Rewiring the circuitry of audiovisual translation

Introduction

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It is customary for introductions to new publications on audiovisual translation (AVT) to start by drawing the reader’s attention to various signs of its vitality. The nature and significance of developments witnessed over the last decade, however, has generated a raft of sophisticated indicators to measure the vibrancy of AVT. No longer limited to the growing number of thematic collections and monographs, specialized conferences and dedicated training programmes, the growing prominence, diversity and clout of AVT studies is now also signalled by the inception of collective research projects funded by international stakeholders, the formation of transnational research groups, and the participation of AVT scholars and trainers in successful programmes of collaboration with industry partners.

Crucially, this sense of buoyancy and expansiveness poses its own risks. As a self-standing area of scholarly enquiry within a wider discipline whose short history has been often accounted for in terms of successive, occasionally spasmodic, twists, AVT has recently attempted to foreground its growing maturity through the trope of the ‘turn’. Remael’s cautiously hedged claim that ‘[t]he 21st century well may see the advent of the “audiovisual turn” in T[ranslation] S[udies]’ (2010: 15) is now routinely repeated like a mantra in the literature, albeit devoid of the caveats and presentational nuances that moulded the original statement (see, for example, McLaughlin 2014: 380) and/or diluted by a trivializing understanding of ‘turns’ as little more than relatively self-standing research themes. Jiménez-Crespo’s (2017: 5) premise that developments in the study of crowdsourced translation are ‘inspired by the “technological turn” (Cronin 2010; O’Hagan 2013), the “sociological turn” (Wolf 2007; Angelelli 2012), and the “audiovisual turn” (Remael 2010)’ is a case in point. Troping the history of a discipline, by acknowledging that an assemblage of turns could potentially co-exist at any given point, somewhat erodes the scholarly significance of the research domain that the term ‘turn’ sought to foreground in the first place. A mechanistic adoption of the logic of turns can be interpreted as an endorsement of ‘commodification, superficiality and transitory (and thus flimsy) commitments’ (Straw 2016: 2), where contributions are valued only inasmuch as they point ‘to a direction in which we want to go now, largely because we see so many others going there as well’ (ibid: 3). Ultimately, any attempt to appraise the vitality of a given research domain in terms of its competitive positioning within the knowledge regime in which it is embedded is bound to be ‘sutured with neoclassical assumptions of neoliberalism, the prevailing political
economy of the modern academy, which promotes accumulation and quantitative growth above other values’ (Keeling 2016: 317). Apart from these ethical risks, troped disciplinary narratives can also have other unintended consequences—potentially even frustrate attempts to gauge that discipline’s capacity to set its own research agenda, develop new methodological directions and facilitate advances in cognate areas of research. Recent views on the state of AVT studies articulated by scholars in the wider translation studies community suggest that qualitative appraisals should be prioritized at this point in the construction of the field. As Baker (2014: xiv) notes, for all its vibrancy,

most of the literature published by scholars of audiovisual translation, while unquestionably useful and welcome, has failed to engage other disciplines and lay the foundation for interdisciplinary research and critical theorizing. Understandably, perhaps, the priority has been to address practical needs, with training manuals and descriptive accounts of professional practice dominating the field.

The need for AVT research to move beyond what has traditionally been regarded as its core remit is more pressing than ever before. In the digital culture, the instantaneity and global reach of audiovisual content flows has undermined the homogeneity of national audiences and the internal coherence of the markets that once thrived around them—which has, in turn, begun to erode the dominance of specific AVT modalities within individual countries. Technological advances also mean that we are becoming increasingly exposed to audiovisual content that facilitates new forms of interaction between the producers and consumers, amid the gradual shift of cultural and creative industries towards participatory forms of organization—thus challenging existing means of analysis and critique. Crucially, AVT is under pressure to develop in seemingly opposing directions. On the one hand, it is increasingly envisioned and funded to play a socially inclusive role by fostering the integration of sensory impaired members of the community within mainstream society, as far as their access to cultural commodities and venues is concerned. On the other hand, it is at the heart of various initiatives and projects to optimize revenue generation through new technologization processes driven by corporate players.

The impact of these developments—prompted by the ever more complex technology-mediated interplay between verbal and visual semiotics, complete with its industrial and social dimensions—is beginning to resonate beyond the confines of AVT and attract attention from scholars who have not been traditionally associated with this field of scholarly enquiry. Tymoczko (2005), for example, has acknowledged the potential of AVT processes to effect change in the wider field of translation, possibly requiring the re-theorization of fundamental concepts of translation studies. The two-way dialogue between AVT studies and the broader discipline, however, could be hampered by the lack of comprehensive reference works showcasing the scope of the research undertaken by AVT scholars.

Indeed, the body literature on AVT comprises a significant number of encyclopedia or companion entries—see, for example, Baker and Hochel (1998), Gottlieb (1998), O’Connell (2007), Pérez-González (2009), Chiaro (2009), Díaz Cintas (2010), Díaz Cintas and Orero (2010), Remael (2010), Remael (2012), Díaz Cintas (2013), Chaume (2013), Gambier (2013), Taylor (2013), and Yau (2014); practical textbooks specializing in a single AVT modality—examples include, but are not limited to Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007), Franco et al. (2010), Romero-Fresco (2011), Chaume (2012); and relatively wide-ranging collections—an indicative non-exhaustive list would encompass, for example, Orero (2004), Chiaro et al. (2008), Anderman and Díaz Cintas (2009), Díaz Cintas (2007), Díaz Cintas et al. (2007), Díaz Cintas
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(2009), Remael et al. (2012), Orrego-Carmona and Lee (2017). The publication rate of special journal issues covering a specific research theme within AVT—e.g. Agost et al. (2012), Baños et al. (2013), Diaz Cintas (2012)—or the field as a whole—Gambier (2003), Gambier and Ramos Pinto (2016)—has accelerated in recent years, as has that of monographs specializing in one AVT modality. Until the recent publication of Audiovisual Translation: Theories, Methods, Issues (Pérez-González 2014), however, there was no volume in English that systematically charted and critiqued influential concepts, research models and methodological approaches in AVT studies, or theorized recent developments and trends. But while this recent volume fills a gap and provides a solid foundation for new researchers in the field, a single monograph written by one author cannot possibly be expected to capture the diverse and vigorous developments that are currently shaping every corner of AVT.

The Routledge Handbook of Audiovisual Translation therefore aims to deliver the sort of comprehensive survey of state of the art research that the field currently needs. Its four sections engage, respectively, with (i) the evolving practices associated with both consolidated and emerging AVT modalities; (ii) key theoretical models that have informed and continue to drive scholarly advances in the area; (iii) methodological approaches supporting traditional and innovative ways of interrogating data sets; and (iv) key themes revealing the impact of AVT on various aspects of social life. Through its thirty-two chapters, the Handbook seeks to rewire the circuitry of this scholarly domain, bringing to the fore current and potential avenues for scholarly interaction and mutual engagement across individual practices, theories, methods and themes—both among members of the AVT research community and with scholars working across a range of disciplines.

Part I: Audiovisual translation in action

Part I consists of ten chapters focusing on established and emerging modalities of AVT. These contributions examine key terms and practices, explore the changing contexts in which these modalities have been and continue to be used, provide an indication of their future trajectory, and intervene in the debates arising from the evolving contexts of production and consumption for each of these forms of interlingual, intersemiotic and intercultural mediation. All chapters in this part identify key debates at the heart of these areas, thus contributing to set the research agenda for years to come.

In Chapter 2, Carol O’Sullivan and Jean-François Cornu deliver a chronological overview of the technological developments and socio-cultural changes that shaped the birth and evolution of audiovisual translation—inextricably associated, during its formation years, with film as the first form of mass entertainment. Taking a look at the interplay between changing translation practices, technical processes and marketing strategies, the authors identify a range of important issues that remain uncharted territory in the history of AVT, as research conducted to date has tended to concentrate on the same AVT modalities and filmic cultures and/or industries. The authors’ call for more research on how film translation practices have evolved throughout the twentieth century and their impact on their reception by audiences resonates with similar recommendations in other chapters focusing on the contemporary AVT scene, including Chapters 3, 4, 22 and 23.

In her forward-looking contribution to this Handbook, Chapter 3, Marie-Noëlle Guillot looks at one of the most widely studied AVT modalities from a refreshingly original perspective, structuring her chapter around three main aspects: the constraints and opportunities informing subtitling practices, the means and modes—understood as the range of semiotic resources—that lend themselves to manipulation during the subtitling process, and
the research models and methods informing scholarship in subtitling studies. In addition to a rigorous overview of traditional research foci in this area, the reader is presented with a stimulating critique of the role that subtitling plays in the new cultural regime unleashed by digitization. Guillot’s treatment of the creative specificities and potential of subtitling and subtitles, the implications of emerging co-creative subtitling models involving professionals and amateurs, and the impact of these new practices on the negotiation of intercultural differences in a global context brings into sharp relief the extent to which these issues have come to take centre stage in subtitling studies.

Echoing Chapter 2’s call to take action against dominant Eurocentric perspectives, Charlotte Bosseaux identifies additional priorities for the development of dubbing studies in Chapter 4. One of the most established research topics within AVT studies, dubbing, is examined here from new angles that are not yet widely represented in the extant body of literature. In keeping with her own interest in the prosodical dimension of dubbing, Bosseaux advocates the relevance of multimodal theory as a new research avenue for dubbing scholars. Other suggested angles pertain to the technologization of dubbing—both in terms of the involvement of amateurs in the practice of this activity and the transformation of the dubbing workflow through the use of voice-synthesizing tools—and the development of ‘accessible dubbing’, a concept that Bosseaux models after Romero-Fresco’s notion of ‘accessibility’ in AVT, as elaborated in Chapter 31.

Voice-over, an AVT modality that has been relatively neglected by translation scholars to date, takes centre stage in Anna Matamala’s Chapter 5. The fact that voice-over is prevalent in audiovisual markets where subtitling and dubbing have not traditionally had a significant presence is reflected in the geographical origin of a substantial part of the experiments and studies that this chapter reports on. And yet, the impact of technological advances on voice-over practices and the need to conduct more research on the reception of voiced-over commodities also emerge here as challenges to be tackled in connection with this AVT modality. The circuitry of AVT is thus being rewired through the emergence of research agendas that cut across individual AVT modalities, as they evolve to cater for the niche audiences that digitization has empowered.

But nowhere is the need to question and reconceptualize current professional practices—and the body of scholarship that these conventions have informed—more pressing than in assistive subtitling, an AVT modality that Josélia Neves surveys and interrogates in Chapter 6. Drawing on the premise that technological affordances have the potential to enhance the quantity, quality and diversity of the current provision of subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing, Neves advocates a change in the paradigm of mediation at the heart of this field. The shift towards an ‘enriched (responsive) subtitles’ model that does not regard ableism as the benchmark against which disabilities are to be defined will enable access to personalized subtitle formats on demand, first on web-based platforms and then via traditional broadcast media. As Neves notes, this should not represent the end of subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, but the upgrading of this AVT modality to serve the needs and expectations of wider constituencies in the era of bespoke media content.

Being a born-digital form of AVT, respeaking has been informed since its inception by assumptions, tools and methods that other modalities of audiovisual transfer see as shaping their future. In Chapter 7, Pablo Romero-Fresco chronicles the institutionalization of respeaking within European higher education providers and delineates a unique domain of research where academics have spearheaded important industrial developments from the start. But the informational society that has fuelled the growth and recognition of respeaking is placing ever more challenging demands on this AVT modality, with automation poised...
to play a central role in delivering more and better intralingual and interlingual respoken output, both for fictional and factual media content.

As was also the case with subtitles for the deaf in Neves’ contribution, Elisa Perego places traditional audio description practices under close scrutiny in Chapter 8. Driven by the insight that users of this assistive form of audiovisual transfer do not constitute the homogeneous constituency that current professional guidelines assume, the author shows how former norms are being superseded by new user-centred and flexible recommendations. Readers are presented here with a thorough account of key debates in the field, pertaining to the need for research on the reception of audio descriptions by different user groups, and the place that the describers’ personal interpretation of media content should have, if any, in the narrations they deliver. Audio description, as surveyed in this chapter, emerges as a key node in the circuitry of AVT, as it would appear to be serving as a productive testing ground for the refinement of corpus-based and eye-tracking research methods, that are explored in more depth in Chapters 20 and 22, respectively.

Together with subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, and respeaking and audio description, surtitling and captioning for theatre and opera have benefited from a heightened awareness, on the part of various administrations and legislative bodies, of the extent to which assistive forms of audiovisual transfer can facilitate the integration of individuals with sensory impairments as members of mainstream audiences. Unsurprisingly, Chapter 9, where Alina Secară explores the origin and expansion of surtitling practices, intersects with the previous three chapters in various and productive ways. Again, the importance of undertaking research on the reception of surtitles by different user groups, the challenges posed by the growing ubiquity of on-demand services and the impact of automation on the production of surtitles emerge as drivers for change and innovation.

The centrality of user-experience and the relationship between content producers and the user base is also a central concern for the future of research on game localization, as Minako O’Hagan contends in Chapter 10. Although key players in the game industry failed to grasp the importance of translation quality until relatively not long ago, ongoing research is drawing on ever more sophisticated methods to gauge and enhance the contribution that localization makes to the immersive experiences that contemporary games deliver. Using eye-tracking technology and collecting biometric data—such as facial expressions, galvanic skin response or heart rates, to give but a few examples—are helping researchers to gain a better understanding of users’ behaviour and preferences. But the emphasis of game localization research on user-experience issues should also address the social dimension of the gaming phenomenon, including the formation and evolution of participatory fan and crowdsourcing communities—another recurring thread traversing other chapters in this Handbook.

The shift of AVT practices towards customization, based on available data about the end-users’ preferences and expectations, also features in the final contribution to Part I. In Chapter 11, Jonathan Evans explores a form of audiovisual transfer whose translational dimension has been primarily acknowledged by film scholars. Remakes, whether they are official or unofficial, interlingual or shot in the same language as the original film, are conceptualized here as intertextual assemblages made, in many cases, for a ‘knowing audience’. Unlike other AVT modalities, where the ubiquity of relevant technologies allows viewers to produce their own translated versions as a form of self-mediation, remakes are still undertaken mainly by the industry. However, the central place accorded to the reception of the adapted film by target viewers in the production of remakes—the ultimate and arguably most creative form of translation—warrants their inclusion in this volume.
Part II: Theoretical perspectives in audiovisual translation studies

The second part of this Handbook consists of eight chapters exploring the interface between AVT and a range of theoretical models that have proved particularly productive in terms of their capacity to inform research on various forms of audiovisual transfer. Some of these models are associated with disciplines that have long intersected with AVT and the wider discipline of translation studies, e.g. pragmatics, sociolinguistics and spoken discourse analysis. Other conceptual networks examined here, however, correspond to (sub)disciplines that are only now beginning to make their presence felt in the AVT literature.

In Chapter 12, Henry Jones sets out to heighten our awareness of various theorizations of mediality, arguing that they have the capacity to facilitate our understanding of the material dimension of audiovisual texts. Crucially, the evolving materiality of audiovisual content has played a significant role in shaping a range of practices to accommodate various types of constraints, including but not limited to the spatio-temporal type. The set of notions explored here is not commensurate with a single conceptual network or disciplinary domain, but Jones’ sophisticated overview manages to weave complementary, sometimes clashing, accounts of transformative technological shifts from across the ages—most of which have not been sufficiently explored in AVT scholarship. Neither should AVT scholars overlook the key notion of narrativity. Although professional translators routinely operate in a narrative milieu, they rarely reflect on the implications of their mediation for narrativity in the work they produce. Jeroen Vandaele’s contribution, in Chapter 15, paves the way for future research work on the narrative mechanisms and devices that drive most audiovisual texts, under the medial constraints at play in each case. The tendency for professionals to focus on a single, often short, segment of language at a time could interfere with the narrative configuration of the source text in terms of its intended clarity and opacity, as realized through carefully placed elements of suspense, curiosity, surprise and character-oriented focalization. The generative power of mediality and narrativity cannot be underestimated by researchers in our field, as the growing interest in multimodal theory (Chapter 17) and research methods like eye tracking (Chapter 22) confirms.

As Silvia Bruti shows in Chapter 13, one of the most established strands of research on the impact of medial constraints on AVT pertains to the study of translated interaction as an idiosyncratic communicative event. Using concepts drawn from discourse and conversation analysis, Bruti illustrates the changes in interpersonal dynamics and characterization that subtitling and dubbing conventions often entail. Bruti’s wide-ranging chapter traces the evolution of scholarly work in this area, from the older structuralist approaches to more recent contributions where fictional dialogue, as defined by its markers of orality, is conceptualized as a genre in its own right, or where the translation of conversation is understood as part of a wider process of multimodal meaning-making. In Chapter 16, Louisa Desilla further gauges the extent to which AVT may tamper with the suprasegmental organization of the source dialogue. The author shows how established notions drawn from various strands of pragmatics, like speech acts, politeness and implicature, can assist researchers in identifying and relaying filmmakers’ creative intentions, as expressed through the characters’ speech. Should translations spell out what directors chose to express in the source conversation using indirect language, for example, they may be altering the perception of certain characters and the coherence of the plot—all of which might be detrimental in terms of reception and enjoyment by the target audience.

Unlike the theories surveyed in some of the chapters that I have just outlined, the models of psycholinguistics and cognitive perception that Louise Fryer surveys in Chapter 14 are
still under-represented in the AVT literature. Audio description is chosen here by the author to illustrate how a raft of concepts relating to perception and presence, as defined in the field of cognitive perception, can help AVT scholars explain systematically how professional audio describers go about making content selection choices, i.e. how they decide which elements of the multimodal text to include in their descriptions. Structured as a constellation of themes, the main body of this chapter provides abundant food for thought for AVT scholars working on the very concept of accessibility (Chapter 31) and the multiple modalities of assistive AVT explored in this Handbook. Audio description and describers’ decisions on how to make audiovisual texts accessible to viewers with sensory impairments are also at the heart of Chapter 17, where Aline Remael and Nina Reviers use the social semiotic strand of multimodal theory to examine how meaning emerges from the interplay between different types of meaning-making resources or modes. Patterns of multimodal cohesion observed in the original text may be altered in the describers’ versions, which could in turn undermine the overall coherence of the multimodal ensemble presented to viewers. The authors illustrate their argument with a detailed case study that shows how multimodal cohesion is construed in the original text and relayed in audio description and subtitles for the hard of hearing. Both Chapters 14 and 17 show how cognitive perception models and multimodal theory provide AVT scholars with new and sound conceptual tools to articulate evidence-driven accounts of decision-making processes, and their consequences, in assistive forms of audiovisual transfer.

The social dimension of AVT, on the other hand, is brought into sharp relief in Chapters 18 and 19. In the first of these, Wai-Ping Yau reflects on the role that the presence of linguistic variation in audiovisual texts plays in the construction and representation of individual and collective identities. Idiolects, sociolects, and dialects—and the connotations that these all carry—make a significant contribution to the overall quality of films, in terms of characterization and plot development. Yau’s chapter gauges the extent to which mainstream AVT strategies tamper with the intended function of linguistic variation, as envisaged by the creators of the source text, and influence the reception by the target audience of the different identities at play. Ultimately, translated audiovisual texts tend to neutralize the diversity of identities represented in their original versions, thus preventing target language viewers from identifying and making sense of the social tensions and power differentials that creators portrayed in the source text. On the other hand, in Chapter 19 Luise von Flotow and Daniel Josephy-Hernández zoom in on the representation of gender-based identities and struggles. Their chapter explores how scholars from across disciplines in the Humanities have theorized the influence of feminism on the way language is used to represent and perform gender in audiovisual products. Drawing on a carefully chosen set of examples, von Flotow and Josephy-Hernández illustrate, for example, the difficulties that Romance languages encounter in trying to recreate genderlects and queer references that originated in Anglo-American audiovisual products; they also show that—contrary to widely held assumptions about its open-mindedness and flexibility—English also finds it difficult to recreate gender-aware features emerging in European and Asian languages. Ultimately, the authors conclude, the linguistic realization of sexual difference and derivative gendered behaviour remains a sensitive issue across languages and cultures that AVT scholars should approach from new angles.

**Part III: Research methods in audiovisual translation studies**

The third part of this Handbook seeks to flag up a range of research methods—whether these are fully established within AVT, e.g. corpus-based and eye-tracking studies; evolving into
more robust approaches, as is the case with reception studies or multimodal corpora; or relative newcomers to the field, e.g. ethnography.

Corpus-based translation studies, the focus of Maria Pavesi’s contribution in Chapter 20, shows how large computer-held collections of carefully selected texts can facilitate quantitative analyses of dubbed dialogue—and enable comparisons between its idiosyncratic features and those of fictional conversation written originally in the source and target languages of the combination under scrutiny. The generalizability of the insights yielded by the analysis of corpus data, typically operationalized in the form of frequency lists and the search for discernible usage patterns around individual lexical items or whole phrases, has allowed researchers to address important questions pertaining to the prevalence of specific translation strategies in dubbing, and the construction of conversational authenticity and naturalness in film dialogue, which is held to play a pivotal role in shaping the audience’s perception of a film’s quality. While computer-based translation studies share many premises and tools with the wider research domain of corpus-based translation studies, working with multimodal corpora places specific demands, as Marcello Soffritti explains in Chapter 21. The development of databases comprising parallel sets of multimodal texts calls for complex annotation protocols and unwieldy query interfaces that are difficult to set up and manage by small research teams or individual scholars. So while multimodal corpora have a great contribution to make to enhance our understanding of AVT, in terms of their capacity to extend the generalizability of current insights derived from qualitative tools such as multimodal concordances, their viability will be ensured only if and when advances in automation can assist with the design, compilation, processing and maintenance of these corpora.

The use of eye-tracking technology to gain new insights into the processing of audiovisual texts by viewers has seen its popularity rise on the back of technological advances in recent years—as borne out by the references to this methodology in most chapters included in Part I of this Handbook. As Jan-Louis Kruger shows in Chapter 22, eye tracking helps researchers understand the impact that formal and mechanical aspects of AVT practices have on the viewers’ experience, but also how specific attributes of audience members influence the way in which they distribute their visual attention among the various semiotic resources they are presented with. The experimental dimension of eye-tracking research has been hailed as a game changer in the trajectory of AVT scholarship; as Kruger argues, the rigour of its various measurements and its perceived scientific status mean that it has now become indispensable for any study of text and image processing in the context of an audiovisual text. In Chapter 23, David Orrego-Carmona casts his net wider, looking at reception studies in a more general sense—not necessarily confined to the use of quantitative or experimental methods, such as eye tracking. Based on a comprehensive survey of previous research, the author advocates the importance of methodological triangulation for the future development of reception studies. Through the combination of quantitative and qualitative perspectives, Orrego-Carmona argues, reception research can meaningfully contribute to the study of very different topics, ranging from the amount of cognitive effort involved in processing certain forms of audiovisual stimuli and their translations, to the social impact of certain translation practices.

Part III finishes with Chapter 24, where Dang Li explores one of the most exciting methodological developments in our field, i.e. the advent of ethnographic and, more specifically, netnographic approaches to the study of AVT. In an ever more participatory media landscape where certain types of audiovisual texts are increasingly translated by communities of citizens pursuing different agendas, the involvement of researchers in such groups—not only in translation-related activities, but also in the discharge of community management or editorial roles—is bound to shed light on the motivations and aspirations of prosumers, as well as
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the collaborative workflow within these, mostly virtual, communities. Drawing on her own netnographic fieldwork, Li delivers an overview of the main methodological challenges she encountered, including the compilation and management of her digital data set, and the development of a personal rapport with the community members. Crucially, netnographers should be willing to explore, develop an awareness of, and manage their own digital identity across various fieldsites and platforms, even once their project has been completed.

Part IV: Audiovisual translation in society

The eight chapters included in Part IV of the Handbook address a range of themes pertaining to the place of AVT in society. Some of the chapters focus on the professional and economic trajectories in the expansion of AVT, primarily in terms of institutionalization, academization and technologization. Other contributions, however, explore the social impact of AVT as a force for social change, with particular emphasis on subtitling as the type of audiovisual transfer that ordinary citizens without specific training in (audiovisual) translation find more easy to take on, either individually or as part of a collectivity.

Chapter 25, by Reglindis De Ridder and Eithne O’Connell, revolves around minority language AVT and the language planning implications of studies undertaken by scholars in the field. In a global media marketplace dominated by English as the main source language, AVT has typically been used to foster the interests of the industry. As a result, in terms of their relative positioning within global media flows, small (and even some major) languages have been minoritized against English. The authors engage with the complexity of the issues at stake here by drawing on different examples of minority languages from across the world, and examining their idiosyncratic sociolinguistic fabric, the directionality of translation flows into and out of minority languages and the impact that the latter have on language planning decisions.

In Chapter 26, Rebecca Johnson examines the links between popular music and AVT—a relatively unexplored area of research due to, among other reasons, the perceived low symbolic capital of the music genres discussed in this chapter. The industry has tended to overlook the translation of popular music lyrics, but motivated prosumers are now capitalizing on the affordances of digital technologies to mediate lyrical content across linguistic and cultural boundaries, either as members of communities of fandom or activism. Their participation, the author argues, is widening the range and scope of translational interventions in popular music through the generalization of remakes or parodies that are quickly eroding the status of the music video as the medium used by the industry to distribute popular music globally.

Fandom, one of the contexts of media content production and consumption surveyed in the previous contribution, is the main focus of Chapter 27. In her piece, Tessa Dwyer focuses mainly on fansubbing, although fandubbing and game translation hacking also feature in this critique of the interplay between fandom and AVT over the span of several decades. Starting with the emergence of Japanese anime fandom, and fansubbing, in the US, Dwyer goes on to chronicle the shifting configuration of fandom communities into prosumer and crowdsourcing agencies. Dwyer’s account of the centrality of the citizen-turned-translator complements the accounts of evolving subtitling and dubbing practices provided in Chapters 3 and 4, and foregrounds the role that affect and performance play in today’s amateur AVT in the context of the digital culture.

Unlike the communities examined in the previous chapter, the activist subtitling collectivities that Mona Baker discusses in Chapter 28 resort to AVT in order to effect social and political change. After surveying the small body of literature that has so far addressed
the interface between activism and audiovisual translation, the author articulates a number of priorities for the theorization of activist AVT and illustrates the main difficulties associated with the study of this type of data. Drawing on the findings of her own research on activist subtitling during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, Baker identifies a number of activist subtitling strategies and presents the reader with an insightful overview of various issues influencing the production of such translations, including but not limited to the constraints posed by the technology used to distribute subtitled media content, the prefigurative dynamics at play within the subtitling groups examined here, and perceptions of agency and visibility in these communities.

The following two chapters bring to the fore the growing presence of AVT in academic settings, whether in the form of audiovisual translator training programmes, or through the contribution that AVT makes to foreign language learning. In Chapter 29, Beatriz Cerezo Merchán charts recent developments in AVT training. After presenting recent advances in translation pedagogy, the author proposes a competence-based approach to the training of audiovisual translators. Both general and specific competences required in this field of professional practice are identified and illustrated, and practical guidelines for the development of subtitling and dubbing courses are articulated—in terms of suggested contents, pedagogical resources, task-based projects and assessment tools—to bolster the development of said competences. For her part, in Chapter 30 Laura Incalcaterra McLoughlin shifts the focus towards the benefits that can accrue from the incorporation of (mainly) subtitling activities in the foreign language classroom. After accounting for the effectiveness of traditional training scenarios involving the student’s exposure to subtitled audiovisual material, Incalcaterra McLoughlin draws on recent studies to argue that AVT tasks where learners are actively involved in the production of subtitles and the completion of different preparatory activities yield more successful pedagogical outcomes and are generally more enjoyable for students. The author shows the extent to which research in this area of study is currently informed by different disciplines—including, but not limited to, second language acquisition, cognitive psychology and translation pedagogy—and ends by suggesting future avenues of research to mainstream active AVT tasks, on account of their capacity to boost learners’ linguistic and intercultural proficiency.

The last two contributions to this Handbook are forward-looking chapters laying the foundations for new developments in AVT. In Chapter 31, Pablo Romero-Fresco proposes and articulates the ‘accessible filmmaking’ approach, under which the translation of films under production—whether through general or assistive forms of audiovisual transfer—should receive serious consideration and be held to scrutiny during the pre-production or production stages, rather than during the post-production or distribution stage, as is almost invariably the case now. Crucially, the integration of discussions on translation in earlier stages of the film production process is bound to prompt collaboration between filmmakers and translators. Romero-Fresco surveys the history of accessible filmmaking, delivers a blueprint for the integration of this approach within translator training programmes and explores scholarly developments on the study of this transfer approach, led by the application of ethnographic and eye-tracking methods.

In Chapter 32, the final contribution, Panayota Georgakopoulou addresses the impact of technological change on the AVT industry, foregrounding the extent to which translation practices are influenced by the technological tools and infrastructure available at any given point—they offering a contemporary counterpoint to the argument that Jones rehearses in Chapter 12. Significantly, Georgakopoulou’s wide-ranging chapter conceptualizes digitization and crowdsourcing as past milestones in the historical evolution of the AVT industry. In the author’s
view, the present state of the field is being shaped by the migration of tools to the cloud and the growing incorporation of machine learning into AVT workflows. Speech recognition and synthesis and machine translation are posited as potential paradigm-changing language technologies with the capacity to disrupt the traditional configuration of the AVT industry.

This reference work provides substantial evidence that AVT has now reached, to borrow part of Guillot’s chapter title, ‘the cusp of its futures’. Its evolving practices are channelling the theoretical vitality and methodological vibrancy of scholarly research in the field, but they also signal their ambition to have an ever deeper and more meaningful impact on social life. It is hoped that this Handbook will give AVT the voice it needs to make its presence felt within the Humanities research landscape; and scholars from other disciplinary backgrounds a useful tool to appreciate and benefit from what AVT scholarship has to offer.

References


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