presented as two of the most delicate steps for subtitlers/translators. Many scholars have proposed their own classification of strategies, professionals usually resort to two models developed by Gottlieb (1992) and Lohmeim. (1999). Gottlieb's model identifies ten subtitling strategies: expansion, paraphrase, transfer, imitation, transcription, dislocation, condensation, decimation, deletion and resignation. Expansion is included by Gottlieb, because he is aware that there are circumstances where it is important to provide additional elements. Expansion is generally used when source expressions require a more exhaustive explanation necessary to understand foreign extra-linguistic realities. Furthermore, they can be used to clarify and explicate the linguistic choices of the original.

According to Gottlieb, with paraphrase the source text is adapted and changed in order to preserve the situational equivalence of the message. Between source and target linguistic expressions, there is no correspondence neither form nor content. The use in the target text of an altered but effective expression, which respects the communicative purposes of the original, is typical when the source expression is exclusive and specific to source language. For this reason, paraphrase is applied especially with idiomatic expressions. For instance, "My mom has just called me. She wanted to say break a leg" might be paraphrased in Italian with the sentence "Mia madre mi ha appena chiamato. Voleva augurarmi in bocca al lupo".

Transfer is the strategy that allows a word for word translation of the source version, i.e. it is possible to completely reflect the original in form and content, respecting the order of the constituents and the syntactical structure. This strategy can be performed when the time and space constraints are not so strict. Although the transfer is a full, direct and faithful rendering, it is not always the best solution. Sometimes the use of strategies which implies a kind of deviation of the original can lead to most suitable solutions, and unidiomatic results or wrong interpretation can be avoided.

Imitation is a strategy which is not so frequently used. It is the rendering of source verbal segments through identical segments in the target version, i.e. the subtitler does not translate certain portions of text but s/he transfers them as they are. Examples might be proper names, allocutive formulas, greetings, song lyrics in languages different from the one of the source version and direct quotation always taken from other languages. In a famous scene of *Friends*, Phoebe try to teach French to Joey by reading a theatre script. Both in English and in Italian, the French lines are not translated, they are simply imitated.

Transcription is a strategy which requires a high level of creativity by the subtitler. It is generally used to render puns, dialects and idiolects or expressions which are culturally connoted. When these words and phrases have a precise communicative function, the subtitler should reproduce, whenever possible, the uses of the source language in order that subtitles should reflect this diversity.

Dislocation is applied when visual or musical effects have to be expressed through verbal language. In other words, phrases, differently from the ones used in the source language, are used in subtitles to reproduce particular rhythmic effects or to preserve the connection between verbal expression and visual elements. Dislocation uses a process of paraphrase triggered by what is appearing on the screen. The message is effectively reproduced and becomes more explicit.

Condensation, which reminds of Kovačič 's (1994) partial reduction, consists of presenting the same message through a more synthetic linguistic form. It concerns only the form of the message and not its content. Condensation, differently from reduction and deletion, tries to summarise and pack the original meaning of all information. According to Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 150-161) condensation can occur at word and clause/sentence level. For instance, at word level they suggest:

- simplifying verbal periphrases: e.g. “I should really be going actually” can be rendered in “Dovrei andare”;
- generalizing enumeration: e.g. “You lied to us, Mark. Your own mother and father” might be translated in “Mark hai mentito a noi, i tuoi genitori”;
- using shorter synonym: e.g. “I have the feeling” can be substituted by “I feel”, in Italian “Ho la sensazione che” can be substituted by “Sento che”;
- using contractions and simple rather than compound tenses;
- changing word classes: e.g. a verb into a noun, adjective into an adverb “Yesterday they had a brutal fight” might be translated in “Ieri hanno litigato pesantemente”.

At clause/sentence level, the scholars proposed the following strategies:

- turning negation or questions into affirmative sentences, indirect questions into direct ones. For instance, “The house where we lived was not so large” may be transformed into “La casa dove vivevamo era piccola” or “Did I tell you there’s a party on Friday” might be subtitled as “Sai che c’è una festa venerdì?” instead of “Te l’avevo detto che venerdì c’è una festa?”.
- Turning direct speech into indirect speech: e.g. “I often tell myself: *Good thing she went, we’re more at ease like this*” might be rendered in “A volte sono contento sia andata, ha reso le cose più semplici”.
- Change the subject of a sentence or phrase: e.g. “Eczema. That can happen to anyone” might be translated in “Chiunque può avere un eczema”.
- Manipulation of theme (known information) and rheme (new information): e.g. “When the lion got closer the river, the hyppos were breastfeeding their young” may be transformed into “Gli ippopotami stavano allattando i loro cuccioli, quando il leone si avvicinò al fiume”.
- Turn long, complex sentences into simple ones: “I didn’t tell you anything because I thought you would get angry” might be rendered in “Non ti ho detto nulla. Pensavo ti saresti arrabbiato”.
- Turn active sentences into passive ones or vice versa: “We know that for years she has been abused by her husband” can be translated in “Sappiamo che il marito l’ha maltrattata per anni”.

- Merge two or more clauses or sentences: “What are your memories of that day? What did you do on that day” may be translated in one sentence “Cosa ricorda di aver fatto quel giorno?”

The decimation strategy is considered by Gottlieb as a fully comprehensible translation form, which generally eliminates additional elements with high but not essential information potential. The source text is reduced both in form and content. It is applied when the speed of speech is too high, so that the source dialogue cannot be fully translated.

Deletion involves the omissions of parts of the source, usually irrelevant for the comprehension of the message such as filler words, question tags, repetitions and hesitations. Decimation and deletion recall Kovačič’s idea of total reduction. Díaz-Cintas and Remael think that this type of omissions and deletion can be done at word, clause/sentence level. At world level, for instance “You woke me out of a deep sleep” may be rendered in “Mi hai svegliato” or “A cup of coffee please” in “Un caffè per favore”. At clause/sentence level, omissions may concern entire turns in the dialogue such as when in a noisy, crowded scene some interventions are not fully audible or when during a conversation a character contributes with an intervention which has very low information load. For instance:

A: Isn’t that your door?	A: Non è la tua porta a cui stanno
B: WHAT?	bussando?
A: Isn’t that your door knocking?	B: Sì.
B: Yes.	

Resignation is the “only case in which the translation process does not even partially return the original text [...] It is obvious that in subtitles chances that this phenomenon occurs are greater, due to the double passage from one language to another and from oral to written form” (my translation) (Sandrelli 1996: 164).⁴ It is applied when the subtitlers find untranslatable elements and they try to replace them with culturally similar

⁴ “L’unico caso in cui il processo traduttivo non restituisce neanche in parte il testo originale. Non si tratta di una vera e propria tecnica traduttiva, ma di un fenomeno riscontrabile in qualsiasi processo comunicativo: la mancata trasmissione del significato. È ovvio che in sottotitolazione ci sono maggiori possibilità che questo fenomeno si verifichi, a causa del doppio passaggio da una lingua all’altra e dalla forma orale a quella scritta” (Sandrelli 1996: 164)

references which are distant from the source language. The comprehension is sometimes compensated by the visual and narrative context. However, resignation is the last resort for subtitlers since it leads to an inevitable loss of meaning.

Differently from Gottlieb, Lohmeim's model includes six strategies: effacement, condensation, addition, hyperonymie, hyponymie and neutralisation. The effacement corresponds to Gottlieb's deletion. The addition strategy is similar to Gottlieb's expansion. With hyperonymie, hyponymie and neutralisation, Lohmeim claims that the subtitler should replace certain lexical units of the source text with semantically related elements of the target language. In the case of hypernyms, the lexical unit is substituted by a more generic, related term, while in that of hyponyms the lexical item is replaced by a more specific, related term.

2.7 The vulnerability of subtitling

As already mentioned in Chapter 1 (cf. section 1.4.4), one of the cons of subtitling is that the source dialogue/text always accompanies subtitles, producing what Törnqvist (1995:49) has called "gossiping effect", also called feedback effect. The educated audience sometimes might recognize words or phrases of the source dialogue, and then it will expect a literal translation in subtitles. Karamitroglou (1998:6) writes:

[...]when such linguistic terms are recognized by the viewers, the exact literal translationally equivalent items are expected to appear in the subtitles as well. This occurs because of the constant presence of an inherently operating checking mechanism in the brain of viewers which raises the suspicions that the translation of the original text is not 'properly' or 'correctly' rendered in the subtitle.

If these recognizable lexical units do not appear in the subtitles, strong criticism of viewers might arise. They can believe that the translator is not able or has forgotten to translate words, which they have heard on the soundtrack. For this reason, one of the strategies adopted by subtitlers/translators is to transfer words that are phonetically and morphologically similar in both languages. For instance, the English word *paranoid* is translated in Italian with the word "paranoico". According to Ivarsson and Carroll (1998:73), it is always fundamental to preserve a semantic and syntactic correlation between the dialogue of the audiovisual product and the content of subtitles.

Gottlieb, considering the difference between overt and covert translation, affirms that “subtitling is an overt type of translation, retaining the original version, thus laying itself bare to criticism from everybody with the slightest knowledge of the source language”(Gottlieb 1994:102). Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 57) describe subtitling as “an instance of vulnerable translation”. Besides respecting space and time constraints, subtitles can also be tested and judged of an educated audience, especially when the source language is English or when two languages belongs to the same language family. Viewers might feel cheated if the vocabulary of a rude speech of a speaker is not reproduced and transferred in a proper way in the subtitles or when a brief dialogue exchange is transformed into a lengthy subtitle and vice versa. These examples may transmit the feeling that something was ‘lost in translation’. On the other hand, it is not always possible to stay too faithful to the source version, not only due to technical constraints but also because the target language and culture cannot be distorted. After analysing the technical elements of subtitling, in the next chapter, aspects of documentary film translation will be analysed and discussed since the documentary films I have chosen for this dissertation are taken from *National Geographic* and *The Economist*. Then the subtitling work concerning these two documentary films will be examined.

CHAPTER 3

SUBTITLING DOCUMENTARY FILMS: “WHY DO LANGUAGES DIE?” AND “DYING LANGUAGES”

3.1 Difficulties in defining documentaries

In the field of TS, scholars did not particularly give importance to the documentary genre, due to “false belief [...] that deprived of the artifices of literary language or cinematic invention, documentaries could be nothing but a boring research topic” (Franco, 1998: 235). Díaz-Cintas, in his article *Subtitling: the Long Journey to Academic Acknowledgment*, asserts that “most studies into subtitling concentrate on films, forgetting a myriad of other audiovisual programmes that are considered inferior such as documentaries, cartoon or series”(2004: 67). This statement could echo Freilikh’s idea about hierarchy of cinematographic arts. He affirms that the hierarchy “could be presented in the form of pyramid, at the top of which fiction films are proudly marked, while documentary films, together with cartoon and popular science [...] constitute the foundation”(my translation) (Freilikh 2002: 180).⁵ Nichols, another specialist of the field, claims that “documentary therefore occupies a complex zone of representation in which the art of observing, responding and listening must be combined with the art of shaping, interpreting or arguing” (Nichols 2016:66). However, professionals in this art are not still able to define documentaries univocally.

Grierson was the first film maker to coin the term “documentary” in 1926, in a review of Flaherty’s film *Moana*. According to Grierson “documentary, or the creative treatment of actuality, is a new art with no such background in the story and the stage as the studio product so glibly possesses” (1933: 8). Through documentaries, viewers receive vivid images which convey knowledge, emotions and culture. From this perspective, documentaries are presented as a vehicle for social change, a way to shape the public opinion by being essentially instructional. They should be capable to draw viewers’ attention to everyday problems. Following Grierson’s definition, other authors see in documentaries a way of conducting social analysis. Rabiger asserts that

⁵ The original quote in Russian “можно было бы представить в виде пирамиды, на вершине которой гордо обозначено игровое кино, документальное же вместе с научно-популярным и мультипликационным [...] составляют ее основание” (Freilikh 2002: 180)

documentary “is the very opposite of escapist entertainment”. In Rabiger’s (1992: 5) definition:

A documentary can be either a controlled and premeditated essay or something lyrical and impressionistic. It can articulate its meaning primarily through words, images, or human behaviour. There seem almost no limits to its possibilities, but at its best, the documentary film reflects as fascination with, and a profound respect for, actuality. It is the very opposite of escapist entertainment, being committed to the richness and ambiguity of life as it really is.

Documentary is a cinema genre which records real people, events and facts and it tries to depict them in an artistic way. Despite the reliability of facts and events, professional in this field do not deny that improvisation and unpredictability are still present: “Sudden new ideas, footage conceived on the set, and caught events very often adorn the documentary film and often become its basis. It is important to be able to regroup in time and not miss the moment” (my translation) (Salaev 2016).⁶ This specific genre is characterised by functions of persuasion and exposition and it is often addressed to a non-expert audience (Agost 1999: 30). In his article “Towards a poetics of documentary”, Renov (1993a: 12-36) explains that the four fundamental tendencies of documentaries are:

1. to record (reveal or preserve);
2. to persuade (or promote);
3. to analyse (or interrogate);
4. to express.

Another author, York (2006: iii), identifies the following basic traits in documentaries: “[...] the shared authorship role played by both filmmaker and participant; the image-text interaction in the visual channel and the prevalence of static visual information; the presence of impromptu speech”. The spontaneity of speech, which emerges in discourse, implies that speakers in documentaries are not expected to perform a role. Another distinctive feature of documentaries is the objective vision of reality. The filmmaker’s subjectivity may sometimes intervene in the process of creation, by selecting and arranging facts according to the purpose of documentaries and the addressed

⁶ In the original Russian, “Внезапно пришедшие новые идеи, кадры, придуманные на площадке, пойманные события очень часто украшают документальное кино, а нередко становятся его основой. Важно уметь вовремя перестроиться и не упустить момент”(Salaev 2016)

audience. Consequently, the reality presented will not be any longer authentic but rather constructed accordingly to the perspective of the filmmaker.

In the last few decades, with technological progress and the development of new techniques, making documentaries has drastically changed. The introduction of lightweight portable cameras and portable recorders has made the interaction with participants possible while recording the documentary. Nevertheless, some specialists believe that the presence of the camera and of the crew might affect the action being filmed. According to Vertov, documentaries should be made secretly, and life should be “caught unawares” in order to show actually “life as it is” (Ďurovičová 1984: 325- 334).

3.2 Various types of documentary film

In his *Introduction to Documentary*, Nichols (2001) distinguishes six types of documentaries:

1. the poetic mode, whose purpose is to produce an impression or a mood instead of arguing a fact or an issue. In order to reach its purpose, in this mode the narrative is expressed visually rather than rhetorically.
2. The expository mode, which endeavours to teach and explain things that are little known to viewers such as exotic world or ways of life, problems, events etc.
3. The observational mode, through the narration of concrete stories about real people, tries to ‘observe’ everyday life without any intervention and intrusion.
4. The participatory mode is described by Nichols (2001: 115) in this way: “When we view participatory documentaries, we expect to witness the historical world as represented by someone who actively engages with [...] that world. The filmmaker [...] becomes a social actor (almost) like any other [...] This is the encounter between one who wields a movie camera and one who does not”. Main feature of this mode is the immediacy with which event and facts are transmitted and perceived.
5. The performative mode emphasizes the filmmaker’s own involvement through his or her experience, emotions, memories and beliefs. In this mode, without the filmmaker’s subjective perspective on a world, fact or event, the viewer would never fully assimilate the concerned topics.

6. The reflexive mode stimulates audience to “question the authenticity of documentary in general” (Nichols 2001: 127). Reflexive documentaries often raise the audience’s awareness regarding the fact that documentaries are not always a unique objectively truthful representation of reality, but rather just one of its many possible representations. This type of documentaries focuses on the relationship between the viewer and the filmmaker. This mode acknowledges the way a documentary is constructed and there will always be subjectivity or decision which will change the story.

Matamala (2009a: 93), by considering other authors’ works in Cinema studies, groups the various type of documentaries in:

[...] compilation films (with images from archival sources), interview or talking-heads documentaries (with testimonies), direct-cinema documentaries (recording ongoing events), nature documentaries (recording wildlife), portrait documentaries (based on the life of a person) and synthetic documentaries (mixing several of the previous options).

Science documentaries, which do not necessarily concern hard sciences but also subjects of soft sciences such as linguistics, psychology etc., are one of the most widespread forms of documentary. According to Bianucci’s model (2008:50-51) science documentaries might be included in the fifth level of his model, which identifies the popular level of science journalism. They try to present and illustrate topics of popular science to a non-specialized audience, by combining narrative, descriptive, persuasive and expository discourse (Espasa 2004). Besides utilizing filmic images, these documentaries may include interviews, photos, charts and tables. The narrator’s voice connects all these materials together (Kaufmann 2008).

3.3 Constituent elements of documentaries

Generally, documentaries are shot without a screenplay, which specifies plot, characters and setting. In this case, the screenplay resembles more a research report, with notes of the filmmaker’s goals and the description of the expected participants. The participants of documentaries are not professional actors, who usually are chosen through casting. On the contrary, these participants are not directed, and they are not required to wear specific

costumes and makeup. They wear their ordinary clothes and have basic make-up. Furthermore, documentaries are shot on location, exploiting available light, without changing the setting (Gauthier 1995: 244). The crew is formed by a small group of professionals: director, camera operator and assistant, sound recordist, gaffer and interviewer. In terms of images, these may include action or archival footage – shooting of landscapes, objects, people’s actions and interviews. On the image, there may be types of written text which are specific to documentary and not generally found in fiction: “titles identifying the participants, computer graphics such as graphs, charts and maps, still or rolling captions that present disclaimers (“this story is based on true facts...”) or updated information (“in the two years since this documentary was shot...”)(York 2006:46). The presence of this written text might have an impact on subtitling: an omission of the translation segment is not possible if the image is crucial and it provides details which are not available in the target verbal version. Concerning the sound sphere, the basic components are the sound recorded during shooting, narration, voice-over of interviews and other sound effects and music (Rabiger 1992: 277-278).

Narration is an additional component of the soundtrack, specific to documentary. It commonly helps the audience to perceive and interpret the images, by clarifying and amplifying what happens on the screen without repeating the information given by the pictures. Since the development of this film genre, the principal mode of narration has been ‘the voice of God’: “the disembodied voice of an unseen narrator”, often a man, who transmit information and present the topic, “addressing the viewer from a position of authority” (York 2006: 15). The narrator acts as a kind of mediator between the film’s participant and the audience. Narration delivers themes and topics in a persuasive way. For this reason, it must be harmonious with images and be composed in a consistent and coherent way, mirroring the filmmaker’s message. As already said in the previous quote, narration is delivered by a man because there is a false belief that the voice of an old man conveys trust much more than a woman’s voice. Moreover, narration is written with an omniscient point of view. The factual images and the male voice should give the audience the illusion that what they are seeing is authentic reality. The script of a documentary film is based on the images filmed. After filming, the producer chooses and arranges the images to express his meaning persuasively. In this process narration is a striking tool to communicate with viewers.

Some filmmakers believe that the authoritative narrator's voice forces a kind of passiveness on the audience rather than involving it in watching the documentary. Drew (1983: 271) claims that "narration is what you do when you fail" because documentaries should tell their story through characters and actions. In her work *New documentary: A Critical Introduction*, Bruzzi (2000: 40-65) underlines that narration can be used in various ways, not limited to the 'voice of God' mode; for instance, it can serve a concise storytelling or give an ambiguous counterpoint to the visuals of documentaries. According to MacDougall (1998:101-102) there are two main forms of narration: the third-person or extradiegetic, in which the voice is anonymous and comes off-the-screen; the first-person or intradiegetic, in which the voice can be identified in one of the people present in the documentary. The two videos that will be subtitled and analysed in the next chapter contains both these two types of narration. In the video "Dying Languages" of *National Geographic* the extradiegetic form of narration is mainly used mixed with two interviews, while in the video "Why do Languages Die?" the intradiegetic form of narration is present. In documentaries without narration, the subject or story is constructed through the voices of the participants.

Interviewing is another fundamental component of documentaries, in which the filmmaker search for a person's thoughts and feelings. Participants' thoughts are the shaped and organised in order to fit the documentary film's story line. Interviews serve as embedded narratives within a story. It should be noted that the interview segments in the final cut of the documentary have been edited and reduced from hours of material. Interviews can be formal such as talking heads or informal, in which a participant talks to the director while performing other actions. Participants' answers most of the time are shortened. In documentaries, interviews are a good example of scenes where "the storyline is not being built up dynamically but statically" (Titford 1982: 114). In this case the audience can read the subtitles without any risk of missing the action. York refers to interviews and talking heads as 'impromptu speech', when talking about documentary film. Since there is no fixed script in interviews, participants choose what to say 'on the fly' and cannot change it once it has been uttered , "speakers tend to operate with a narrower range of lexical choices than writers" (Chafe & Danielwicz 1987:88).

Generally, in subtitling of fiction cinema, names, greetings and simple form of address are omitted. However, these omissions might not occur in documentary subtitling

because the impromptu speech of documentary records what is said by the participants just as well the way they say it. This information should be available in the target version since it is not eliminated in the source version.

3.4 Documentary film translation in AVT

Documentaries are placed by Franco (1998: 235) in the category of ‘serious television programmes’, because they deal with reality. Consequently, the viewers of documentary concerning a foreign culture/country will expect the facts and information shown to be accurate and reliable. They will also assume that the translation of interviews and testimonies are objective and faithful as possible. For this reason, Franco believes that documentary film translation has to be considered as ‘specific practice’.

In the latest edition of Gambier’s *Language Transfer and Audiovisual Communication Bibliography* (1994), only six entries out of 1241 refer to “documentaries”. From the foregoing, it is clear that documentaries still play a marginal role within AVT. This marginality could originate from two main factors: first, the preference for literature which leads researchers in AVT to focus only on the fictional genre; second what Franco calls “a false belief” among scholars, that “translating facts is a straightforward, non-problematic activity” (Franco 1998: 235).

According to Agost (in Duro 2001: 237-238), documentaries perform specific communicative functions that make them fall within the category of audiovisual text: they tell and depict real stories; they inform about true facts and events; they influence viewers so as to change their habits, attitudes or behaviours and they try to entertain the audience.

3.4.1 Myths about documentary film translation

Espasa (2004) thinks that the scarcity of studies in documentary film translation is due to two myths – false beliefs – that she tries to debunk in her article “Myths about documentary film translation”:

- a documentary is not a film,
- documentary translation is not specifically audiovisual

Originally, cinema began as a documentary, because one of the first experiments with the camera documented an astronomic phenomenon: the passing of Venus in front of the Sun by César in 1874. In these experiments, the main purpose was to show people that there were worlds which were accessible but not completely perceived (Barnouw 1998:12). Documentary films immediately showed their versatility by serving the arts, medicine, science and education (Barnouw 1998:31). Initially, documentarians performed the role of advertisers, artists, reporters, travellers and ethnographers. Only after 1907, the genre of fiction developed and started to predominate in the field of cinematography. Politicians understood that fiction films could be used as a means of propaganda.

With reference to the second myth, current studies of translation recognise the control of the translator in the construction of text. However, the questioning of reality – major purpose of documentary – collides with voice-over, which is the most used translation mode in the rendering of foreign documentary. Voice-over is chosen for the illusion of authenticity that it can convey to the audience. In documentaries the reliability of images “depends upon its ability to inspire belief in its ‘real’ provenance” (Renov 1993b:8). In their translation, the illusion authenticity is provided by the discourse, the speakers’ voice and their accent (Orero 2004). Agost and Chaume (1999:250) give a clear definition of voice over specific to documentaries:

Voice-over: a mode of dubbing, used especially in documentaries, where the dubbing actor’s utterance overlaps with the original oral text. This original oral text is emitted at a lower volume than the translation, which starts about three seconds, later, but finishes at the same time.

In this definition, voice-over and subtitling are similar since source and target language coexist, although in different codes. In order to characterise documentary translation as specifically audiovisual, it might be also necessary to examine the following discursive aspects: field, mode, translation mode and textual function. Concerning field, documentaries can include any topic and subject matter thanks to their multifunctionality. Mir (1999: 55) claims that “the task of a documentary translator is close to an

investigative journalist. It requires minimum knowledge of a maximum number of topics”. The documentary film translator should not specialize only in one specific field such as medicine, astronomy, history etc., but rather in a specific mode, i.e. ‘audiovisual’. The specialized knowledge of any field can be complemented with queries to specialists, with books and research on Internet.

In terms of mode of discourse, it should be remembered that mode distinguishes audiovisual translation from other types of translation. According to Gregory and Carroll’s characterisation (1978:47) the audiovisual text of documentary films is written to be spoken. The text of a documentary film might include both a more organized speech as in the case of narration, and a more spontaneous speech as in the case of interviews and talking heads. The nature of this type of text leads to a diversity of registers in translation. The narrator’s register and diction tend to be more authoritative and formal than that of the participants of talking heads and interviews. The translator must be able to reflect this difference in the target version too. Translation guidelines recommends different registers for narrators and participants of talking heads in terms of syntax, lexicon and pronunciation (Chaume 2001: 79-80). Talking heads should have more varied registers, from the official/authoritative style of a specialist to the simple and frank spontaneity of an uneducated person. In the translation of documentaries, the most used modes are: lip-synch dubbing, voice-over, and subtitling. Both dubbing and voice over are used for narrators and talking heads. Generally, voice over is used when the narrator is a renowned scientist or reporter (Agost 1999:88) in order to allow a sort of comparison between the original and the translation. Other factor that influences the choice between voice over, dubbing and subtitling is the implementation cost of these modes: voice-over is much cheaper, since fewer professionals are involved, and “the length of time required to carry out voice-over is far less than for lip-sync dubbing” (Luyken & Herbst 1991:81). Subtitling is sometimes used together with dubbing and subtitling. For instance, subtitles are used when a third language is present; when speakers’ dialect is difficult to understand or when documentaries are shown in cinemas. Differently from the diamesotic form of subtitling which renders speech into writing, in documentary subtitling, the translator faces the particular challenge of transforming speech that was not initially conceived as written form.

With reference to the textual functions, according to Agost's (1999: 30, 40) classification for the translation of audiovisual genres, documentaries belong to the informative genre, but with some narrative, descriptive, persuasive and expository functions. Gommlich (1993:175-184) provides a translation-oriented classification for technical and scientific text, which might be applied to any type of documentaries:

1. transfactual texts I are informative and addressed to an expert audience. An example might be a documentary film about an experimental method of surgery shown at a medical-scientific conference.
2. Transfactual texts II are informative and addressed to a non-expert audience, such as a European documentary on Egypt and its history.
3. Transbehavioural texts I have a persuasive non-binding function, i.e. they might suggest, rather than impose, a change in the behaviour of the target audience; for instance, a documentary about wastewater by an environmentalist organisation.
4. Transbehavioural texts II have a binding persuasive function. In the case of audiovisual translation, we might think of the text about anti-piracy laws shown on rented videotapes or for instance documentaries about laws and patents.

Prototypical documentaries might be associated to the category of Transfactual texts II, for their specific feature of information-based communication from expert to non-expert. Documentaries might also be considered Transbehavioural texts II when they are conceived as a mean of propaganda, e.g. guerrilla action or clarion call (Barnouw 1998:7).

3.4.2 The source text in documentary film translation

In documentary films, filmmakers decide how participants' words should be interpreted according to initial purposes of the documentary film itself. After shooting the various interviews, the participants are rarely considered for a possible clarification of their words said on camera. What are the implications for the subtitler? In translation terms the question might be: who is the author of the source text? The filmmaker, who is the mastermind behind the creation and the production of the documentary film? Or the

participant, whose speech is the material to be translated and whose “language use reflects both an individual and a social actor?” (York 2006:23).

In the discourse analysis approach, this aspect might be seen as one of intentionality. Translation, as is well known, is an act of interpretation, in which the purpose of the translator is to recover the original meaning intended by the author of the source text. For this reason, both filmmaker and participants should be considered as the author of the source text. Hatim and Mason’ s scheme regarding film dialogue (2000) might be conformed as follows in case of documentaries:

Text producer 1= participant

Text producer 2= filmmaker

Text receiver 1= another participant or
off-screen interviewer

Text receiver 2= the audience

Text receiver 3= other potential receivers

The source text originates from the participants’ words and is subsequently shaped by the filmmaker. Since the impromptu speech does not follow any sort of script, participants’ words are mainly addressed to the interviewer – who may be the filmmaker himself/herself – or other participants. Unlike film dialogue, impromptu speech in documentaries might not be designed to consider the cinema audience, but rather the purpose of the documentary film.

Whereas the aim of subtitlers of film dialogue is to reach the ideal degree of coherence for the audience, subtitlers dealing with documentary films should focus on the intended meaning of speakers. The filmmaker himself/herself first perform an act of interpretation on the raw material formed by the impromptu speech of the participant, producing the original version of the documentary. The filmmaker’s original is a correct, proper but not authoritative interpretation of the participant’s speech. The subtitler, in turn, interprets the material of the documentary film in another language, considering the participant’s speech “as open to interpretation independently from the filmmaker’ s use of them in construction of a character or storyline” (York 2006: 27). In the next section, the main challenges in translating documentaries will be explored and analysed.

3.4.3 Main challenges in translating documentaries

When carrying out the translation of documentaries, the translator might face some challenges related to the working conditions, the different type of speaker, the translation modes and the terminology. Concerning the working conditions, documentary film translation generally demands a longer research process than the usual film translation, and consequently it requires more time. Nevertheless, Chaume (2003: 14) states that for the translation of a 90-minute documentary, translators are usually given 5-7 days (rarely 15), a pretty tight deadline. This time limit is imposed by broadcasting companies especially when documentaries are related to the latest news.

A significant problem, which occurs frequently, is the lack of a postproduction script or, when it is present, its quality. Dries believes that “a postproduction script is absolutely essential in the dubbing of a foreign production”, and in the case of science documentaries he adds that “Latin names of all flora and fauna appearing in the film script should be given” (Dries 1995: 22-23). There are often wrong postproduction scripts with no indication about specific terminological units and proper nouns. Translator should refer to the postproduction script by having a critical use of it. In order to identify the proper transcription of specific terminological units and proper names, translators should consult any available atlases, research works and Internet resources. Sometimes, they can find this data inside the original documentary itself since it is the main source of information. For instance, when the narrator is using a place name, a written sign with the name might appear in the images. Moreover, native speakers may help translators find a correct transcription of this information, avoiding inaccuracies and mistakes.

As regards terminology, documentaries can deal with a broad range of topics and subjects. The variety of subjects, which a documentary film could examine, can range from quantum physics to the preservation of mummies, from the scientific explanation of natural disasters to the analysis of medieval drawing techniques. In this dissertation, the main subject of the two documentary films is linguistics and more specifically they concern the disappearing of minority languages. The degree of specialisation of documentaries can vary according to their purpose and their target audience – experts, general public, children, learners. Science documentaries often include terms which pose problems to translators, e.g. scientific nomenclature (León 1999: 104). As stated in the *Communicative Theory of Terminology* (Cabré 1999), terms are treated as

multidimensional lexical units which acquire specialised meaning according to discourse conditions. Consequently, audiovisual translators must conduct research and terminological searches in the specialised field. They must be able to obtain all the information necessary to interpret the documentary film and then proceed with its translation.

The first step should be extracting as much information as possible from the documentary itself, without separating units from the context. For instance, in a science documentary about zoology, the name of a specific animal can be mentioned while images of it are flowing on the screen and the narrator is depicting his features. All these indications might be essential to find the equivalent, especially when rendering a generic term of the source version into a more specific name in the target language. The spoken discourse also includes information which might facilitate the comprehension of the text. For instance, the rewording of specialised terms may be a useful resource – ‘x, that is to say, y’ or ‘x, which is y’. The second step should be the consultation of professionals, specialised handbooks, terminological databases, Internet resources. Another common issue is the difference between the terms suggested by authoritative dictionaries or official termbases such as Termcat and those employed by most of the specialists. This problem is defined by Cabré (1999: 80) as the difference between the terminology *in vivo* – spontaneous – and the terminology *in vitro* – standardised, agreed by consensus. Therefore, the questions are: should translators use terms suggested by terminological entities although specialists do not use them? Or, should they combine both terms using terminology *in vivo* in the speech of specialist and the terminology *in vitro* for the narrator? It is not possible to give a unique answer, it all depends on the customer’s request and the type, style, function and target audience of the documentary.

With reference to the audience, Laine seeks to figure out which questions a translator should consider before starting to translate a documentary: what type of audience was the program aimed at in source culture? What target audience will receive the translated programme? Children, uneducated people or experts in the field? (Laine 1996:199). In this regard, translators should take corresponding decision considering for instance the type of documentary and the time of broadcast. For instance, in the translation of a documentary for 4 to 10-year-old children, the translator might avoid difficult terms and the Latin nomenclature of animals and plants.

Further difficulties also originate in the type of speakers and in the use of the different translation modes. A documentary film usually contains a narrator, talking heads and other spontaneous dialogues and interventions. In talking heads, people explain their own experiences or opinions. Although these interviews are recorded, people adjust the degree of formality of their speech, by using a more spontaneous language which includes hesitations, false starts, repetitions, anacoluthon, and other oral features which are not generally found in the narration. However, Luyken and Herbst (1991:141) underline that these elements such as “fluffs, hesitations, grammatical errors made during the interview must be ignored”. The degree of formality and the quantity of terminology varies according to the subject and the speaker. Talking heads are generally rendered using the voice-over technique in order to convey authenticity and preserve the false illusion that an interpreter is translating the source speech.

Theoretically, the target language version starts after few words of the source speech and then the original soundtrack is reduced to a minimum volume till the end in order to make audible the translated version. Clearly, a lip-synchrony is not required; however, the translator must consider the synchrony text/images – gestures, descriptions, etc. In talking heads, when the interviewee does not speak English fluently and he or she makes some mistakes, these must be corrected in the target version, since the accuracy of the information is what really matters. On the contrary, in fiction films, these mistakes may characterise the way of speaking of a character and they help creating a credible oral language. Spontaneous dialogues are also revoiced since they are not directly addressing the audience and the language is frequently informal and even vulgar; when participants speak a different language, they might be subtitled. Furthermore, subtitles are used to identify the speaker, to render certain signs which are shown on screen, to translate songs and historical footage. Nevertheless, there are some circumstances which can alter all these norms:

- due to technical constraints, the source narrator’s track can be revoiced with the voice-over mode instead of being substituted with the target track. In this way, the narrator’s voice of the source version is left underneath.
- Due to the emphasis given by the narrator, in some cases the voice-over can be chosen over other modes in order to preserve the emotional characteristics of the discourse.

- Programming and broadcasting conditions might modify these criteria. For instance, when a documentary is programmed on prime-time and a broad public is expected, voiceover is chosen over subtitling, “whereas quality documentaries broadcast on a more cultural and innovative channel might be subtitled” (Matamala 2009b: 115).

3.5 Aspects of fixed language in documentary films

Even in documentary films, since they are composed of speech and written text, is possible to examine these aspects of fixed language: compositionality, word combinations, collocations, use of metaphors and idiomatic expressions. According to the canon of compositionality, the global linguistic meaning of a sentence or of a clause results from the set of the meanings of the elements that constitute this same sentence or clause. The concept of compositionality is deeply analysed by the German scholar Frege. In one of his works, translated by Geach and Stoothoff (1977:55), he asserts that:

It is astonishing what language can do. With a few syllables it can express an incalculable number of thoughts, so that even a thought grasped by a terrestrial being for the very first time can be put into a form of words which will be understood by someone to whom the thought is entirely new. This would be impossible, were we not able to distinguish parts in the thought corresponding to the parts of a sentence, so that the structure of the sentence serves as an image of the thought.

In Frege’s opinion, comprehension of an entire sentence comes from the understanding of its constituent elements and their combination within the structure. In this way, it is possible to recognise the meaning of the familiar parts and how these familiar parts are combined in sentences that have never been read or heard. The canon of semantic compositionality involves the process of progressive establishment of meanings from a morpheme to a sentence and the relationship that these meanings build among themselves. However, in figurative language a process of compositionality is not always possible. For instance, proverbs and idioms are examples of a non-compositional meaning since their interpretation does not rely on the meaning of their parts. Idioms and proverbs are non-compositional because their components are not actual semantic elements, consequently they are not relevant for global meaning.

Another academic, Hudson (1999: 273-276) classifies three types of compositionality: linear compositionality, non-linear compositionality and non-compositionality. The first type is established when the understanding of a sentence

matches the sum of the meaning of its parts; the second one concerns the cases in which there is discontinuity between the constituent elements of a sentence, i.e. they are separated by other words. For instance, in the sentence “A strange girl, who is in the hall, is asking for you”, the relative pronoun interferes with the process of conveying information and it complicates the comprehension of the entire sentence. The last type is represented by figurative expressions, whose meaning cannot be established through the sum of the signifiers of their elements.

Word combinations are another interesting aspect of fixed languages related to compositionality. While learning a language, it is fundamental to study fixed or set phrases, whose meaning is non-compositional, therefore it cannot be inferred from the meaning of their parts. These set expressions are extremely widespread in any language and they tend to be ‘statically frozen’, i.e. the order of the parts can be hardly changed, and it is quite rare to find other combinations. These fixed phrases violate the combination rules of semantic properties since they have their own syntactic and semantic characteristics. Word combinations usually correspond to particular sequences learnt by heart and to lexical combinatory patterns. These lexical combinatory patterns – or lexical combinatorics – can vary from collocations to idiomatic expression. Mel’čuk (1998: 1) affirms “People speak in set phrases – rather than in separate words; hence the importance of set phrases”.

Zgusta (1971) examines the topic of set combinations, meant as multiword lexical units, by listing a number of criteria for their identification: no substitution is possible; the addition of extra words is extremely uncommon; the meaning of set combination does not derive from the meaning of the single constituent elements; they may have particular formal and grammatical properties, for instance the absence of articles. Mel’čuk (1995:165-232) identifies another type of word combination: the semantic phraseme. In this set phrase, where two or more lexemes are combined, the signified is the sum of the signified of its lexemes. The signifier is different from the set of their meaning. Within this group of phrasemes, it is possible to find semi-phrasemes – also known as collocations – and complete phrasemes – also called idiomatic expressions.

Heid (2001: 788) sees collocations as “[...] a phenomenon of lexical combinatorics: they involve lexical, semantic and syntactic properties of lexical items and their syntagmatic co-occurrence”. He also highlights the problem of translating collocation

since they are “[...] a matter of convention rather than being explicitly rule governed” (Heid 2001: 788). Furthermore, he lists a series of principles that are considered uncontroversial:

1. collocations usually include two lexemes, not involving determiners, prepositions and quantifiers that might also appear. This is the first main difference from idiomatic expression.
2. Collocations might be grouped according to the word classes of their constituent parts. For instance, noun + verb, noun + adjective, noun+ noun, verb + adverbs etc. It is fundamental to be aware that not all word classes can form a collocation, in particular subject/verb collocations cannot be included in this classification.
3. Collocations are polar since one of the constituent parts – the base – is determined while the other – the collocate – determines.

Heid assumes that the choice of the components in collocations follow standard combinatory preferences: “a given collocate with a given base being an arbitrary phenomenon [...] must be memorized” (Heid 2001: 790). Nevertheless, there are no fixed rules which govern collocation; they can be seen as peculiar of a language and they must be learned by heart. Collocations depend on lexical factors, subtypes factors of typical properties, usages and actions. Partial compositionality has also to be considered as an important criterion because collocations can be sometimes predicted in part.

In the documentary film “Why do Languages Die?”, one particular collocation related to history was quite challenging to translate:

18

00:00:48:10>00:00:52:02

It's been spoken continuously
since the time of the Caesars

18

00:00:48:10>00:00:52:02

È stato parlato ininterrottamente
sin dai tempi dell'Impero Romano,

In this line (no. 18), the narrator is stating that Latin never actually died, but indeed it has been spoken since “the time of the Caesars” – the times of ancient Rome – and then followed the transformation processes toward the various Romance languages. In Italian, the literal translation “sin dai tempi dei Cesari” would sound quite strange since the collocation “tempi dei Cesari” does not exist. In Italian it is quite rare to find the group of all Roman emperors with the word “Cesari”. For this reason, I had firstly opted for “sin

dai tempi degli imperatori romani”. However, for the reduction strategy and after consulting internet results for “Impero Romano”, I chose the phrase “sin dai tempi dell’Impero Romano” as translation. In Italian it is much more common to refer to institution, such as monarchy, republic and empire, rather than to people/emperor when discussing Roman period.

In addition to collocations, in the group of semantic phrasemes, there are idiomatic expressions or idioms. From an etymological point of view, the word ‘idiom’ derives from the Greek word ‘idios’, which meant own or peculiar. Idioms are mainly used in a metaphorical way and not in their literal meaning. Since they are considered polylexemic expression, many academics approach them as a linguistic issue both stimulating and problematic. Strässler (1982:11) states that “idioms are a special category of lexical items which are not only determined through their structure, but which also show a specific type of behaviour in language use”. In his opinion, idioms are a functional element of language. Another scholar, Fernando (1996) defines idioms as conventionalized phrases, whose features are non-compositionality, institutionalisation, semantic opacity and a strong degree of ‘frozenness’ that does not allow the change of their elements. In his standpoint, idioms can be classified into idioms of coding and idioms of decoding. In this classification idiom is considered as an expression composed of two independent lexical elements. Idioms of decoding can be furtherly grouped into lexemic and sememic idioms: in the former group it is possible to find phrasal verbs, e.g. break up, chip in, while the latter includes proverbs, familiar quotation such as “not a mice stirring”. Due to their conventional nature, idioms have lexical and grammatical features that are not specific of single lexemes. Fernando (1996: 32) also draws up a scale of idiomaticity in order to give a precise classification of idioms:

<p>PURE IDIOMS Non-literal conventionalized phrases which are always understood as a whole</p>
<p>SEMI-IDIOMS Phrases that are composed of one literal constituent and at least of one constituent with non-literal meaning</p>
<p>LITERAL IDIOMS Phrases that are lexically less complex and allow invariability</p>

Table 3.1 Scale of idiomaticity by Fernando

Source: Fernando (1996:32).

Metaphorical construction is the last aspect of fixed language to be analysed. Metaphors are often identified as the base for the construction of set phrases. For instance,

Kövecses (1986: 193, 201) believes that idioms are a blend that include metaphors, sayings, phrasal verbs and proverbs. Metaphors allows to notice similarities between things. They associate two concepts/ideas of two different conceptual fields, one being concrete, the other abstract. Cormac (1985:143-144) also discusses the importance of metaphors as major cognitive way to understand unclear concepts. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the functions of metaphors are to provide meaning to human experience and to organise the conceptual system. In their studies they find many types of metaphors: the most common are the conduit metaphors which portrays the placement of concepts, ideas and objects into words. With reference to idioms and metaphorical construction, it is possible to find and analyse the translation of an idiom in the documentary film “Why Do Languages Die?”:

43	43
00:02:09:02>00:02:10:09	00:02:09:02>00:02:10:09
Once a language is gone, well...	Quando una lingua scompare, beh...
44	44
00:02:10:10>00:02:12:12	00:02:10:10>00:02:12:12
it usually goes the way of the dodo.	fa la fine dei dinosauri.

In these lines, the narrator is alluding to the death of a language using this idiom “go the way of the dodo”. First of all, in order to understand the meaning of this idiomatic expression, it is necessary to clarify what is a dodo and why it is mentioned in this expression. The dodo was a flightless bird which solely lived in the island of Mauritius and Madagascar. Due to their fearlessness of humans and their flying inability, they were an easy prey for sailors. During the 17th century, on Mauritius, Dutch and Portuguese settlers progressively destroyed dodo’s natural habitat and introduced several competing species such as dogs, pigs, rats and macaques. The human activity and the competition with other species led to the extinction of dodos. After understanding the historical developments of this animal, it was fundamental to find the metaphorical meaning of this idioms since the literal translation would have been “andare nella direzione/fare la fine del dodo”. By consulting some internet pages, it emerged that the metaphorical meanings of this idiom were ‘to go extinct’, ‘to become obsolete’, ‘to fall out of common practice or use’, ‘to become a thing of the past’. For the Italian translation, firstly, I decided to use the phrase “cadere in disuso”, then I opted for the phrase “fare la fine dei dinosauri” in

order to find a certain similarity and correlation in the topic of extinct animals. In this way, a certain phonetic correspondence has been respected: both animal start with the letter ‘d’. In the next sections, the entire transcription of the two documentary films will be shown and some lines of them will be examined taking into consideration the various subtitling strategies and the aspect of fixed language mentioned above.

3.6 “Dying Languages” – Italian subtitles analysis

The documentary film “Dying Languages” was published by *National Geographic* on its Youtube channel. For this video, I was not able to obtain the dialogue list, therefore I had to transcribe all the dialogue on my own and in addition I had to perform the spotting phase – detecting the in-time and the out-time of subtitles. In this documentary film, the extra diegetic narrator, a female off-screen voice, tells the story of the *Enduring Voices* project team which travels around the globe world and tries to save minor languages that are in danger of becoming extinct. In the team there are two linguists, Dr. Anderson and Dr. Harrison, who records the basic notions of these endangered languages. The narrator's voice is often interrupted by interviews with the project team members and with the speakers of these minor languages. In the whole speech the register is informal, and the lexicon is quite simple, except for a particular expression uttered by the last Amarak speaker. This language is also known as Amurdak or Amurdag. What follows is the entire transcription of subtitles, I will analyse only the parts which I consider more challenging and interesting.

1	00:00:08:05>00:00:11:13	They've been travelling the globe searching for word and ideas
2	00:00:11:14>00:00:14:03	at the risk of being lost forever.
3	0:00:17:01>00:00:20:12	David Harrison and Reg Anderson of the Living Tongues Institute and
1	00:00:08:05>00:00:11:13	Viaggiano per il mondo in cerca di parole e idee
2	00:00:11:14>00:00:14:03	che rischiano di andare perdute per sempre.
3	0:00:17:01>00:00:20:12	David Harrison e Reg Anderson del <i>Living Tongues Institute</i> e

4
00:00:20:13>00:00:23:03
Chris Rainier of National Geographic

5
00:00:23:04>00:00:25:08
were last in Northern Australia,

6
00:00:25:09>00:00:27:02
where they interviewed a man

7
00:00:27:03>00:00:29:00
who may be the last speaker

8
00:00:29:01>00:00:32:04
of a language previously thought to be extinct.

9
00:00:32:05>00:00:35:12
"Arabai looks like my father"

10
00:00:35:13>00:00:38:10
"Arabai my father"

11
00:00:38:11>00:00:42:06
There are 7000 known languages in the world

12
00:00:42:07>00:00:43:86
but more than half are expected

13
0:00:43.86>0:00:46.52
to die out in coming decades.

14
00:00:47:03>00:00:52:03
That's why the trio helped create National
geographic Enduring voices project.

15
00:00:52:12>00:00:55:11
"Every two weeks around the planet
a language disappears

4
00:00:20:13>00:00:23:03
Chris Rainier del *National Geographic*

5
00:00:23:04>00:00:25:08
sono stati l'ultima volta nel nord dell'Australia,

6
00:00:25:09>00:00:27:02
dove hanno intervistato un uomo

7
00:00:27:03>00:00:29:00
che potrebbe essere l'ultimo parlante

8
00:00:29:01>00:00:32:04
di una lingua precedentemente ritenuta estinta.

9
00:00:32:05>00:00:35:12
"Arabai significa mio padre"

10
00:00:35:13>00:00:38:10
"Arabai mio padre"

11
00:00:38:11>00:00:42:06
Sono 7000 le lingue conosciute al mondo

12
00:00:42:07>00:00:43:86
ma si prevede che

13
0:00:43.86>0:00:46:52
nei prossimi decenni più della metà scomparirà.

14
00:00:47:03>00:00:52:03
Ecco perché il trio ha contribuito a creare
il progetto di National Geographic *Enduring Voices*.

15
00:00:52:12>00:00:55:11
"Ogni due settimane, nel nostro pianeta
scompare una lingua,

16	00:00:55:12>00:00:59:02	completely disappears forever and ever
17	00:00:59:70>00:01:05:88	so what we're doing with enduring voices project
18	00:01:02:68>00:01:05:88	is really kind of trying to bring awareness to this whole issue
19	00:01:05:88>00:01:08:10	of language loss around the planet.
20	00:01:10:07>00:01:13:00	After Australia, the team continues the search.
21	00:01:13:01>00:01:15:14	This time in the extreme north east of India.
22	00:01:16:14>00:01:19:11	The Team arrives in a large village called Hong
23	00:01:21:03>00:01:23:05	After speaking to several villagers,
24	00:01:23:06>00:01:26:04	it seems the local Apatani language
25	00:01:26:06>00:01:29:14	is widely spoken among the older generation,
26	00:01:30:00>00:01:31:14	but the endurance of a language
27	00:01:32:00>00:01:36:02	like many aspects of culture depends on the youth.
16	00:00:55:12>00:00:59:02	scompare completamente, per sempre,
17	00:00:59:70>00:01:02:68	quindi con il progetto <i>Enduring Voices</i>
18	00:01:02:68>00:01:05:88	stiamo cercando di sensibilizzare sulla questione
19	00:01:05:88>00:01:08:10	della scomparsa delle lingue nel mondo.
20	00:01:10:07>00:01:13:00	Dopo l'Australia, la squadra continua la sua ricerca.
21	00:01:13:01>00:01:15:14	Questa volta nell'estremo nord-est dell'India.
22	00:01:16:14>00:01:19:11	La squadra arriva in un villaggio chiamato Hong.
23	00:01:21:03>00:01:23:05	Dopo aver parlato con parecchi abitanti,
24	00:01:23:06>00:01:26:04	sembra che la lingua locale apatani
25	00:01:26:06>00:01:29:14	sia largamente parlata tra la vecchia generazione,
26	00:01:30:00>00:01:31:14	ma la resistenza di una lingua come
27	00:01:32:00>00:01:36:02	molti aspetti della cultura dipendono dai giovani.

28
00:01:37:01>00:01:43:04
The team meets a young man named Vijay,
who speaks English and Apatani.
29
00:01:43:14>00:01:45:09
Vijay invites them into his home.
30
00:01:47:09>00:01:51:06
Here with help from Indian scholar
Dr. Ganesh Murmu,
31
00:01:51:07>00:01:54:05
the researchers record the basics
of the local language.
32
00:01:56:06>00:01:59:06
“How you count: one two three four one?”
33
00:01:59:07>00:02:04:05
“One, four, one” [counting in Apatani]
34
00:02:04:09>00:02:07:00
In addition to conducting their own research
35
00:02:07:01>00:02:11:05
the team trains local
to use special language technology kits
36
00:02:11:06>00:02:19:09
Each kit contains a laptop computer,
37
00:02:14>00:02:19:63
digital video and still cameras,
and basic digital recorders.
38
00:02:19:13>00:02:22:13
The Enduring Voices team must press on

28
00:01:37:01>00:01:43:04
La squadra incontra un ragazzo di nome Vijay,
che parla inglese e apatani.
29
00:01:43:14>00:01:45:09
Lui li invita a casa sua.
30
00:01:47:09>00:01:51:06
Qui con l'aiuto di uno studioso indiano,
il Dott. Ganesh Murmu,
31
00:01:51:07>00:01:54:05
i ricercatori registrano le nozioni base
della lingua apatani.
32
00:01:56:06>00:01:59:06
"Come conti: uno, due, tre, quattro, uno?"
33
00:01:59:07>00:02:04:05
“uno, quattro, uno” [contando in apatani]
34
00:02:04:09>00:02:07:00
Oltre a condurre la propria ricerca,
35
00:02:07:01>00:02:11:05
la squadra istruisce la gente del posto
ad usare dei kit appositi.
36
00:02:11:06>00:02:14:28
Ogni kit comprende un computer portatile,
37
00:02:14>00:02:19:63
una videocamera digitale e una fotocamera,
e dei registratori digitali facili da usare.
38
00:02:19:13>00:02:22:13
La squadra di *Enduring Voices* deve proseguire

39	00:02:23:00>00:02:25:09	but they leave behind the technology kit,
40	00:02:25:10>00:02:28:04	so that the community can continue to preserve
41	00:02:28:05>00:02:30:06	this vital part of their heritage.
42	00:02:31:12>00:02:34:00	The recordings they make will ensure that
43	00:02:34:01>00:02:37:10	even if the last speaker
44	00:02:37:11>00:02:41:05	of a native language dies,
		it won't be the final word.
39	00:02:23:00>00:02:25:09	ma lascia loro il kit di strumenti,
40	00:02:25:10>00:02:28:04	in modo che la comunità possa continuare a preservare
41	00:02:28:05>00:02:30:06	questa parte vitale del proprio patrimonio.
42	00:02:31:12>00:02:34:00	Le registrazioni effettuate faranno in modo che
43	00:02:34:01>00:02:37:10	anche se l'ultimo parlante di una lingua
44	00:02:37:11>00:02:41:05	dovesse morire,
		per quella lingua non sarà la fine.

One of the first problems I had to face during the subtitling process of this video was how to write the foreign expression *Arabai*, which is uttered by the last speaker of Amarag. The only thing I knew thanks to the video was that the translation of this term was 'father'.

9	00:00:32:05>00:00:35:12	"Arabai looks like my father"
10	00:00:35:13>00:00:38:10	"Arabai my father"
9	00:00:32:05>00:00:35:12	" <i>Arabai</i> significa mio padre"
10	00:00:35:13>00:00:38:10	" <i>Arabai</i> mio padre"

Before finding a reliable source about Amarag, the first strategy was to write the term through the international phonetic alphabet and put it in square brackets or between inverted commas. However, after searching the Internet I was able to find the term in the dictionary *A Vocabulary of 600 words in Forty North Australian Language* written by Capell (1956: 43). In this dictionary, Capell collects the translation of some English terms

into Australian aboriginal language at risk of extinction. The fourth row is focused on Amarag. Below, the page extracted from this dictionary is shown:

43			
<u>FALL</u>	<u>FAT(n.)</u>	<u>FATHER</u>	<u>FEAR</u>
1 njaṇaḍbuni	(murgan (adj.); ṅurgaid' (n.);	bunji; -madaṛwin	djamaḍbi
2 manga-	gunbalin	ṅabaḍ; -bonan	-geneme
3 gaḥe:nbimi	miruwara	-baba	gumerana (ijtr.) (aramaramai (tr.))
4 wa:bilu	murgaid'	→ arabai	almarā ṅaijunan
5 ṅamaliṅ	ulumāṅg	abanṅun	jamira:m
6 ṅaijandiṅarabu	ṅgaru	baba	ṅoṛije:maiṅa
7 -bungu-	bulōḷo	ṅananja	-gurugudju-
8 -fu'min	gudne	njara-	wi:
9 -lara-	amalja	nurwa-	-agbada
10 -rabini	maraidj	nababa	-adriṅawi-
11 galggiri	djugur	baba	(barariri)
12 galggine	djugur	babarj	gundja'diri
13 galg...	...	baba	...

Figure 3.1 The page extracted from Capell's dictionary
Source: Capell (1956).

Following the rules of subtitling, my final decision was to write the term in italics since it belongs to a third foreign language, different from English and Italian. Other terms that I wrote in italics were the name of the project (Enduring voices), the name of the institute (Living Tongue Institute) and *National Geographic* in subtitles no. 3,4 and 14. In subtitle no. 2 I changed the class of the word, by transforming “at the risk”, (preposition+ noun) into “che rischio” (verb).

2	2
00:00:11:14>00:00:14:03	00:00:11:14>00:00:14:03
at the risk of being lost forever	che rischio di andare perdute per sempre.

In subtitle no. 10, I eliminated the word “there” and in this way I made the sentence more understandable in Italian. The literal translation for the sentence “There are 7000 known languages in the world” would have been “Ci sono 7000 lingue conosciute al mondo”, though I opted for “Sono 7000 le lingue conosciute al mondo”.

11	11
00:00:38:11>00:00:42:06	00:00:38:11>00:00:42:06
There are 7000 known languages in the world	Sono 7000 le lingue conosciute al mondo

Following the reduction strategy, I left out some modifiers such as “really” and “whole” in subtitle no. 18 and I only used “questione” in Italian.

18	18
00:01:02:68>0:01:05:88	00:01:02:68>0:01:05:88
is really kind of trying to bring awareness to this whole issue	stiamo cercando di sensibilizzare sulla questione

In subtitle no. 33, since in the video the speaker was counting in Apatani, an ancient Indian language, I found it appropriate to use the square brackets to highlight the action.

33	33
00:01:59:07>00:02:04:05	00:01:59:07>00:02:04:05
“One, four, one” [counting in Apatani]	“uno, quattro, uno” [contando in apatani]

Another reduction strategy was applied to the subtitle no. 35:

35	35
00:02:07:01>00:02:11:05	00:02:07:01>00:02:11:05
the team trains local to use special language technology kits.	la squadra istruisce la gente del posto ad usare dei kit appositi.

When I was first confronted with the term “special language technology kit”, I immediately thought that it was too exaggerated to literally render it in Italian. English is a very precise language and it tends to specify a lot by giving much information. Italian is a language where some pieces of information can be implied, especially since in subtitles no. 37-38, the narrator list the equipment of the kit. Therefore, in order to ‘lighten’ the semantic load of this phrase I chose the Italian “kit appositi”. On the contrary in subtitle no. 37 I used the expansion strategy in order to make clear the term basic recorder which I translated with the Italian phrase “registratori facili da usare”.

37	37
00:02:14>00:02:19:63	00:02:14>00:02:19:63
digital video and still cameras, and basic digital recorders.	una videocamera digitale e una fotocamera, e dei registratori digitali facili da usare.

3.7 “Why do Languages Die?” – Italian subtitles analysis

The documentary film “Why do Languages Die?” was published by *The Economist* on its Youtube channel. For this video, I was able to find and get the dialogue list, the in-times and out-times of subtitles since there were already English subtitles. This documentary film is slightly different from “Dying Languages”, not in terms of content but more in terms of form. There are no interviews with other people and the narrator is clearly visible on the screen. The register is slightly more formal and scientific than the other video. A chart is also shown. The lexicon used and the sentence structure seem more complex. The narrator – the American journalist Greene – attempts to make a geographical and historical overview of endangered languages, using Latin and Hebrew as two examples of languages that have managed to survive. In his opinion, Latin is not dead, as people think, but it has undergone processes of transformation that have to led to Romance languages. Hebrew was revived when Jewish settlers moved to Palestine at the beginning of the 20th century. Greene also considers modern languages, such as Shanghainese and Cantonese, which are at risk of extinction due to bad governments’ indifference to this issue. What follows is the entire transcription of subtitles, but I will only analyse the parts I believe more challenging and interesting to subtitle.

1	1
00:00:01:14>00:00:04:14	00:00:01:14>00:00:04:14
WHY DO LANGUAGES DIE?	PERCHÉ MUOIONO LE LINGUE?
2	2
00:00:06:04>00:00:07:08	00:00:06:04>00:00:07:08
IRANKARAPTE	<i>IRANKARAPTE,</i>
3	3
00:00:07:09>00:00:09:12	00:00:07:09>00:00:09:12
(HELLO)	il saluto del popolo giapponese Ainu.
AINU PEOPLE, JAPAN	
4	4
00:00:10:00>00:00:12:12	00:00:10:00>00:00:12:12
IISHU (HELLO)	<i>IISHU,</i> il saluto del popolo Eyak dell'Alaska.
EYAK PEOPLE, ALASKA	

5	00:00:12:13>00:00:16:02	DYDH DA (HELLO)	CORNISH, BRITAIN	5	00:00:12:13>00:00:16:02	<i>DYDH DA</i> , il saluto in lingua cornica in Gran Bretagna.
6	00:00:16:03>00:00:17:10	I don't speak those languages.		6	00:00:16:03>00:00:17:10	Io non parlo queste lingue.
7	00:00:17:11>00:00:19:09	In fact, very few people do.		7	00:00:17:11>00:00:19:09	In realtà, pochissimi le parlano.
8	00:00:19:10>00:00:22:01	They're used only by a handful of people.		8	00:00:19:10>00:00:22:01	Sono usate da un gruppo ristretto di persone.
9	00:00:22:02>00:00:25:01	And all those languages are in danger of extinction		9	00:00:22:02>00:00:25:01	E tutte queste lingue rischiano di estinguersi.
10	00:00:25:12>00:00:28:12	There are more than 7000 languages spoken in the world today.		10	00:00:25:12>00:00:28:12	Ad oggi nel mondo si parlano più di settemila lingue.
11	00:00:28:13>00:00:33:00	But about a third of those have fewer than 1,000 speakers and		11	00:00:28:13>00:00:33:00	Ma un terzo di queste ha meno di mille parlanti e
12	00:00:33:01>00:00:38:02	according to UNESCO more than 40% of those languages are in danger of extinction		12	00:00:33:01>00:00:38:02	secondo l'Unesco più del 40% di queste lingue rischia di estinguersi.
13	00:00:38:03>00:00:40:00	In fact, every fortnight,		13	00:00:38:03>00:00:40:00	In effetti, ogni due settimane,
14	00:00:40:01>00:00:42:06	one of the world's language disappears forever.		14	00:00:40:01>00:00:42:06	una delle lingue del mondo scompare per sempre.
15	00:00:42:12>00:00:44:09	When you say dead language		15	00:00:42:12>00:00:44:09	Quando si parla di lingue morte,

16
00:00:44:10>00:00:46:10
many people think of Latin.
17
00:00:46:11>00:00:48:09
But, Latin actually never died.
18
00:00:48:10>00:00:52:02
It's been spoken continuously
since the time of the Caesars,
19
00:00:52:03>00:00:55:09
but it changed very gradually
over 2000 years until it became
20
00:00:55:10>00:00:59:04
French, Spanish and other romance languages.
21
00:00:59:05>00:01:01:10
True language death happens
22
00:01:01:11>00:01:03:14
when communities switch to other languages and
23
00:01:04:00>00:01:07:11
parents stop raising their children
to speak their old one.
24
00:01:07:12>00:01:10:03
When the last elderly speaker dies,
25
00:01:10:04>00:01:13:09
the language is unlikely ever
to be spoken fluently again.
26
00:01:14:11>00:01:17:07
If you look at this chart
which measures the world's languages

16
00:00:44:10>00:00:46:10
molte persone pensano al latino.
17
00:00:46:11>00:00:48:09
Ma in realtà il latino non è mai morto.
18
00:00:48:10>00:00:52:02
È stato parlato ininterrottamente
sin dai tempi dell'Impero Romano,
19
00:00:52:03>00:00:55:09
ma nel corso di duemila anni
è cambiato poco per volta fino a diventare
20
00:00:55:10>00:00:59:04
italiano, spagnolo e le altre lingue romanze.
21
00:00:59:05>00:01:01:10
Una lingua muore davvero
22
00:01:01:11>00:01:03:14
quando le comunità cambiano lingua e
23
00:01:04:00>00:01:07:11
i genitori smettono di crescere i loro figli
parlando la loro vecchia lingua.
24
00:01:07:12>00:01:10:03
Quando l'ultimo parlante anziano muore,
25
00:01:10:04>00:01:13:09
è improbabile che la lingua
venga parlata di nuovo fluentemente.
26
00:01:14:11>00:01:17:07
Se osservate questo grafico
che valuta le lingue del mondo

27	00:01:17:08>00:01:20:10	in terms of their size	and their state of health,
28	00:01:20:11>00:01:23:14	you can see that	most languages are ranked in the middle.
29	00:01:24:00>00:01:27:03	English, like just a few other dominant languages,	
30	00:01:27:04>00:01:29:06	is up at the top left-hand corner.	
31	00:01:29:07>00:01:31:03	It's in really strong state.	
32	00:01:31:04>00:01:35:00	But if your language is	in the bottom right-hand corner of the graph,
33	00:01:35:01>00:01:39:06	like Kayapulau from Indonesia	or Kuruaya from Brazil,
34	00:01:39:07>00:01:41:08	you are in serious trouble.	
35	00:01:41:09>00:01:45:11	In bad, old days governments just banned languages	they didn't like.
36	00:01:45:12>00:01:48:10	But sometimes the pressure is more subtle.	
27	00:01:17:08>00:01:20:10	in base al numero di parlanti	e a come sono usate,
28	00:01:20:11>00:01:23:14	potete notare che	la maggioranza delle lingue si posiziona al centro.
29	00:01:24:00>00:01:27:03	L'inglese, come solo poche altre lingue dominanti,	
30	00:01:27:04>00:01:29:06	è nell'angolo in alto a sinistra	
31	00:01:29:07>00:01:31:03	È in una condizione molto forte.	
32	00:01:31:04>00:01:35:00	Ma se la vostra lingua si trova	nell'angolo in basso a destra del grafico
33	00:01:35:01>00:01:39:06	come la lingua indonesiana kayupulau	o quella brasiliana kuruáya,
34	00:01:39:07>00:01:41:08	è in serio pericolo.	
35	00:01:41:09>00:01:45:11	In passato, governi insensibili al problema vietavano le	lingue che non gradivano.
36	00:01:45:12>00:01:48:10	Ma a volte le pressioni sono più impercettibili.	

37	00:01:49:03>00:01:52:10	Any teenager growing up in the Soviet Union soon realized
38	00:01:52:11>00:01:55:02	that whatever language you spoke at home,
39	00:01:55:03>00:01:58:01	mastering Russian was going to be the key to success.
40	00:01:59:00>00:02:01:04	Citizens of China, including Tibetans,
41	00:02:01:05>00:02:04:03	as well as speakers of Shanghainese or Cantonese,
42	00:02:04:04>00:02:07:07	face similar pressure today to focus on Mandarin.
43	00:02:09:02>00:02:10:09	Once a language is gone, well...
44	00:02:10:10>00:02:12:12	it usually goes the way of the dodo.
45	00:02:13:12>00:02:18:03	Just one language has ever come back from the dead: Hebrew.
46	00:02:18:09>00:02:20:04	It was extinct for two millennia
47	00:02:20:05>00:02:23:12	but Jewish settlers to Palestine in the early 20th century
37	00:01:49:03>00:01:52:10	Qualsiasi adolescente che cresceva in Unione Sovietica capiva subito
38	00:01:52:11>00:01:55:02	che qualunque fosse la lingua parlata in famiglia,
39	00:01:55:03>00:01:58:01	la chiave per il successo sarebbe stata la padronanza del russo.
40	00:01:59:00>00:02:01:04	In Cina, tutti, compresi i tibetani,
41	00:02:01:05>00:02:04:03	i parlanti del cinese di Shangai e del cantonese
42	00:02:04:04>00:02:07:07	affrontano oggi una simile pressione per imparare il mandarino.
43	00:02:09:02>00:02:10:09	Quando una lingua scompare, beh...
44	00:02:10:10>00:02:12:12	fa la fine dei dinosauri.
45	00:02:13:12>00:02:18:03	Solo una lingua è resuscitata: l'ebraico.
46	00:02:18:09>00:02:20:04	È rimasto estinto per 2000 anni,
47	00:02:20:05>00:02:23:12	ma agli inizi del ventesimo secolo i coloni ebrei in Palestina,

48
00:02:23:13>00:02:26:10
spoke different languages back in Europe

49
00:02:26:11>00:02:30:07
and they adopted Hebrew on their arrival
as their common language.

50
00:02:30:09>00:02:32:07
It became Israel's official language

51
00:02:32:09>00:02:35:04
when the country was fully established in 1948

52
00:02:35:05>00:02:37:12
and now had seven million speakers.

53
00:02:37:13>00:02:42:00
Now Hebrew is the world's only fully revived
language, but others are trying.

54
00:02:42:01>00:02:44:10
Cornish spoken in southwestern England

55
00:02:44:11>00:02:47:02
died out two centuries ago.

56
00:02:47:03>00:02:51:14
But today there are several hundred speakers
of this revived language.

57
00:02:52:00>00:02:56:03
Practicality aside, human diversity is a good thing
in its own right.

58
00:02:56:04>00:02:59:03
Imagine going on an exciting holiday
only to find that

48
00:02:23:13>00:02:26:10
pur parlando lingue diverse quando erano in Europa,

49
00:02:26:11>00:02:30:07
al loro arrivo adottarono l'ebraico
come lingua comune.

50
00:02:30:09>00:02:32:07
Divenne la lingua ufficiale nel 1948

51
00:02:32:09>00:02:35:04
quando venne istituito lo Stato d'Israele

52
00:02:35:05>00:02:37:12
ed ora ha sette milioni di parlanti.

53
00:02:37:13>00:02:42:00
Ora l'ebraico è l'unica lingua del mondo ad essere
risorta appieno, ma altre ci stanno provando.

54
00:02:42:01>00:02:44:10
La lingua cornica parlata nell'Inghilterra sud-occidentale

55
00:02:44:11>00:02:47:02
si è estinta due secoli fa.

56
00:02:47:03>00:02:51:14
Ma oggi ci sono diverse centinaia di parlanti
di questa lingua risorta.

57
00:02:52:00>00:02:56:03
Tralasciando l'aspetto pratico,
la diversità umana è di per sé un vantaggio

58
00:02:56:04>00:02:59:03
Immaginate di andare in vacanza
solo per scoprire che

59	59
00:02:59:04>00:03:03:08	00:02:59:04>00:03:03:08
the food, clothing, buildings, the people, and yes,	il cibo, i vestiti, gli edifici, le persone e perfino,
60	60
00:03:03:09>00:03:06:14	00:03:03:09>00:03:06:14
the language was just the same as back home.	la lingua sono le stesse che avete a casa.
61	61
00:03:07:00>00:03:09:00	00:03:07:00>00:03:09:00
Oliver Wendell Holmes put it well:	Come disse il poeta Oliver Wendell Holmes:
62	62
00:03:09:01>00:03:13:12	00:03:09:01>00:03:13:12
"Every language is a temple in which the soul of those who speak it is enshrined".	"Ogni lingua è un tempio, in cui è custodita l'anima di coloro che la parlano".
63	63
00:03:13:13>00:03:20:01	00:03:13:13>00:03:20:01
Moving that soul of the people from a temple into a museum just isn't the same thing.	Spostare quest'anima delle persone da un tempio in un museo non è la stessa cosa.

In this documentary film, unlike the first one, the title "WHY DO LANGUAGES DIE?" appears in capitals and I decided to render it in Italian in capitals.

1	1
00:00:01:14>00:00:04:14	00:00:01:14>00:00:04:14
WHY DO LANGUAGES DIE?	PERCHÉ MUOIONO LE LINGUE?

In this video, information is also conveyed through non-verbal components. Some words and phrases are projected onto the screen, without the narrator uttering them.

3	3
00:00:07:09>00:00:09:12	00:00:07:09>00:00:09:12
(HELLO)	il saluto del popolo giapponese Ainu.
AINU PEOPLE, JAPAN	
4	4
00:00:10:00>00:00:12:12	00:00:10:00>00:00:12:12
IISHU (HELLO)	IISHU, il saluto del popolo Eyak dall'Alaska.
EYAK PEOPLE, ALASKA	

5
00:00:12:13>00:00:16:02
DYDH DA (HELLO)
CORNISH, BRITAIN

5
00:00:12:13>00:00:16:02
DYDH DA, il saluto in lingua cornica
in Gran Bretagna.

In this case, only after the narrator has pronounced the foreign words *Irankarapte*, *Iishu* and *Dydh da*, information about the people and the place of origin of these greetings flows on the screen. I thought of condensing this information into a single sentence “il saluto del popolo giapponese *Ainu*.”, “*ISHU*, il saluto del popolo *Eyak* dall’Alaska.”, “*DYDH DA*, il saluto in lingua cornica in Gran Bretagna.”. In subtitle no. 10, I eliminated the word “there” to make the sentence clearer in Italian. By reformulating the sentence, I also changed the order theme-rheme. Moreover, I placed the adverb “today” at the beginning of phrase, since in Italian this ‘peripheral’ information is placed at the beginning of the sentence. This change was also applied to subtitle no. 47. The phrase “In the early 20th century” was moved to the beginning of the sentence in Italian “ma agli inizi del ventesimo secolo i coloni ebrei in Palestina”.

10
00:00:25:12>00:00:28:12
There are more than 7000 languages
spoken in the world today.

10
00:00:25:12>00:00:28:12
Ad oggi nel mondo
si parlano più di settemila lingue.

47
00:02:20:05>00:02:23:12
but Jewish settlers to Palestine
in the early 20th century

47
00:02:20:05>00:02:23:12
ma agli inizi del ventesimo secolo
i coloni ebrei in Palestina,

In subtitle no. 20, I introduced a cultural difference by adding the word “italiano” instead of “francese”. Since Italian is the target language of these subtitles and also the closest language to Latin amongst Romance languages, I chose to mention it.

20
00:00:55:10>00:00:59:04
French, Spanish and other romance languages.

20
00:00:55:10>00:00:59:04
italiano, spagnolo e le altre lingue romanze.

In subtitle no. 21 a change of class of words was necessary. The English noun “true death” was rendered in Italian with the verb+adverb of affirmation “muore davvero”. Thus, there is a shift from the English nominalisation to the Italian verbalisation. In this way I have also reduced the text since the literal version would have been “La vera morte di una lingua avviene”.

21	21
00:00:59:05>00:01:01:10	00:00:59:05>00:01:01:10
True language death happens	Una lingua muore davvero

In subtitle no. 35, there was another idiom “bad old days” which is the negative of the idiom “good old days”. The meaning of the idiomatic expression “good old days” is a period of the past when things were better, consequently “bad old days” is the opposite. However, it was quite difficult to translate it in Italian since there is not a similar expression. Firstly, I thought of the Latin expression *mala tempora currunt*, but I believe that it does not express the same meaning as the English idiom. Therefore, I decided to transfer the meaning of that ‘bad’ to the word ‘government’. I could not use the Italian word ‘dittature’ since not all bad governments are dictatorships. Moreover, in this context bad governments refers to those officials who were insensitive to the issue of language loss. For this reason, through an expansion strategy, I decided to write “i governi insensibili al problema”.

35	35
00:01:41:09>00:01:45:11	00:01:41:09>00:01:45:11
In bad, old days governments just banned languages they didn’t like.	In passato, i governi insensibili al problema vietavano le lingue che non gradivano.
36	36
00:01:45:12>00:01:48:10	00:01:45:12>00:01:48:10
But sometimes the pressure is more subtle.	Ma a volte le pressioni sono più impercettibili.

In subtitle no. 36, I transformed the singular “pressure” in the plural Italian “pressioni” since in English this noun is uncountable in the meaning of persuasion/force. In subtitles no. 38-39, I turned the English collocation “at home” into the more usual Italian one “in famiglia”, then I changed the order of the sentence to respect the Italian theme-rheme structure. The English sentence “mastering Russian was going to be the key

to success” was paraphrased in Italian as “la chiave per il successo sarebbe stata la padronanza del russo”.

38	38
00:01:52:11>00:01:55:02	00:01:52:11>00:01:55:02
that whatever language you spoke at home,	che qualunque fosse la lingua parlata in famiglia,
39	39
00:01:55:03>00:01:58:01	00:01:55:03>00:01:58:01
mastering Russian was going to be	la chiave per il successo
the key to success.	sarebbe stata la padronanza del russo.

Another ‘ethical and political’ problem was faced in subtitle no. 40. In this line, the narrator is talking about the situation of languages in China. The line “Citizens of China, including Tibetans” does not respect the real situation of Tibetans, which do not feel Chinese citizens, but they want to be a separate community. For this reason, in order to respect this feeling, I decided to change the literal translation “I cittadini cinesi, compresi i Tibetani” putting the geographical name of the country and then translating the word ‘everyone’:

40	40
00:01:59:00>00:02:01:04	00:01:59:00>00:02:01:04
Citizens of China, including Tibetans,	In Cina, tutti, compresi i tibetani,
41	41
00:02:01:05>00:02:04:03	00:02:01:05>00:02:04:03
as well as speakers of Shanghainese or Cantonese,	i parlanti del cinese di Shanghai e del cantonese

In subtitle no.43, which I have already analysed in section 3.5, in addition to an idiom, there is also the discourse marker “well”. I decided to translate it with the Italian discourse marker “beh”.

43	43
00:02:09:02>00:02:10:09	00:02:09:02>00:02:10:09
Once a language is gone, well...	Quando una lingua scompare, beh...
44	44
00:02:10:10>00:02:12:12	00:02:10:10>00:02:12:12
it usually goes the way of the dodo.	fa la fine dei dinosauri.

In subtitle no. 51, for the reduction strategy I omitted the modifier “fully” since the meaning in Italian would not have been distorted. I also put the date in the previous subtitle to fit the discourse.

50	50
00:02:30:09>00:02:32:07	00:02:30:09>00:02:32:07
It became Israel’s official language	Divenne la lingua ufficiale nel 1948
51	51
00:02:32:09>00:02:35:04	00:02:32:09>00:02:35:04
when the country was fully established in 1948	quando venne istituito lo Stato d'Israele

Another problem was found at the end of the documentary film, when Greene quotes Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr., an American poet and writer of *The Breakfast-Table Series*. The quotation is from the Wendell’s table-talk book *The Poet at the Breakfast-Table*. Unfortunately, he does not belong to the Italian heritage and his name and works are not so widespread, hence I had to specify his occupation with the phrase “il poeta Oliver Wendell Holmes”. The meaning of phrasal verb “put it well” is to ‘say something eloquently’. Nevertheless, I translated it with the phrase “come disse”.

61	61
00:03:07:00>00:03:09:00	00:03:07:00>00:03:09:00
Oliver Wendell Holmes put it well	Come disse il poeta Oliver Wendell Holmes
62	62
00:03:09:01>00:03:13:12	00:03:09:01>00:03:13:12
“Every language is a temple in which the soul of those who speak it is enshrined”	"Ogni lingua è un tempio, in cui è custodita l'anima di coloro che la parlano"

When I first faced the quotation, I soon realized that the first thing to do was to find a reliable translation. I found it in an Italian newspaper (Skytg24) article about “International Mother Language Day”. The newspaper article reports “Ogni lingua è un tempio, in cui è custodita l'anima di coloro che la parlano. Questa frase del medico e scrittore Oliver Wendell Holmes sintetizza l’importanza di celebrare la Giornata Internazionale della Madrelingua.” (Skytg24 website 2019). After reading the article, I was more certain of the correctness of the translation, and I was able to put it between quotation marks in my subtitles.

Both documentary films were subtitled through the editor AEGisub. It is basic and very intuitive. Within the programme you can insert the dialogue list file from the drop-down menu *Subtitles*, and the video file from the drop-down menu *Video*. In this way you can work on the translation of the dialogue list, inserting and editing the various subtitles. AEGisub also has the option *CPS* represented by a number that helps you to understand if your subtitles are too long, i.e. too many letters. Subtitles' in and out-times can be managed through the 'rule-bar' located under the screen of the video.

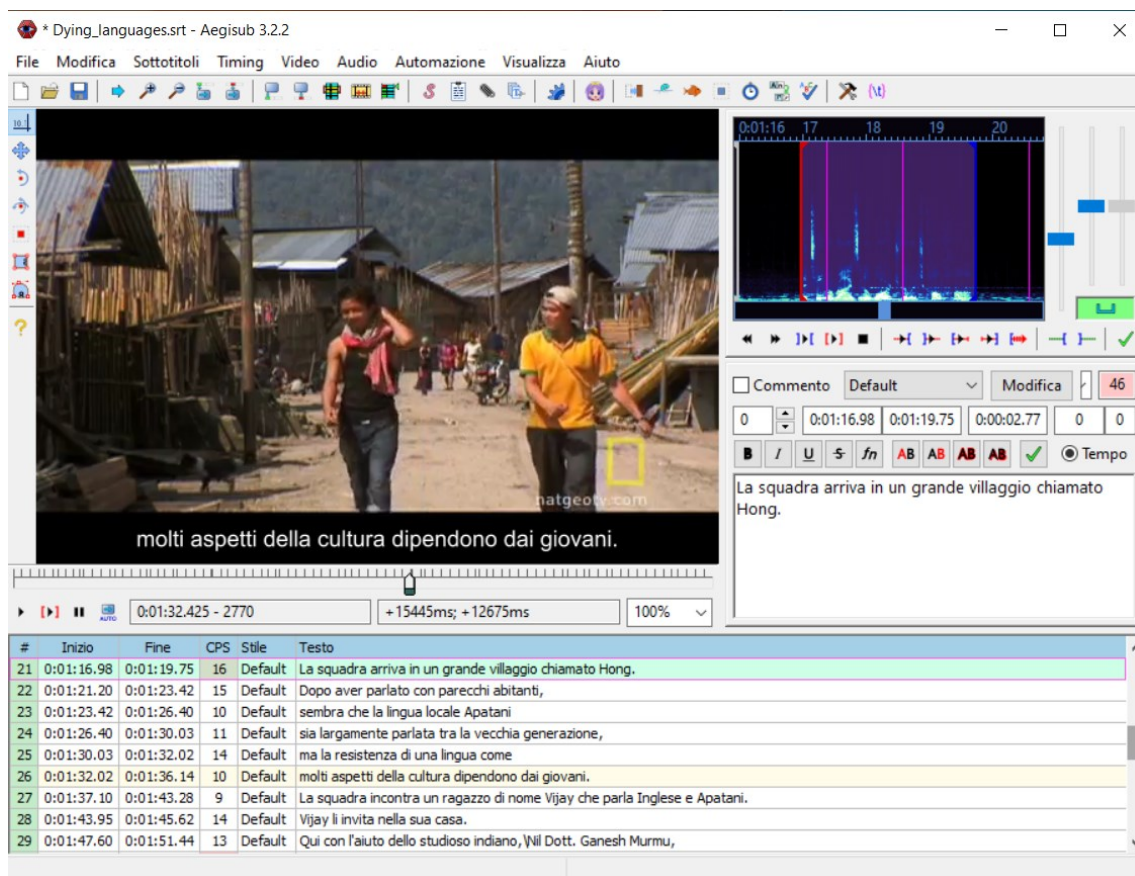


Figure 3.2 Home screen of AEGisub

After analysing my subtitles, in the next section I would like to deepen the topic of endangered languages with particular focus on the policies that institutions as EU and UNESCO are implementing to save them.

3.8 A brief reflection on language endangerment and revitalization

First of all, what is meant by the expressions ‘endangered languages’ and ‘dead language’? The term ‘endangerment’ is a borrowing from biology. By using this word, the extinction of animal species is compared to those of languages. According to UNESCO, there are five degrees of endangerment which concern languages:






Degree of endangerment	Intergenerational Language Transmission
safe	language is spoken by all generations; intergenerational transmission is uninterrupted >> not included in the Atlas
 vulnerable	most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g., home)
 definitely endangered	children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home
 severely endangered	language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves
 critically endangered	the youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently
 extinct	there are no speakers left >> included in the Atlas if presumably extinct since the 1950s

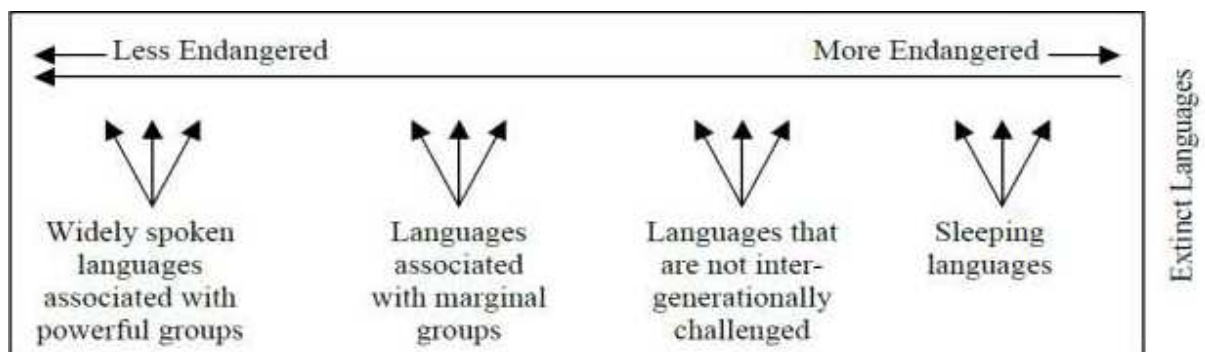
Figure 3.3 UNESCO’s Language Vitality and Endangerment framework.

Source: Moseley (2010).

What emerges from this table is that a language is defined safe when it is widely spoken and transmitted from generation to generation; a language is vulnerable when children speak it only at home; a language is said to be endangered – from definitely to critically – when parents stop raising their children teaching it, consequently the older generation knows and understand the language but the younger one does not; a language that is extinct has obviously no speakers left. In order to elaborate this framework, the UNESCO utilises 9 parameters which include the total number of speakers, the amount and the quality of the available documentation of the language, the various attitudes toward the language (policies), the use of the language in the mass media and in the novel sectors. A different classification is made by Zanna Isa, who consider only three degree of endangerment:

1. safe or viable languages: they are spoken by at least 100, 000 speakers and they are chosen as official by governments.
2. Endangered languages: they are learnt by children but in future they will cease to be learned and used.
3. Moribund languages: they are terminal decline languages which are spoken only by elderly people.
4. Extinct languages: they have no more speakers since there are not written materials or recordings (Zanna Isa *et al* 2014:46-48).

According to Joshua Fishman (1991) the language endangerment can be represented through eight stages: the first stage in which the language is used in official context (higher education, governments); the language of the second stage is used by local governments and mass media; the third stage include language used in business by employees in less specialized work fields; from stage four to stage six languages are used only in the community and in elementary schools; stage seven and stage eight represent the highest level of danger for minority languages. One of the most recent assessments of language vitality is drafted by Wesley Leonard (2008). In the continuum shown below, he places languages which are not spoken anymore at the right, while the less endangered languages on the left.



*Figure 3.4 Leonard's continuum about endangered languages.
Source: Leonard (2008:27).*

With all these classifications, it becomes clear that language death is not something abstract to grasp, on the contrary it is a concrete phenomenon which occurs around the globe. Today, half of all languages present on the globe have less than 10,000 speakers; more than 11% of the world's languages is spoken by less than 150 people. At the end of the twenty-first century, more than four thousand languages will disappear.

The main reasons and factors which lead to the death of language are: the shift towards a stronger language; natural and human-instigated disasters such as diseases, genocide and wars, which kill the last few speakers of a determined endangered language; political reasons – e.g. colonization or migration. When a country or a geographical area is colonized, the language spoken by the new settlers becomes more important and the native struggle to adopt this new language in order to receive benefits – job opportunities, facilities and new products. For instance, in 1932 the last speakers of Pipil in El-Salvador stopped speaking their native language due to the fear of reprisals. Other times, the native speakers do not think that their language is a fundamental component of their uniqueness, consequently their willing to ensure the survival of the language progressively diminishes just as happened for some sub-groups of population in Wales and Ireland.

Governments and institutions should worry about language loss since language is the first form of expression of identity. Language defines people's identity and its loss might impact speakers in negative ways. For instance, some native speakers of endangered languages often associate a feeling of strong pride and power when speaking their mother tongue, others feel "liberated". Many metaphors are used by scholar to describe language as a means to symbolize identity. In his book *Language death*, Crystal (2000:6) writes "Language is a skin". He also quotes an ancient Welsh proverb "Cenedl heb iaith, cenedl heb galon." which means "A nation without a language is a nation without a heart" (Crystal 2000: 36).

Another reason to care about language loss is that languages help people in their interpretation of human existence. For instance, endangered languages might provide multiple levels of intellectual profundity. Linguists believe that when you learn a new a language, you acquire a new soul. There is a lot of data and knowledge that can be examined when experience new languages. According to Nettle and Romaine (2000: 11) "Linguistic diversity gives us unique perspectives into the mind because it reveals the many creative ways in which humans organize and categorize their experience". In addition to identity, languages play a vital role for culture. When native speakers lose its language, they also lose some aspects of their culture such as verbal art forms – poetry, tales, traditional songs. The European commission mentions six reason to revitalize a language at risk of extinction, among which it is possible to find the community building, cognitive benefits, the connection with past, ancestors and cultural heritage (Olko 2018).

What approaches should be used to protect and to revitalize an endangered language? There are many ways to stop or to avoid language death: for instance, by improving the living conditions of the rural areas and of poor people in developing countries; by empowering native speakers of endangered languages and not interfering with their life and their governments; by funding projects which find the latest speakers of endangered languages and try to document the basic notions of these languages; by funding revitalization programs. The revitalization of a language involves social transformation since its use is a social act. A language lives as long as someone believes it is important. Sociological and psychological elements are involved in the loss but also in the revitalization of a language. This last one may be inspired by a massive social change since the reintroduction of a language then might lead to the strengthening of human rights. For this reason, authorities – especially the most tyrannical ones – are against these efforts. They are threatened by the empowerment of minorities groups. Some governments see in revitalization programs a way toward self-governance and political autonomy.

In revitalization programs, second language teaching play a major role. Some colleges and universities offer pedagogical courses on topics related to indigenous languages; however, they rarely contribute to a fully fluency of endangered languages. It is complicated to find fluent speakers of these languages which are trained to teach. In addition, this type of language teaching is a pioneering process which requires the evolution of the models of language teaching. Another program is focussed on families rather than schools, funding and training parents who teach endangered language to their children. This type of program is used in Wales with Gaelic. The learning of an endangered languages as L2, when it is hardly accepted by the dominant society, can be considered as language activism which can positively influence minority language speakers' attitudes.

With reference to the connection with ancestors and past, the revitalization of the language might be developed by reading of ancestral texts in the endangered language. There are workshops organised by language activists where ancestral texts can awake the historical memory of minority communities, leading to the strengthening of their identity and self-esteem. These activities were conducted in Mexico with the speakers of Nahuatl in 2018. They collaboratively transcribed, translated and interpreted the texts and they

personally examined the original document. For them, it was a deep emotional experience (Olko 2018). Connection with the past is very significant in indigenous communities: the ancestors are perceived as 'root' of knowledge and strength for the living. A further way to show pride for minority language is to organise and participate to parades, public events which celebrate and support endangered languages. The support can also be shown by using these languages in media and technologies.

Language revitalization may also have health and economic benefits. It increases cultural tourism and reduce delinquency. The cultural tourism is essential for the economy of every country of the world. Quite often, aboriginal traditions become a point of attraction for many people. Language endangerment is, yes, a problem caused mainly by the humankind, but we all have the necessary tools to avoid it. I would like to conclude this reflection with a quotation from the TEDtalk of Wade Davis (2003) "Dreams from endangered cultures":

Language is not just a body of vocabulary or a set grammatical rule. A language is a flash of human spirit. It is a vehicle through which the soul of each particular culture comes into the material world. Every language is an old-growth forest of the mind, a watershed, a thought, an ecosystem of spiritual possibilities.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation aimed to describe audiovisual translation in-depth. This field has been considered marginal by many scholars of TS for a long time. Since the 1980s, academics have debated the appropriate terminology to define this branch of translation, resulting in the all-encompassing term ‘audiovisual’ which included ‘screen translation’, ‘film translation’ and ‘multimedia translation’. In addition, the goal of this dissertation was to apply the audiovisual translation to the genre of ‘documentary films’, in particular to subtitle two documentary films concerning the topic of language loss. In the past, documentaries were not actually seen as film products. For this reason, AVT scholars have had to debunk some myths about documentary film translation. The structure of this work endeavoured to follow a quite logical path, starting from the basic concepts of AVT and subtitling to the analysis of the subtitles of two documentary films called “Dying Languages” by National Geographic and “Why do Languages Dies?” by the Economist.

Chapter One introduced all the major theoretical issues that might be useful to build a solid background for understanding the process of creation of subtitles. In this chapter the various definitions of audiovisual translation were presented, following then the description of the different modes of AVT. The focus is on subtitling, its historical development, and its classification according to different parameters. A short section also emphasised the position of European countries regarding audiovisual translation, on how the different European countries choose between subtitling and dubbing.

Chapter Two tried to explore the subtitling process, examining its rules and constraints, but also all the translation strategies useful to achieve a successful subtitling work. In this chapter many examples of subtitles from films were given by using some images. Furthermore, when discussing the diverse strategies, I have tried to produce some examples of subtitles by imagining hypothetical sentences taken from films. I have done this type of ‘exercise’ to immerse myself even more in the mind of a subtitler and to understand what kind of cognitive process occurs while working.

Chapter Three is totally dedicated to documentary film translation. It started from a more theoretical point of view by defining the genre of documentaries and then examining the various features of documentary film translation, including aspect of fixed

language such as idioms, metaphorical constructions, word combinations and collocations. After providing the entire transcript of the subtitles, I analysed some parts of the Italian subtitles trying to justify my translation choices and the strategies used. In this analysis, I focused mainly on the rendering of idioms, quotation, and discourse markers, but also on non-linguistic problems that the subtitler might face when creating subtitles. I have also shown my research to find the transcription of a word belonging to an Australian aboriginal endangered language. The making of subtitles has been fascinating both from a linguist and non-linguistic perspective.

Subtitling is not only about translating the source text respecting the space and time constraints, it allows the subtitlers to use their creativity to convey the meaning of the original message. They can choose to paraphrase entire sentences, omit unnecessary words, to condensate information but also to add it when the meaning of the message is unclear. Well, subtitlers have power to experiment with target languages in order to solve translation issues and create original solutions every time. Furthermore, the topic of this dissertation helped me to reflect on endangered languages. It was extremely stimulating and inspiring since it changed my perception of the world's languages. There are languages around the globe that are now disappearing, resulting in a loss of different cultures, traditions, and ideas. In this view, language is not just a set of grammar norms, syntactic rules or a body of words but a way to express one's identity and for this reason it is of primary importance to preserve this vital part of our heritage. Governments and institutions are starting to implement policies aimed at revitalizing language and projects such as *Enduring Voices* by *National Geographic* are clear proof that human intervention, contrary to what people may think, can be essential to prevent languages from dying.

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RIASSUNTO

Il panorama audiovisivo è stato fortemente condizionato dalla globalizzazione che ha apportato dei cambiamenti drastici alla produzione e alla distribuzione di prodotti audiovisivi. L'avvento e la diffusione di nuove piattaforme streaming (Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+) ha portato ad una inevitabile diversificazione dell'audience che ha richiesto la traduzione di tali contenuti audiovisivi. Per questo motivo, negli ultimi decenni la traduzione audiovisiva ha riacquisito popolarità in campo accademico con la pubblicazione di nuovi studi e ricerche. Negli ultimi vent'anni, la rapida evoluzione di nuove tecnologie multimediali, la varietà dell'offerta di prodotti multimediali e la crescente domanda di traduzione di prodotti audiovisivi ha contribuito a rivoluzionare il campo della traduzione audiovisiva. In passato gli specialisti degli studi sulla traduzione hanno sempre considerato la traduzione audiovisiva una branca inferiore a quella letteraria, molto probabilmente a causa della mancanza di prestigio dei mass media rispetto alla letteratura. Attualmente, la traduzione audiovisiva sta diventando uno dei settori più produttivi degli studi sulla traduzione, consolidandosi anche come disciplina accademica. In tante università è sempre più facile trovare corsi dedicati a questa materia.

Il presente lavoro di tesi ha come obiettivo quello di descrivere complessivamente la traduzione audiovisiva, focalizzandosi principalmente sulla sottotitolazione. L'approccio della tesi non è stato solo di tipo teorico, ma comprende anche un esempio pratico di traduzione audiovisiva applicata a due video documentari riguardanti le lingue a rischio di estinzione. Il lavoro è stato suddiviso in tre capitoli: nel Primo viene circoscritto l'ambito teorico della traduzione audiovisiva e le diverse modalità di traduzione ad essa associate. Nel Secondo viene esaminato in dettaglio il processo di sottotitolazione: le sue caratteristiche tecniche, le restrizioni spaziali e temporali che i sottotitoli devono rispettare per essere considerati corretti. Inoltre, in questo capitolo, vengono descritte le varie strategie utili per affrontare al meglio i problemi traduttologici che sorgono durante il lavoro di sottotitolazione. Il Terzo, e ultimo capitolo, concerne l'aspetto pratico di questo elaborato. Dopo una prima parte in cui viene definito il genere documentario, viene presentata l'intera trascrizione dei sottotitoli con relativa analisi delle parti che ho considerato più stimolanti e interessanti durante il mio lavoro di

sottotitolazione. A conclusione di questo capitolo verrà fatta una breve riflessione sull'estinzione delle lingue e quali misure devono essere prese da governi e istituzioni per evitare tale perdita.

Il Primo capitolo offre una panoramica generale sulle teorie e le varie definizioni riguardanti la traduzione audiovisiva, che secondo la *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* è incentrata sul trasferimento di testi multimediali e multimodali tra due lingue diverse. Prima di utilizzare il termine “traduzione audiovisiva”, gli studiosi hanno a lungo discusso su quale altro termine potesse definire questa branca degli studi sulla traduzione. Ad esempio, furono prese in considerazione le espressioni “traduzione filmica”, “screen translation” e “traduzione multimediale”. Le prime due espressioni vennero utilizzate soprattutto quando il cinema e la televisione dominavano il panorama dei mass-media. Naturalmente con l'avvento di Internet e di altre piattaforme, si è pensato ad un termine più onnicomprensivo, ovvero “traduzione multimediale”. Al giorno d'oggi però la multimedialità è un concetto che si avvicina maggiormente al campo informatico piuttosto che a quello linguistico. Per questa ragione, la maggior parte degli studiosi ha infine deciso di adottare il termine “traduzione audiovisiva”, che include le diverse pratiche di traduzione nei mass-media (cinema, televisione, Internet, DVD, piattaforme streaming).

Bisogna specificare che la traduzione audiovisiva presuppone l'interazione tra più canali, e per questo la sua natura viene definita polisemiotica. I prodotti audiovisivi agiscono su due codici: quello visivo e quello sonoro, i quali a loro volta possono essere verbali e non verbali. Quindi non è il solo testo ad essere trasferito da una lingua all'altra, ma anche il suono, le immagini, il linguaggio non verbale. Ad esempio, i titoli di giornale, i cartelli, le scritte, le espressioni facciali e i gesti possono diventare elementi integranti e il loro esatto trasferimento da una lingua all'altra può contribuire alla corretta interpretazione del messaggio finale da parte dell'audience. Gli studiosi della scienza della traduzione classificano almeno dodici modalità di trasferimento linguistico all'interno della traduzione audiovisiva. Quelle più comuni e utilizzate sono doppiaggio, voice-over e sottotitolazione. Il doppiaggio è una tecnica che prevede la sostituzione della colonna sonora originale contenente i dialoghi degli attori con una registrazione nella lingua di arrivo che riproduce il messaggio e il significato originale. Questo presuppone ovviamente un cambiamento nella voce degli attori. Questa modalità richiede grande

precisione nella sincronizzazione labiale ed una scrupolosa attenzione nell'adattare i nuovi dialoghi, in modo tale che il testo ascoltato nella lingua di arrivo e i movimenti delle labbra degli attori originali coincidano il più possibile. Bisogna dare l'illusione che gli attori originali parlino la lingua d'arrivo degli spettatori. Non devono avere la percezione che il film fosse stato originariamente prodotto in un'altra lingua. Inoltre, gli spettatori in questo modo possono godersi la visione del prodotto audiovisivo senza essere distratti da altri elementi sullo schermo. Il doppiaggio è però una tecnica molto costosa, richiede tempo ed energie, nonostante le nuove tecnologie abbiano semplificato il procedimento. Un ulteriore svantaggio è la mancata percezione di sfumature originali, in quanto i doppiatori sostituiscono gli attori originali.

Un'altra modalità di trasferimento linguistico simile al doppiaggio è il voice-over. Questo consiste nella sovrapposizione di una o più voci alla colonna sonora originale. Dopo pochi secondi, che l'audio originale inizia ad un volume più basso, un narratore inizia a parlare nella lingua di arrivo. I dialoghi della versione originale restano quindi parzialmente accessibili, anche se indecifrabili. Il voice over viene posto dagli accademici in una posizione intermedia tra doppiaggio e sottotitolazione. La non sincronizzazione tra l'audio originale e quello di arrivo contribuisce all'autenticità del lavoro, dando l'impressione che ciò che venga raccontato nella traduzione sia lo stesso dell'originale. In Italia questa tecnica viene utilizzata nei reality show stranieri o in programmi importati dagli Stati Uniti e dal Regno Unito.

La tecnica di trasferimento linguistico protagonista di questo elaborato di tesi è la sottotitolazione. Essa consiste nella sovrapposizione di porzioni di testo che riportano la traduzione dei dialoghi (e della colonna sonora) originale, solitamente posizionati nella parte bassa dello schermo. Questa modalità permette la coesistenza tra i dialoghi scritti e la colonna sonora originale, visto che essa non viene sostituita ed il suo volume non viene diminuito. Questo particolare aspetto della sottotitolazione ha portato in passato gli studiosi a considerare tale tecnica più un adattamento che una vera e propria modalità di traduzione. La comunità accademica sta iniziando finalmente a riconoscere i vantaggi e l'utilità anche didattica nell'utilizzo dei sottotitoli. Gottlieb (1998) definisce la sottotitolazione come una forma 'diagonale' di traduzione, in quanto vi è un trasferimento da una lingua all'altra, ma anche dal canale orale a quello scritto. La storia dei sottotitoli risale ai primi anni del Novecento. Antenati furono gli intertitoli, ovvero delle immagini

su uno sfondo nero che contenevano i dialoghi e questi erano inseriti tra le varie sequenze di film. Nel corso del tempo, le tecnologie hanno progressivamente cambiato la procedura di produzione e sovrimpressioni dei sottotitoli. In Europa, sottotitolazione e doppiaggio sono sempre andati di pari passo anche se in diversi paesi. Infatti, è possibile contraddistinguere due gruppi: quello dei “subtitling countries” ovvero di quelle nazioni (come il Regno Unito, Olanda, Belgio etc.) che hanno da sempre prediletto e hanno utilizzato maggiormente la sottotitolazione e quello dei “dubbing countries” composto da paesi (come Italia, Francia, Spagna e Germania) che hanno sfruttato prevalentemente il doppiaggio. Questa contrapposizione che ha radici storiche e sociali ben precise, oggi si sta assottigliando. La sottotitolazione permette allo spettatore di apprezzare il prodotto originale con le voci degli attori, le loro intenzioni e i riferimenti culturali. Tramite un prodotto audiovisivo sottotitolato, è possibile stabilire un buon approccio verso la lingua straniera, confrontando le strutture e i significati con la propria lingua. La sottotitolazione resta inoltre la modalità di traduzione audiovisiva più economica.

I sottotitoli possono essere suddivisi secondo diversi parametri. Dal punto di vista linguistico, i sottotitoli possono essere intra linguistici, interlinguistici e per bilingui. I sottotitoli intra linguistici non implicano il trasferimento da una lingua d'origine ad una di arrivo, ma solo un passaggio di codice (da orale a scritto). Di questo gruppo fanno parte i sottotitoli per non udenti e quelli a scopo didattico. I sottotitoli interlinguistici comportano sia il cambio della lingua che quello del codice. Infine, i sottotitoli per bilingui sono utilizzati in quei paesi dove coesistono più lingue ufficiali. Questi sottotitoli sfruttano più spazio (4 righe) in quanto dedicano due righe per lingua. In merito ai tempi di preparazione, i sottotitoli possono essere realizzati in tempo reale o essere preparati anticipatamente. Quelli realizzati in tempo reale vengono utilizzati ad esempio per gli eventi sportivi o i discorsi politici. Da un punto di vista tecnico, i sottotitoli si dividono in aperti e chiusi. I primi sono parte una fisica del prodotto audiovisivo in quanto vengono masterizzati e proiettati sulle immagini, e quindi non possono essere separati. Le persone non possono scegliere se tenerli o no sullo schermo. Al contrario i sottotitoli chiusi sono facoltativi, sono visibili solo se lo spettatore li attiva. In base alla modalità di proiezione, i sottotitoli possono essere impressi permanentemente sulla pellicola tramite un laser (infatti viene chiamato laser subtitling) e questa tecnica viene prettamente adoperata per il cinema; si stanno diffondendo anche i sottotitoli elettronici, i quali vengono

semplicemente sovrainposti non rovinando il prodotto. A seconda del formato di distribuzione, i sottotitoli possono essere prodotti per il cinema, per la televisione o per i DVD, seguendo per ogni mezzo delle regole e delle caratteristiche precise.

Nel Secondo capitolo viene approfondito il processo di sottotitolazione con i suoi aspetti tecnici e le strategie traduttive coinvolte. Data la sua particolare natura e i limiti imposti dai mezzi, la sottotitolazione deve necessariamente seguire un insieme di regole e convenzioni che ne garantiscano la correttezza. Ad esempio, è importante adeguare la velocità di scorrimento dei sottotitoli, ricordando che in televisione deve essere inferiore rispetto al cinema. Il tipo di font scelto deve essere chiaro e leggibile e dovrebbe variare in base al tipo di sfondo su cui appaiono i sottotitoli. Lo sfondo deve essere abbastanza scuro in modo che i caratteri scritti in chiaro risaltino per contrasto. Deve esserci abbastanza spazio tra i caratteri e le parole. È preferibile distribuire il testo dei sottotitoli su una o due righe, a seconda della sua lunghezza. Per non occupare troppo lo spazio dello schermo e per non coprire dettagli importanti delle immagini, i sottotitoli vengono posizionati nella parte bassa dello schermo. In questo modo non si interferirà con l'espressività degli attori. Bisogna utilizzare i segni di interpunzione e le convenzioni tipografiche in maniera adeguata in modo tale da trasmettere al meglio le sfumature paralinguistiche del testo di partenza (come ad esempio intonazione, esitazione ed enfasi). Nonostante non sia necessario effettuare una sincronizzazione rigida come nel doppiaggio, è importante stabilire una corrispondenza con il materiale audiovisivo, in modo tale che gli spettatori percepiscano una certa congruenza tra dialoghi, testo e immagini. Infatti, è abbastanza fastidioso leggere sottotitoli che anticipano il dialogo degli attori. Bisogna prestare attenzione alla struttura sintattica dei sottotitoli, evitando delle frasi troppo lunghe che devono necessariamente continuare per più sottotitoli. Ogni sottotitolo dovrebbe essere un'unità logica a sé stante e per questo motivo sarebbe meglio evitare l'interruzione della connessione logica e grammatica delle parole. È meglio riformulare l'intero sottotitolo in modo che esso risulti completo, compatto e coeso dal punto di vista semantico e grammaticale. Il numero di caratteri in una riga di sottotitolo può variare da 37 a 41. Per quanto riguarda i limiti temporali, ovvero i tempi di comparsa e scomparsa dei sottotitoli, essi possono 'sostare' sullo schermo da un minimo di un secondo ad un massimo di sei secondi, rispettando così la regola d'oro dei "sei secondi". La gestione dei tempi di comparsa e di scomparsa dei sottotitoli può avvenire tramite i

time code, ovvero una serie di numeri che specificano il momento preciso (in ore, minuti e secondi) in cui il sottotitolo comparirà.

Questo capitolo prosegue con la presentazione delle varie strategie traduttive che i traduttori e sottotitolatori possono utilizzare per adattare i dialoghi originali. Infatti, a causa dei limiti spaziali e temporali, i sottotitoli non potranno mai essere una traduzione piena di dettagli come l'originale. Il modello proposto da Gottlieb (1992) individua dieci strategie traduttive. Quelle che solitamente vengono impiegate di più sono quelle di riduzione del testo come la condensazione, l'omissione e la riformulazione. La condensazione e la riformulazione permettono di 'riassumere' il dialogo originale, preservando il messaggio originale. Queste strategie possono essere applicate sull'intera frase, su un sintagma o anche solo su una parola. Infatti, solitamente si tende a sostituire le parole più lunghe con dei loro sinonimi brevi o per esempio, si sostituisce un tempo composto con uno semplice, eliminando così gli ausiliari. L'applicazione di strategie come la riformulazione e la condensazione può incidere anche sulla struttura sintattica della frase. Ad esempio, una frase passiva molto lunga può essere trasformata nella sua corrispettiva attiva se questo permette un risparmio dello spazio. Questa conversione può essere applicata anche nelle frasi interrogative, negative e affermative. Possono essere trasformate, ovviamente senza cambiare l'intento del messaggio in modo tale da risparmiare caratteri. La riformulazione comporta a volte la fusione tra due frasi, quando quest'ultime contengano ripetizioni di parole o di sinonimi che esprimano lo stesso significato. L'omissione è un'altra strategia utile per eliminare la ridondanza nei sottotitoli. Data la natura additiva dei sottotitoli, durante il loro processo di creazione, è possibile omettere gli elementi superflui come pause ed esitazioni. Inoltre, in questo modo si facilita la lettura per gli spettatori. L'omissione è possibile in quanto i sottotitoli riportano quello che viene detto nei dialoghi e quello che viene visualizzato sullo schermo. Però, bisogna prestare attenzione quando si adotta questa strategia: il messaggio non deve essere stravolto, altrimenti gli spettatori potrebbero perdere delle parti importanti del prodotto audiovisivo. L'omissione può essere applicata a livello lessicale o sintattico. È possibile rimuovere parole o sintagmi, la cui informazione sia facilmente reperibile tramite le immagini presentate allo schermo. Le classi di parole solitamente ad essere omesse sono aggettivi, avverbi, esitazioni e saluti. Alcuni studiosi definiscono il linguaggio filmico una *oralità prefabbricata*, in quanto si avvale di espedienti lessicali e

di registro che servono a caratterizzare il personaggio, la sua personalità e il suo bagaglio culturale (accenti dialettali o difetti di pronuncia). I sottotitolatori deono essere capaci di trasporre anche questi elementi che nel passaggio di codice, da orale a scritto, potrebbero andare persi. La correttezza grammaticale dei sottotitoli deve essere ineccepibile, in quanto potrebbe condizionare la loro leggibilità. Per questo motivo, i traduttori che si ritrovino davanti a degli errori nell'originale, dovrà correggerli in modo tale da produrre dei sottotitoli grammaticalmente corretti. Un altro aspetto che i sottotitolatori devono considerare è il cosiddetto "effetto pettegolezzo" ("gossiping effect"). Gli spettatori più istruiti a volte potrebbero riconoscere delle parole o frasi del dialogo originale, dato che la colonna sonora rimane intatta ad un volume alto, e quindi si aspettano una traduzione letterale di tali parole nei sottotitoli. Se queste unità lessicali riconoscibili non apparissero nei sottotitoli potrebbero sorgere forti critiche da parte del pubblico. Gli spettatori possono pensare che i sottotitolatori abbiano dimenticato di tradurre delle parole che hanno invece effettivamente sentito nella colonna sonora. Per risolvere questo problema, una strategia che viene adottata è quella di trasferire tutte quelle parole che sono foneticamente e morfologicamente simili in entrambe le lingue.

Dopo aver analizzato gli ambiti più teorici della sottotitolazione e della traduzione audiovisiva, nel Terzo capitolo viene analizzato il mio lavoro pratico sui sottotitoli di due video documentari intitolati "Dying Languages" e "Why do Languages Die?". Nel campo della traduzione audiovisiva ne, gli studiosi non hanno mai dato particolare importanza al genere documentario, rilegandolo come un noioso argomento di ricerca. Infatti, la maggior parte degli studi sui sottotitoli si concentra sul cinema di finzione, dimenticando molti altri programmi audiovisivi considerati inferiori come documentari e cartoni animati. Queste considerazioni riprendono l'idea di molti ricercatori nell'ambito degli studi del cinema, secondo cui le varie arti cinematografiche seguano una gerarchia ben precisa. In cima a questa piramide è possibile trovare i film, mentre i documentari ne costituiscono la base. I professionisti dell'arte cinematografica non sono ancora in grado di definire univocamente il genere dei documentari. È risaputo che lo scopo dei documentari è appunto quello di documentare la realtà principalmente per fini educativi e per mantenere una 'memoria storica'. Attraverso i documentari, gli spettatori ricevono delle immagini vivide che trasmettono conoscenza, emozioni e diffondono cultura. Da questo punto di vista, i documentari sono presentati come un veicolo per il cambiamento

sociale, un modo per plasmare l'opinione pubblica essendo molto istruttivi. Devono essere in grado di attirare l'attenzione sui problemi quotidiani della vita e di condurre una vera e propria analisi sociale. Le quattro tendenze portate avanti dai documentari sono: registrare, persuadere, analizzare ed esprimere. Il documentario è quindi un genere cinematografico che registra persone, eventi e fatti reali ma cerca di rappresentarli in modo artistico. Un'altra caratteristica distintiva dei documentari è la visione oggettiva della realtà. La soggettività del regista a volte può intervenire nel processo di creazione, selezionando e organizzando gli eventi in base allo scopo del documentario stesso e al pubblico a cui si rivolge. Negli ultimi decenni, il progresso tecnologico e lo sviluppo di nuove tecniche cinematografiche hanno influenzato il processo di realizzazione dei documentari. L'introduzione di videocamere più leggere e di registratori portatili ha reso possibile l'interazione con i partecipanti del documentario durante la sua registrazione. Alcuni specialisti ritengono che la presenza di questi apparecchi possa in qualche modo influenzare l'azione che si sta filmando. Secondo alcuni la realtà e la vita dovrebbe essere colta alla sprovvista.

I documentari presi in visione per il lavoro di sottotitolazione sono di tipo scientifico. I documentari scientifici non devono necessariamente riguardare le cosiddette *hard sciences* per essere ritenuti tali, ma possono avere come oggetto anche materie delle *soft sciences* come la psicologia o la linguistica, come nel caso di questo elaborato di tesi. Questo tipo di documentario cerca di presentare e illustrare argomenti scientifici ad un pubblico non specializzato, combinando vari tipi di discorso (narrativo, descrittivo, persuasivo). Oltre a utilizzare le immagini questi documentari possono mostrare grafici, tabelle ed è la voce del narratore a collegare tutti questi materiali insieme. Gli studiosi ritengono che la scarsità di studi sulla traduzione di documentari sia dovuta a due miti, che possono essere però sfatati. Il primo mito è che il documentario non è un film. In realtà, in origine il cinema nasce proprio come documentario, in quanto uno dei primi esperimenti con la cinepresa documentò un fenomeno astronomico: il passaggio di Venere davanti al Sole nel 1874. Questi primi esperimenti filmici servivano a mostrare dei mondi accessibili ma che non potevano essere percepiti a occhio nudo. Solo dopo il 1907, il genere della narrativa e del cinema di finzione iniziò a primeggiare, questo perché i politici capirono fin da subito che i film potevano essere usati come mezzo di propaganda. Il secondo mito afferma che la traduzione dei documentari non può essere

inclusa nella traduzione audiovisiva. Invece la traduzione dei documentari dovrebbe essere considerata una vera e propria pratica specifica di traduzione. I documentari rientrano a pieno diritto nella categoria dei testi audiovisivi, in quanto raccontano e descrivono storie reali, informano su eventi realmente accaduti, intrattengono e influenzano gli spettatori cambiando i loro comportamenti e le loro abitudini. Le modalità più utilizzate nella traduzione dei documentari sono: voice-over, doppiaggio e sottotitoli. In questo ambito, voice-over e sottotitoli sono simili in quanto la lingua di origine e quella di arrivo coesistono, sebbene in codici diversi. Generalmente, il voice over viene utilizzato quando il narratore è un noto/a scienziato/a o reporter, in questo modo si consente una sorta di confronto tra l'originale e la traduzione. I traduttori dovrebbero cercare di rendere il registro del loro discorso con il giusto grado di formalità. I dialoghi degli esperti vengono resi con la tecnica del voice-over in modo tale da trasmettere l'autenticità e preservare l'illusione che un interprete stia traducendo il discorso originale. Negli interventi spontanei, invece, è importante essere precisi nella trasmissione delle informazioni, correggendo quindi qualsiasi tipo di errore. I sottotitoli vengono utilizzati nei documentari soprattutto per identificare il parlante, per rendere alcuni segni, grafici, parole che vengono mostrati sullo schermo e per tradurre canzoni e filmati storici. I sottotitoli vengono adoperati nel caso in cui i documentari vengano trasmessi su un canale più culturale e innovativo, o se vengono trasmessi al cinema. Nella sottotitolazione dei documentari, i traduttori affrontano la particolare sfida di trasformare un discorso che inizialmente non era concepito in forma scritta, a differenza del cinema di finzione. Infatti, la maggior parte dei dialoghi e delle interviste nei documentari sono spontanei nella loro creazione. La traduzione dei documentari richiede un processo di ricerca molto più lungo rispetto alla normale traduzione dei film, e di conseguenza richiede più tempo. Un altro problema è la mancanza di una sceneggiatura di post-produzione che i traduttori potrebbero usufruire nella ricerca per la trascrizione corretta di specifiche unità terminologiche (es. nomi latini di flora e fauna). In questo caso chi lavora alla sottotitolazione dovrebbe consultare atlanti ed enciclopedie per essere sicuro sulla correttezza di tali termini. A volte, questi dati possono essere trovati all'interno del documentario originale. Ad esempio, quando il narratore dice un toponimo, nelle immagini potrebbe comparire un segnale con scritto il nome del luogo. I traduttori

possono anche rivolgersi, quando possibile, ai parlanti madrelingua per trovare la trascrizione corretta di queste informazioni, evitando imprecisioni ed errori.

Il primo documentario che ho sottotitolato e analizzato è stato “Dying Languages” pubblicato da National Geographic. Per questo video-documentario non sono riuscito ad ottenere la lista dei dialoghi, quindi ho dovuto effettuare la trascrizione dei dialoghi originali da solo e in più ho dovuto eseguire la fase di *spotting*, ovvero stabilire i tempi di comparsa e scomparsa dei sottotitoli. In questo documentario è presente una voce fuori campo femminile che narra le vicende del team di ricerca del progetto di National Geographic *Enduring Voices*. Il team composto da due linguisti e dal regista, viaggia per il mondo cercando di salvare quelle lingue che sono a rischio di estinzione. La voce della narratrice è spesso interrotta da interviste con i membri del team e da interviste con i parlanti di queste lingue minori. Per tutto il discorso, il registro è abbastanza informale e il lessico utilizzato abbastanza semplice. Una dei primi problemi che ho dovuto affrontare è stata la trascrizione della parola “*Arabai*” in lingua Amarag (Amurdak o Amurdag), una lingua aborigena australiana. Tale parola viene infatti pronunciata dall’ultimo parlante rimasto. L’unica cosa che sapevo appena finito di guardare il video è che la traduzione di tale parola era padre. Inizialmente ho pensato di scrivere la parola nei sottotitoli attraverso la trascrizione fonetica e poi di inserirla tra le parentesi quadre o tra le virgolette. Successivamente, cercando su internet, sono riuscito a trovare un dizionario che racchiudeva circa 600 parole delle lingue aborigene australiane e la loro traduzione. Fortunatamente tra questa c’era anche la parola “*Arabai*”. Ovviamente per la resa di alcune collocazioni, combinazioni di parole, ho sfruttato le strategie traduttive precedentemente spiegate come nel caso del termine “special language technology kit”.

Per il secondo documentario, intitolato “Why do Languages Die?” pubblicato dal *The Economist*, è stato possibile ottenere la lista dei dialoghi e i tempi di comparsa e scomparsa dei sottotitoli, dato che erano già presenti dei sottotitoli in inglese. Questo documentario è leggermente diverso dal primo, non solamente in termini di contenuto ma anche di forma. Non ci sono interviste con altre persone e il narratore non è una voce fuori campo, ma è chiaramente visibile sullo schermo. Il narratore è il giornalista americano Greene che spesso collabora con il *The Economist*. Il registro è leggermente più formale e scientifico rispetto all’altro video. Il lessico utilizzato e la struttura sintattica della frase risultano leggermente più complesse. Greene cerca di fare un breve *excursus*

storico e geografico sulle lingue in via di estinzione, usando il latino e l'ebraico come due esempi di lingue che sono riuscite a sopravvivere. Inoltre, considera anche la situazione contemporanea delle lingue minori (come quelle parlate in Cina) e come quest'ultime rischierebbero di estinguersi a causa dell'indifferenza dei governi nei confronti di questo problema. In questo video-documentario vengono utilizzate delle espressioni idiomatiche che come ben sappiamo non possono essere semplicemente tradotte letteralmente, ma devono essere adattate per la nostra cultura. Inoltre, un'altra questione che ha subito un adattamento è stata una collocazione storica riguardante l'Impero Romano. Alla fine del video, viene citato un poeta americano Oliver Wendell Holmes Senior e la traduzione della sua citazione ha comportato un ulteriore lavoro di ricerca, dato che le sue opere non sono particolarmente diffuse in Italia. Nell'ultima parte del capitolo, ho cercato di riflettere sul tema delle lingue a rischio di estinzione, con un particolare focus sulle cause e sulle possibili misure da adottare per prevenirla. Essendo uno studente di lingue straniere, questo argomento è stato particolarmente interessante poiché ha cambiato la mia percezione delle lingue nel mondo. Il fenomeno della scomparsa di una lingua che all'inizio poteva sembrare astratto, è divenuto molto più concreto dopo aver constatato i numeri e le statistiche. Ci sono lingue in tutto il mondo che in questo preciso istante stanno scomparendo, con la conseguente perdita di culture, tradizioni e idee. La lingua non è quindi solo un insieme di parole, norme grammaticali o regole sintattiche, ma un modo per esprimere la propria identità.

Tramite questo elaborato di tesi, ho potuto comprendere che la sottotitolazione non è solo la traduzione di un testo rispettando i vincoli di spazio e tempo, ma essa permette di sfruttare la propria astuzia e creatività per trasmettere il significato del messaggio di chi parla. Ho avuto a disposizione diverse strategie: ho potuto condensare le informazioni, omettere le parole non necessarie o perfino aggiungere parole quando il significato del messaggio non è stato chiaro. È stato particolarmente stimolante ricercare, sperimentare con la mia lingua per risolvere i problemi di traduzione e creare ogni volta delle soluzioni originali.