

Research on Audiovisual Translation in Finland: Features of Subtitling and Dubbing

Jukka Mäkisalo
University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu



Disposition

1. Introduction: audiovisual translation in Finland
2. The field of research on audiovisual translation
3. Characteristics of subtitling and dubbing



1. AV Translation in Finland

- Various kind of AV translation is rapidly growing worldwide.
- There are every year more and more tv programs, movies and software supplied and demanded.
- New technology also enables new means to produce AV translations. One of the most rapidly growing eras, "fan subbing", takes place on Internet.



YouTube - Jeff Dunham - Achmed the dead terrorist (FIN sub) -

http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=CmpZHz6NL9s#t=46



01:17 / 10:47

Transferring data from v22.lscache3.c.youtube.com...

- In various countries and various language families the need of the mediation of foreign language programs is operated with various techniques.



- In Scandinavia, Benelux countries, Greece, Portugal, Australia, China and Arab countries the television subtitles all of the foreign programs.
- In German speaking countries, Romanic countries, Russia and largely Eastern Europe, dubbing or voice over is used in television; however, in movie theaters, subtitling is an option, too.



- The force of habit of the AV technique is strong, for instance, in Finland dubbing is felt as negative and alienated in programs for adult audience.
- In Finland, movies and programs for children are mostly dubbed (in television, also voice over is used).
- In German, for instance, although expensive, full dubbing with actors and actresses holds its ground firmly by the force of habit and by actors' trade union.



2. Research on AV Translation

- Internationally, the empirical research on AV translation was launched during the 90s'.
- Jääskeläinen (2009) has reviewed the research and divides it on three:
 - The needs of the language form
 - The reception of AV translations
 - The needs of AV labour market
- Here, the two first mentioned will be reviewed.



1. The needs of the language form

- Limits on space and timing of subtitles
 - > everything that is said on program cannot be translated
 - > needs to condensate information
- How do professional translators solve the problem of condensation? < Background information, when training AV translators.
- The knowledge and skills of professional translators are often implicit or tacit > the need to explicate conventions.



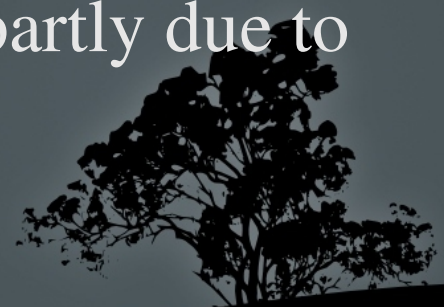
2. Research on the reception of AV translations

- How aware of subtitles/dubbing television viewers are?
- What kind of issues disturb them, or prevents them to follow translations?
- Are there various kind of viewers, or readers of subtitles?
What kind of readers are they?

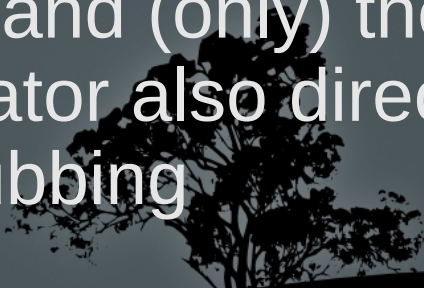


3. Needs of the labour market

- In Finland, for instance, AV translators have experienced recently the deterioration of their working conditions and salary, although at the same time, there is a need for new translators on labour market.
- On the DVD market of subtitling, there are plenty of free lancers, even amateurs.
- The quality of subtitles? < Finnish children learn to read fast, when compared internationally; partly due to subtitles?



3. Features of Subtitling and Dubbing

- Technical demands of subtitling:
 - From speech to writing
 - Loose synchronization with speech
 - Synchronization with sequences and cuts
 - Reader's reading pace; capacity of the working memory
 - Technical demands of dubbing:
 - Dubbed speech must be synchronized with the actor's speech
 - Lipsynchronization
 - Limits of timing, no limits of space
 - In Finland (only) the translator also directs the dubbing
- 

Features of Subtitling and Dubbing

- Linguistic features of subtitles:
 - Standard written Finnish
 - Written taboo words moderated
 - The illusion of spoken language
- Linguistic features of dubbing:
 - Spoken language
 - Written taboo words prohibited (for children)
 - Compared to subtitles, detached further away from the original



Features of Subtitling and Dubbing

- The illusion of spoken language, for instance, BEV in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* (Moision 2003):

Ya father ain't no real father.

> Isäsi ei ole mikään oikea isä.

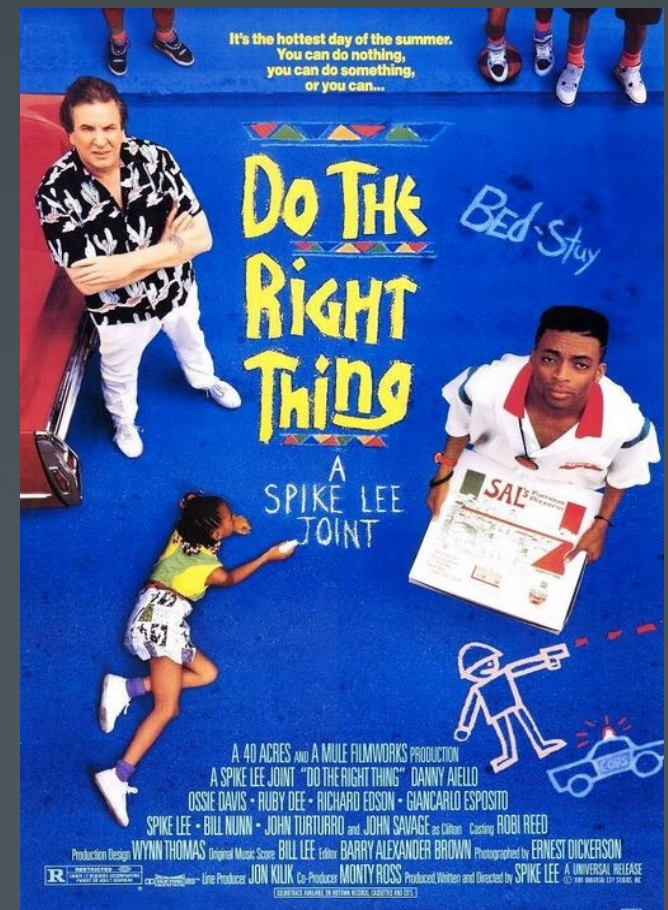
How you be?

> Mitä jäbä?

I be. Living large, bro.

> Hyvin pyyhkii, veli.

- The illusion is created largely by lexical means, only.





Features of Subtitling and Dubbing

In the Finnish subtitles of the animated film *Shrek*, Donkey uses standard written Finnish, however, in the dubbed version he uses the slang of southern Finnish (although there's no slang in the original):

Original: Wow, only a true friend would be that cruelly honest.

Subtitled: Vain tosiystävä olisi noin julman suora.
only true+friend be+COND that cruelly straight

Dubbed: Vau, vaan tosiystävä on noin streitti.
wow, only true+friend is that straight.



Features of Subtitling and Dubbing

- A study on reception (Paakkinen 2006) asked, how do children in eastern Finland understand the two versions of translation of *Shrek*?
- Two test groups of 10 years old school children: one that looked at the dubbed version, and another that looked at the subtitled version.
- Test of comprehension with statistical analysis.



Features of Subtitling and Dubbing

- Examples of subtitled vs. dubbed version:

- *suora* 'honest' : *streitti*
- *haista* 'smell' : *döfätä*
- *nenä* 'nose' : *klyyyvari*
- *pitää* 'to like' : *digata*
- *toimia* 'work' : *skulata*



http://www.dvdplaza.fi/reviews/images/Shrek_screenshot4.jpg

Features of Subtitling and Dubbing

- In the dubbed version, the children largely missed the meaning of the slang words.
- Those slang words that they did understand had a context that focused the meaning of the word, for example, a loving couple with male saying
Mä diggaan susta. (digata colloquial for pitää)
I like+SG1 you
- Notice, here, the interplay between the subtitle and the picture.



- Research on reception (Lång 2010, Mäkisalo & Lång 2009)
- Method
 - Tracking viewers' eye movements when they look at a subtitled television program
 - A questionnaire
- Objectives
 - The automaticity of reading habits
 - The effect of various kind of convention breaks and translation errors in subtitling



■ Results:

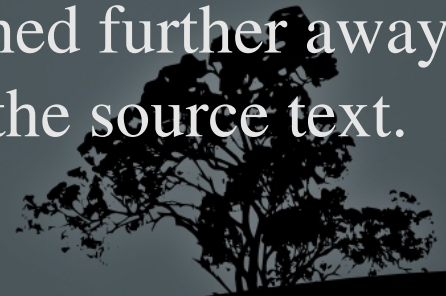
- Reading subtitles is automatic for Finns.
- Synchronization errors are consciously most detected.
- Translation errors are not easily detected, especially, if they match with the picture or the plot.

Features of Subtitling and Dubbing



Features of Subtitling and Dubbing

- Similar features:
 - Reading subtitles is as automatic cognitively as listening speech.
 - The importance of synchronization.
 - The relationship between picture and text (subtitle/speech) is crucial for understanding.
- Dissimilar features:
 - Subtitles are standard written Finnish, whereas dubbed speech is colloquial.
 - The illusion of speech in subtitles is created by lexical means.
 - In translation, dubbing is detached further away from the source text.



Finally

- More research will be needed in
 - Linguistic and stylistic features
 - Cultural puns
 - Interplay between the picture and the translated text
 - Reception
- Reception, especially, requires more attention: the true effects in various kind of viewers remains unknown without empirical survey.



References

- Jääskeläinen, Riitta 2009: AV-kääntämisen lajit ja niiden tutkimus. [The reserach on AV translation and its types.] A Lecture in the Univeristy of Joensuu 7.10.2009.
- Lång, Juha 2010: *How Does Breaking Subtitling Conventions Affect Fixation Counts in Viewer Eye Movement Data?* Pro Gradu Thesis, University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu.
- Moisio, Juhani. 2003. Translation of Black English Vernacular in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* – *Kuuma päivä*. Unpublished proseminar paper. University of Joensuu.
- Mäkisalo, Jukka & Lång, Juha (2009): Breaking the Conventions in Finnish Subtitling. Tracking the Eye Movements. – A paper presented in *Moving In – Moving On*, 10–12 December 2009, Joensuu Finland.
- Paakkinen, Hanna. 2006. *Comprehensibility of Slang in Audiovisual Translations for Children. The Finnish Dubbed and Subtitled Versions of Shrek as a Case in Point*. Unpublished Pro Gradu Thesis. University of Joensuu.

