The Profession and Didactics of Subtitling: a mixed-methods research from global to local, with a focus on Italian- and English-speaking contexts

Agnese Morettini
University of Macerata, ITALY
a.morettini(a)unimc.it

ABSTRACT
This doctoral thesis addresses an under-researched topic in Audiovisual Translation: subtitling didactics. It does so by exploring some upstream aspects which are preliminary to curricular and didactic planning, namely subtitling terminology, subtitler profile characteristics, subtitling competence and subtitling training practices. The aim is to better understand these aspects from a sociological, professional and empirical perspective, through an integrated description of the needs, expectations and opinions of subtitling companies, professionals and university trainers. Indeed, as modern didactic approaches highlight, empirical data from market and social agents provide essential information, especially if we consider that subtitling is a practical activity which naturally calls for vocational training. Only with such data, is it therefore possible to plan the subtitling curriculum and syllabus (i.e. definition of learning objectives, implementation of activities and evaluation) with a view to both reducing the distance between the profession and university, and promoting students' future employability on the market.

The study is exploratory in nature and relies on an empirical, mixed-methods approach combining descriptive, observational and sociological methods. Interdisciplinary qualitative and quantitative methodologies (corpus-based linguistic analyses, qualitative content analysis, and survey research) were used to collect, analyse and interpret data so as to pursue both breadth and depth via integration and triangulation. Three subsequent studies were designed and implemented: Study 1 focused on subtitling terminology, subtitler profiles and subtitling competence using corpus-based linguistic analyses and qualitative content analysis on a corpus of 48 job descriptions published on the Internet by subtitling companies worldwide (macro perspective). Study 2 analysed the responses to a quantitative survey about subtitler profiles and subtitling competence given by 54 professionals offering subtitling and captioning services in English-Italian on the website TranslatorsCafe.com (meso perspective). Finally, Study 3 examined the opinions and experiences of five university trainers, who teach subtitling in Italy, the United Kingdom and Ireland, regarding subtitling competence and subtitling training practices, via a qualitative and quantitative questionnaire (micro perspective).

An integrated analysis of the main findings revealed an ambiguous use of English subtitling terminology as a consequence of different subtitling traditions in the UK and USA. Secondly, regarding profile characteristics, common ground between the professional profiles of interlingual and intralingual subtitlers, as well as subtitlers and translators, was identified. Thirdly, an empirically-validated, multi-componential, overarching model of subtitling competence was developed, based on a core of sub-competences whose relevance and importance to the profession was recognised by companies, professionals and trainers alike.

Finally, the crucial impact of professional realities and experiences on subtitling training practices was emphasised, even if it was acknowledged that the degree of influence of the profession on the didactics of subtitling may depend on the context and aim of the programme/curriculum.

The main findings of this research ultimately allowed to discuss the possibility of training hybrid subtitler profiles with shared competences, as well as to derive possible suggestions and implications for subtitler training.

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