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Interlingual Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

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Introduction

Considerable mileage has been covered since the early days, in the late 1950s, when audiovisual translation (AVT) began to be addressed as a subject in its own right. Concerns have moved from the dubbing/subtitling debate to more specific domains such as the analysis of issues pertaining to discourse analysis, technical constraints and audience design. Comprehensive lists of audiovisual translation typologies (Luyken *et al.*, 1991; Gambier, 1996; Díaz Cintas, 2003) have reflected the gradual change in scope and are making space for newer forms of language transfer within the audiovisual context. Indeed, the lines once drawn between language transfer types in the media are becoming less and less visible. Principles and techniques are merging to give way to specific offers, directed to specific audiences. This implies that the very concept of 'mass' media is changing; technology is now allowing masses to be broken down into smaller groups and products are tailor-made to the expectations and the needs of defined sub-groups. AVT will inevitably need to follow the general trend in the audiovisual market and, rather than aiming to cater for a general audience, audiovisual translation now finds itself focusing on the needs of smaller distinct audiences in order to respond to them in a more adequate manner.

This concern with making translations accessible to the intended receptor is not new. As a matter of fact, in his seminal work 'Principles of correspondence', Nida (1964) calls our attention to the fact that translations need to be directed towards the different types of audiences. This scholar takes up the topic later (1991: 20) to specify that translators need to look at 'the circumstances in which translations are to be used'. Ever since, academics and translators have gone to great lengths to find

theories and practices that reflect such concerns for their audiences. Kovačič (1995: 376) questions the meaning of 'reception' in subtitling, to see it as a multilayered construct in which factors such as 'the socio-cultural issue of non-TV context influencing the process of receiving subtitles', 'the attitudinal issue of viewers' preference for subtitling over dubbing or vice versa', 'the perceptual issue of subtitle decoding (reading and viewing) strategies', and 'the psychological or cognitive issue of the impact of cognitive environment on understanding subtitles' are of paramount importance in audience design. Gambier (2003: 185) adds that 'these four aspects (socio-cultural, attitudinal, perceptual and psychological/cognitive) could be used to inform a model for research on subtitle reception'. These very same aspects have proved to be of utmost importance in the still ongoing study of SDH in Portugal; and it is with these in mind that I address a situation that is changing just as writing and reading are changing. In fact, technological and policy changes are offering new challenges to all those working within AVT and it would be interesting to see practices improving, by taking advantage of the new products for the benefit of audiences who should not be seen as minorities but as one of the many parts of a fragmented reality.

It is in this context of fragmentation and plurality that a different type of subtitling solution, interlingual SDH, has emerged. A new concept to most people, interlingual SDH is gradually gaining visibility, particularly in the DVD market where, further to intralingual subtitles for the hearing-impaired, a track is provided with interlingual subtitles for the hearing-impaired in a language other than that spoken in the original soundtrack. The analysis of 200 randomly chosen DVDs, made available in video rental shops in Portugal, showed that close to 38% contained intralingual SDH in English; 9% contained a track with interlingual SDH (15 titles had interlingual SDH in German; and 3 in Italian); and none of such titles contained SDH into Portuguese. Indeed, these numbers show that not many DVDs offer interlingual SDH, and those that do offer it, seem to do so by applying the conventions of traditional subtitling on DVD, which, I believe, do not cater for the needs of people with hearing impairment.

However unusual and scarce the offer, this 'new product', in its hybrid make-up, lends itself to reflection and allows one to address problems that are shared with the more common types of subtitling: both interlingual subtitling for hearers and intralingual SDH.

In its complexity, interlingual SDH might be regarded as a perfect example of transadaptation (Gambier, 2003). On the one hand, as happens with traditional interlingual subtitling, one is faced with an

instance of translation between two different languages. On the other hand, as happens with intralingual subtitling, further to taking speech into writing, there is a need for the adaptation of multiple aural messages (speech, sound effects and music) so as to produce a visual (most often verbal) substitute for the information that cannot be picked up by people with hearing impairment. In my view, what most strongly determines the nature of this kind of subtitling is the need to 'adapt' a product to a target audience or addressee, which, according to Nord (2000: 196), is:

...not a real person but a concept, an abstraction gained from the sum total of our communicative experience, that is, from the vast number of characteristics of receivers we have observed in previous communicative occurrences that bear source analogy with the one we are confronted with in a particular situation.

In other words, if we are to consider subtitling as 'translational action' (Vermeer, 1989: 221), serving a functional end, its *skopos* needs to be perfectly understood by all those involved in the commission. Quite often, the commissioners of SDH, and the subtitlers themselves, are not fully aware of the particular needs of their 'clients' for not much is given to them in terms of audience design or reception analysis. In fact, only by knowing the distinctive features of the target audience will people be reasonably aware of the possible effects of their work on the receptor. Only then can anyone aim at the utopian situation where the 'new viewer's experience of the programme will differ as little as possible from that of the original audience' (Luyken *et al.*, 1991: 29).

No distinction appears to be made between being deaf and being hard-of-hearing in terms of intralingual subtitling. Both conditions go hand-in-hand as if they were complementary or even interchangeable. Guidelines for intralingual subtitling assume that their subtitling solutions cater for the needs of all alike and, in so doing, I would suggest that they are catering for the needs of neither. According to Nord (2000: 195):

...the idea of the addressee the author has in mind, is a very important (if not the most important) criterion guiding the writer's stylistic and linguistic decisions. If a text is to be functional for a certain person or group of persons, it has to be tailored to their needs and expectations. An 'elastic' text intended to fit all receivers and all sorts of purposes is bound to be equally unfit for any of them, and a specific purpose is best achieved by a text specifically designed for this occasion.

If subtitles are to produce functionally adequate texts for these particular people, it seems fundamental that, however difficult it may be, one clarifies what is meant by 'deaf' and by 'hard-of-hearing', to which I add another term: 'Deaf'.

Deaf vs. hard-of-hearing (HoH)

Medically and clinically speaking, one is considered to be 'deaf' whenever hearing loss is so severe that one is unable to process linguistic information through hearing alone.¹ On the other hand, one is considered to be 'hard-of-hearing' when there is a hearing loss, whether permanent or fluctuating, which adversely affects an individual's ability to detect and decipher some sounds. In other words, despite the hearing loss, there is still some residual hearing. Rodda and Grove (1987: 43) draw the line between audiological and social understanding of these terms:

Defining hearing loss is a fairly simple matter of audiological assessment, although the interpretation of the simple pure-tone audiogram is more difficult. Defining deafness is exceedingly complex; it is as much, if not more, a sociological phenomenon as an audiological definition.

This particular reference to the sociological dimension of deafness is of utmost importance when it comes to knowing our addressees better. In fact, it leads us to a different concept, the concept of 'Deaf' which refers to the cultural heritage and community of deaf individuals, that is the Deaf culture or community. In this context, the term applies to those whose primary receptive channel of communication is visual. It is also in this context that we refer to the Deaf as a minority group, with a language of their own (national sign language) and with an identity that differs from that of hearers and that of the hard-of-hearing. Further to this, we are dealing with a group of people whose first language is not that of hearers in their country. The (oral) national language is, even for those Deaf people who are Bi-Bi (bilingual and bicultural), a second language with all that this entails.

With all this in mind, I will try to reformulate the traditionally canonical 'for the deaf and hard-of-hearing' by readdressing hearing and deafness in terms of the two ends of a scale that spans between two distinct poles: being a 'hearer' and being 'Deaf'. Here too, I prefer to address deafness in sociological rather than audiological terms. To be 'hard-of-hearing' means to be somewhere in the 'grey zone', midway

between two distinct realities. Usually, people who are hard-of-hearing identify themselves with the hearing community. They have acquired the condition through age or disease but they mainly partake of the social order of the community in which they were raised. Their mother tongue is the spoken language of their national group. They have a notion of the sound systems which inhabit their environment. Even in cases of severe hearing loss, there is usually some residual hearing and, above all, sound is still stored in a fairly accessible memory bank, ready to be retrieved through effective stimuli. Being Deaf, on the other hand, means belonging to a world in which there is no sound, not necessarily meaning that there is silence. Emmanuelle Laborit, a French Deaf actress and author of an autobiography, *The Cry of the Gull* (1998),² describes silence as 'the absence of communication', adding that 'I've never lived in complete silence: I have my own noises: that are inexplicable to hearing people. I have my imagination and it has its noises that are inexplicable to hearing people' (*ibid.*: 10). Further to this, Deaf people communicate among themselves using their natural language: sign language. Laborit (*ibid.*: 88) clarifies:

That's right. As far as I am concerned, sign language is my voice and my eyes are my ears. Frankly, I don't feel deprived of anything. It's society that makes me handicapped, that makes me dependent of hearing people, that makes it impossible to contact a doctor directly, that makes me need to have conversations translated, that makes me have to ask for help to make a phone call or for captioning on TV (there are so few captioned programs). With more Minitels and captioning, I or rather we, the deaf, could have better access to culture. There wouldn't be a handicap, a deadlock, a border between us.

Up until fairly recently, Deaf children were brought up to 'oralise'. This meant that they were taught to pronounce words and to make use of lip reading to understand speech. Communicating through sign language was not widely accepted and Deaf people were forced to use the national oral language, regardless of the fact that their hearing and speech apparatuses were not tuned to such a task. The ways in which Deaf children are educated determine their development and their perception of the world. Their proficiency in the use of language will be of paramount importance in their ability to decode messages. Needless to say, Deaf people's reading competence will necessarily be different from that of hearers, and that of the hard-of-hearing as well. And subtitles are all about reading.

Reading film ... in search of relevance

Watching a film is all about decoding information that is conveyed through multiple channels (speech, sound, and image). Reading film is a complex process. It is problematic to say that full access to audiovisual texts is ever attained, even in the case of people with no impairment. In accepting the dialectic interaction between the producer and the receiver in the construction of meaning, and in the knowing that the audiovisual text is a perceptive whole that does not equal the sum of its parts, it is as obvious that decoding polysemiotic texts is a demanding task for all.

Speech is usually decoded through cognitive processing, and sound effects and visual signs are often impressionistic and concurrent. Image, sound and speech are interrelated, quite often in a redundant manner. Such redundancy makes access to the message easier and it is only when there is no direct access to one of the elements, (either for some sensory impairment or for lack of knowledge in the Source Language) that subtitles gain importance. Interlingual subtitles usually bridge the gap between the SL and the language of the target audience; intralingual subtitles replace more than speech, they are expected to account for paralinguistic information and for acoustic elements. If they are to be fully integrated with the visual and auditory channels, subtitles must also guarantee a certain degree of redundancy in relation to concurrent information, fitting in with the whole in an integrated manner, guaranteeing ease rather than adding to the load of decoding effort. Díaz Cintas (2003: 195) sheds light on the issue by reminding us that:

Even for those with adequate command of the foreign language, every audiovisual product brings with it a range of additional obstacles to comprehension: dialectal and sociolectal variation, lack of access to explanatory feedback, external and environmental sound level, overlapping speech, etc., making translation of the product crucial for the majority of users.

This is so much more pertinent in the case of people with hearing impairment. To a greater degree than in the case of people who do not understand the SL, to the Deaf and HoH subtitles are essential, rather than redundant. They are the visual face of sound. For the HoH they are a stimulus and a memory exercise; for the Deaf, they are the only means to gain access to aural information. However redundant, sound

and image tell different stories. Watching images alone will not allow us to grip the whole, just as listening without viewing will never allow for a full understanding of the whole audiovisual construct. When subtitling for these specific audiences – the Deaf and the HoH –, it is up to the subtitler to turn into written words both the dialogue that is heard and the sound effects that are only apprehended. In other words, subtitlers need to be familiar with filmic codes so that they may capture the different effects in order to transfer sensations and emotions into words. Deciding what is relevant is a difficult task, for relevance is determined by the needs of the addressee. Ideally, as mentioned before, subtitlers should aim at producing equivalent effects on their audience as those produced in the target audience of the original. But, as Gutt (1991: 384) puts it:

... this raises the question of what aspects of the original the receptors would find relevant. Using his knowledge of the audience, the translator has to make assumptions about its cognitive environment and about the potential relevance that any aspects of the interpretation would have in that cognitive environment.

Knowing the addressee's cognitive environment is relatively easy for subtitlers who translate into their mother tongue and for an audience who is believed to belong to their social group. But when it comes to subtitling for the Deaf, hearing subtitlers rarely have true knowledge of the cognitive environment of their target audience. This may be due to the lack of specific training in the area, or even due to the fact that subtitlers are not aware that their 'translation action' is specifically directed towards addressees that do not share the subtitler's language or culture. According to Gutt (*ibid.*: 386) and his approach to translation and relevance:

... whatever decision the translator reaches is based on his intuitions or beliefs about what is relevant to his audience. The translator does not have direct access to the cognitive environment of his audience, he does not actually know what it is like – all he can have is some assumptions or beliefs about it. And, of course, as we have just seen, these assumptions may be wrong. Thus our account of translation does not predict that the principle of relevance makes all translation efforts successful any more than it predicts that ostensive communication in general is successful. In fact, it predicts that failure of communication is likely to arise where the translator's assumptions about

the cognitive environment of the receptor language audience are inaccurate.

This alone may account for many of the problems often found with subtitles for the deaf and HoH, which I think should be rightfully named 'subtitling for the Deaf and HoH'. What is relevant? How do these two addressees (for they are indeed two different communities) perceive the world? How do they read film? And how do they read words (subtitles)? How much information do they need for meaning to be fully understood? When are words too much/too many? When are they not enough? Only when subtitlers find answers to these questions will they be better equipped to determine their addressees' profile. Only when that is done will they be able to decide on issues such as how much and which information is to be presented in the text; how this information is to be structured; and which linguistic and stylistic devices are to be used to present the selected information, so that the translation may yield 'the intended interpretation without putting the audience to unnecessary processing effort' (Gutt, 1991: 377). Further, and keeping the audiences' needs in mind, I would posit that subtitlers should question what supplement begs to be added for their benefit.

In fact, when asked to comment upon the open subtitles offered on Portuguese television programmes, the criticism that was most often made by Deaf respondents was that subtitles were 'difficult'. Deeper probing led to the conclusion that the respondents were referring to the great effort they put into decoding (any) written text and particularly into the reading of subtitles. Not many people referred to the need for supplementary information on sound effects. Most of the respondents had little notion that such information could be added at all, as at the time of the survey in early 2003, there was no significant offer of intralingual subtitles for the Deaf in Portugal. They demanded nothing, because they expected nothing, they did not know they could get anything different. But they voiced their frustration about not following subtitles: 'subtitles come and go too rapidly'; 'the vocabulary is too difficult'; 'the sentences don't make sense; they are too long and convoluted', were some of their comments.

These reactions to common, open subtitles call for further reflection on the different needs of the Deaf audience. One might question what could be done to attain the minimax effect (Kovačič, 1994: 246) to improve reception or to guarantee the viewer's comfort. The answer is not always straightforward. But further discussion on how the Deaf

read might shed some light on the issue. Laborit (1998: 120) speaks of her reading experience in the first person:

I was one of the rare students in the Morvan program who read a lot. As a general rule, deaf people don't read very much. It's hard for them. They mix up the principles of oral and written expression. They consider written French a language for hearing people. In my opinion, though, reading is more or less image-based. It's visual.

If we can extrapolate, what seems important here is the fact that Deaf people in general do not enjoy reading very much, and whereas the Deaf have this 'visual' reference base for the reading process, hearers complement it with an auditory reference system. Further to this, many have not developed the tools that allow them to take a step forward from simple word-processing to processing of a higher order such as inferring and predicting, (often done subconsciously by the hearer), and planning, monitoring, self-questioning and summarising (metacognitive techniques that are specific to highly skilled readers). Normative studies on the reading abilities of Deaf people (Di Francesca, 1972; Conrad, 1979; Savage *et al.*, 1981; Quigley and Paul, 1984) substantiate this idea that Deaf people attain very poor standards in reading. The results of the well known study conducted by the Office of Demographic Studies at Gallaudet College, USA, in 1971, indicated that 'although the reading skills of deaf students increase steadily from 6–20 years, they peak at a reading level equivalent to Grade 4 in the United States school system (approximate chronological age 9 years)' (Rodda and Grove, 1987: 165).

It is widely accepted that subtitles are constrained by time and space to the point of making language hostage to parameters that will dictate options when writing subtitles. Such parameters vary in nature. Some pertain to the programme itself (genre, global rhythm, type of action); others to the nature of subtitles (spatial/temporal features; position of subtitles on the screen; pauses between subtitles; gap between dialogue and subtitles; density of information); and others to textual and paratextual features (semantic/syntactic coherence; register; role of punctuation). Further to these constraints many more will derive from factors such as the medium (cinema, VHS/DVD, TV); country of transmission (AVT policies and practices); producers' distributors' and clients' demands; or, in the case of television broadcasting, the time of transmission and the expected audience.

The problems that hearers find in reading subtitles will obviously be all the more acute for the Deaf viewer. Luyken *et al.* (1991) suggest that

average adult reading speeds hover around 150 to 180 words per minute. This number varies according to the manner in which the text is presented, to the quantity and complexity of the information, and to the action on the screen at any given moment (De Linde, 1995: 10). The 6-second rule has been widely accepted as rule of thumb for 'readable' subtitles. On being questioned about the adequacy of such a 'norm' for the specific needs of the Deaf, and with reference to studies on how the Deaf read subtitles, d'Ydewalle states that 'the 6-second rule should be replaced by a 9-second rule as they are typically slow readers' (personal email, 17 February 2003).

Reducing the amount of information is not, in my opinion, the solution to this need for extra processing time. Reduction is often achieved through the omission of information or by sacrificing interpersonal meaning. Redundancy is a feature of all natural languages and serves to make messages better understood. Such redundancy – phonetic, lexical, collocational or grammatical in nature – serves mainly to make up for possible interference, or noise. In subtitles, losing redundancy for the sake of economy is common practice, often resulting in a greater processing effort on behalf of the reader/viewer. In fact, subtitling goes against the grain of most translation practices in that rather than extending, subtitles usually seek to condense as much information as possible in as little space as possible. This often results in reduction strategies that can make decoding rather taxing, particularly for those who are reading subtitles in their second language.

In the case of the Deaf reader/viewer, redundancy is of utmost importance, for such elements will make reading less demanding. This obviously adds tension to the difficult equilibrium between economy and expenditure. Economy cannot be had if it is at the expense of meaning. The first priority, when subtitling for this particular audience, needs to be the conveyance of meaning as fully as possible in as 'readable' a manner as possible, and only then, in as condensed a form as possible. Quite often, extra reading time might need to be given to allow for the reading of longer subtitles; however, if drawn out subtitles mean the use of simpler structures or better known vocabulary, it may well be worth sacrificing synchronisation and having subtitles appearing a little earlier or staying on a little longer, thus adding to reader comfort.

Cohesive devices are also easily sacrificed in the search for economy. When cohesion is given by the image, subtitles may jeopardise cohesive devices; the problem arises when cohesion needs to be reinforced through language for lack of visual redundancy. What is conveyed

through subtitles is never *the* message but a possible version of the message and special care needs to be taken so that nothing can contradict that particular version. It is easy for the image to add, confirm or even contradict the verbal message conveyed. For Deaf audiences, who depend on visual cues to assist language decoding, special care needs to be taken so that subtitles may be truly complementary and so be seen as part of the whole, never as an obtrusive, or even cumbersome, add-on.

Language has its own means of guaranteeing internal and external redundancy. Speech naturally involves linguistic, paralinguistic and non-linguistic signs. Paralinguistic signs cannot be interpreted except in relation to the language they are accompanying. On the other hand, non-linguistic signs are interpretable and can be produced without the co-existence of language. Non-linguistic signs or natural signs such as facial expressions, postural and proxemic signs, gestures, and even some linguistic features are likely to be the most cross-culturally interpretable' (Cruse, 2000: 8) but also the source of many misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication. Such kinetic elements are no greater a problem to the Deaf than they are to hearers.

However, paralinguistic signs are more often hidden from the Deaf person, for they are only sensed in the tone or colour of voice in each speech act. There are times when such paralinguistic signs actually alter the meaning of words; and more often than not, punctuation cannot translate the full reach of such signs. Whenever such signs have informative value, there is a need for explicitation, one of the 'universals of translation' according to authors like Toury (1980: 60). In subtitling for the Deaf, explicitation is a fundamental process to compensate for the aural elements that go missing. In the case of paralinguistic information, there might even be a need to spell out what can only be perceived in the way words are spoken. Sound effects (such as 'phone rings') are often straightforward to describe, but expressing what comes with the tone of voice (irony, sadness, irritation) can be difficult. In feature films and series, paralinguistic features are most frequently found in moments when the story is being pushed forward by emotional interplay or when characters reveal something in themselves that goes against their words. This could mean that adding extra information might alter the intended pace or cut down on the tension. Finding adequate solutions for the problem is a challenge for those working in the area. The use of smileys to convey such information has proved effective thanks to the economy of their pictorial nature. Deaf TV viewers in Portugal have reacted most

favourably to the introduction of commonly used smileys in the subtitling of a primetime soap opera.³ Even though the introduction of information about paralinguistic signs may be considered redundant for hearers, it is fundamental for the Deaf if they are to get a better perception of the expressiveness of the intersemiotic whole. A study conducted by Gielen and d'Ydewalle (1992: 257) concludes that 'redundancy of information facilitates the processing of subtitles'. If Deaf viewers are to gain better access to audiovisual texts, such redundant components of speech will need to be made explicit, and then too, be redundant in terms of the subtitles that convey speech utterances. Such redundancy will be a fundamental element to boost the limited short-term working memory characteristic of Deaf individuals (Quigley and Paul, 1984).

Short-term working memory is of crucial importance in the reading process for it allows the reader to understand complex sentences and linked ideas. Coherence and cohesion is only possible if the reader can keep different fractions of information active so that, once processed together, meaning might be achieved. This does not mean that Deaf people are cognitively impaired and unable to process information efficiently; what this means is that they make use of other strategies (strong visual memory) to process information. As Rodda and Grove (1987: 223) put it:

Hearing impairment does not incapacitate their central comprehension processes. Provided deaf readers can grasp the semantic context of a message, they seem to be able to exploit the syntactical redundancy of natural language and to comprehend its contents with surprising degree of efficiency.

Deaf viewers will benefit from subtitles that are syntactically and semantically structured in ways that will facilitate reading. Long complex sentences will obviously be more demanding on their short-term working memory. Short direct structures, with phrasal breaks (e.g. avoiding the separation onto different lines of the article from the noun), will ease comprehension and make the reading of subtitles far more profitable. This does not mean that Deaf people cannot cope with complex vocabulary. In fact, subtitles may be seen as a useful means to improve the reading skills of Deaf viewers, as well as an opportunity to increment both their active and passive vocabulary. However, difficult vocabulary should only be used to some specific purpose, and only when there is enough available time for the processing of meaning. In fact, this principle could apply to all sorts

of subtitling for, as Gutt (1991: 380) reminds us when referring to translation in general:

...rare lexical forms [...] are stored in less accessible places in memory. Hence such unusual forms require more processing effort, and given that the communicator would have had available a perfectly ordinary alternative, [...] the audience will rightly expect contextual effects, special pay-off, from the use of this more costly form.

In the case of intralingual subtitling, where verbatim transcription of speech is frequently sought, pruning text is particularly difficult. In interlingual subtitling, functional shifts are less exposed and, therefore, it may be easier to adapt text to the needs of the Deaf addressee. In the case of intralingual subtitles, editing might be understood as not giving the Deaf all that is given to hearers. Writing every single word on the screen, transcribing every utterance, is not, in my view, serving the needs of this particular audience. Not having enough time to read subtitles and to process information; not understanding the meaning of certain words; or not being able to follow the flow of speech, cannot be understood as being given equal opportunities. Paraphrasing, deleting superfluous information, introducing explanatory notes, making explicit the implicit, may mean achieving functional relevance for the benefit of the target audience. Borrowing Reiss' terminology (1971: 161), in SDH we need to make 'intentional changes' for our readers are definitely not those intended for the original text. In order to gain accessibility for those who cannot hear, we need to strive for 'adequacy of the TL realisation in accordance with the "foreign function"' (*ibid.*) that is being aimed at. Gutt (1991: 377) also sheds light on this issue:

Thus if we ask in what respects the intended interpretation of the translation should resemble the original, the answer is: in respects that make it adequately relevant to the audience – that is, that offer adequate contextual effects; if we ask how the translation should be expressed, the answer is: it should be expressed in such a manner that it yields the intended interpretation without putting the audience to unnecessary processing effort.

Making sound visible

As mentioned before, audiovisual texts are multimodal in their making and sound plays an important role in their narrative force. Most of the

time, hearers make very little effort to process sound in a film. Unlike speech, that requires cognitive effort to be decoded, sound effects and instrumental music convey meanings in a discreet way. According to Monaco (1981: 179), 'we read' images by directing our attention; we do not read sound, at least not in the same conscious way. Sound is not only omnipresent but omnidirectional. Because it is so pervasive, we tend to discount it'.

Furthermore, in contrast to speech and to paralinguistic features pertaining to oral expression, sound and music need no translation. A hearer will quite easily pick up the suggested meanings transmitted through sound effects that often underline images, sustaining them and guaranteeing continuity and connectivity. Processing music is somewhat more difficult. However, hearing viewers have grown to understand filmic conventions and have come to associate musical types with certain genres and with particular filmic effects. Quite often, film music has been taken from its intersemiotic context to grow in the ear of radio listeners, and to gain a life of its own. Yet, while associated to image, its meaning is strongly felt even if its existence is subtle and little more than a suggestion. In fact, 'it makes no difference whether we are dealing with speech, music, or environmental sound: all three are at times variously parallel or counterpointal, actual or commentative, synchronous or asynchronous' (Monaco, 1981: 182) and it is in this interplay that filmic meaning grows beyond the images and the whole becomes artistically expressive.

One might question the pertinence of describing music and sound effects to people who have never been able to hear. There is no question that to the HoH, a comment on sound effects or music may activate the aural memory and may even guide viewers to consciously direct their residual hearing capacities towards relevant content. Those who have lost their hearing later on in life will recall previous experiences and may find cultural, social and historical references in certain melodies or rhythms. But even those who were born deaf can, never having heard, make those very same connections creating their own references, for even though they cannot hear, they live in a world of sound, which they perceive through vibrations and they learn to appreciate through other sources (literature, television, etc.). Once again, a Deaf person's testimony may clarify doubts (Laborit, 1998: 17):

I was lucky to have music when I was a child. Some parents of deaf children think it's pointless, so they deprive their children of music. [...] I love it. I feel its vibrations. [...] I feel with my feet, or my whole

body if I'm stretched out on the floor. And I can imagine the sounds. I've always imagined them. I perceive music through my body, with my bare feet on the floor, latching onto the vibrations. The piano, electric guitar, African drums, percussion instruments, all have colors and I sway along with them. That's how I see it, in color. [...] Music is a rainbow of vibrant colors. It's language beyond words. It's universal. The most beautiful form of art that exists. It's capable of making the human body physically vibrate.

I firmly believe that every effort should be made to convey sound and music visually. Present subtitling systems do not allow for much more than alphabetical characters in the form of subtitles. Many teletext systems do not allow for the use of symbols, such as ♪, and a # is often used to indicate the presence of music. New strategies are already found in the subtitling of DVDs, where special care is given to identifying music through the use of symbols; yet the same cannot be said for television for, at present, technical conditions are still hindering progress in this domain. I believe that with the advent of digital technology, it will be possible to convey music visually, thus adding more information for those who cannot hear. Until that day comes, subtitlers will need to be sensitive to sound and music to be able to decode their inherent messages and to find adequate and expressive solutions to convey such sensations verbally. Even though it may be difficult to find words that fully convey the expressive force of sound and music, the translator (subtitler) should try to produce an analogous aesthetic effect (Nord, 1996: 83), as well as to reproduce the expressive content of the original in the case of thematic music.

Conclusion

To conclude, it seems appropriate to address the issue of SDH anew in order to bring to the fore commonly held and often erroneous notions about SDH: that SDH is intralingual subtitling; that the Deaf and HoH are one and the same group; and that these specially conceived subtitles are for hearing impaired viewers alone.

In the first case, and until fairly recently, this might have been a fact. Indeed, and particularly on television, SDH has mainly been the intralingual transposition of speech from the oral to the written mode. However, interlingual SDH might now be found on DVD, even if as yet only in a small number of films and languages. This may lead us to believe that common interlingual subtitles are sufficient and are used by hearers and hearing-impaired alike. The latter assumption may be

true, but the former can only be a misconception, for Deaf viewers will not only be reading subtitles in a second language but will be relating them to yet a third lingua-culture, that of the original audiovisual text. It would appear obvious that the future of interlingual subtitling for the deaf and HoH lies ahead for, as Díaz Cintas (2003: 200) puts it:

...failing to account for this type of subtitling would imply a tacit acceptance of the fallacy that the deaf and hard of hearing only watch programmes originally produced in their mother tongue, when there is no doubt that they also watch programmes originating in other languages and cultures. This in turn would mean that they are forced to use the same interlingual subtitles as hearing people, when those subtitles are, to all intents and purposes, inappropriate for their needs.

This takes us to the second notion that, regardless of the languages that might be at stake, SDH serves the needs of Deaf and hard-of-hearing alike. As mentioned above, it is misleading to consider the needs of each of these groups similar in nature. It goes without saying that most of the time neither of the two gets its due in what is presently offered. It would be excellent to be able to arrive at a compromise that would not be too taxing to either of the two. However, in an ideal world, these two audiences should be given different subtitles. Whilst that ideal situation is not yet with us, it seems only natural to me that one should try to address those at the far end of the spectrum, the Deaf, in the knowledge that the hard-of-hearing will be the ones left to choose between two not very adequate solutions. If they choose to follow SDH they will obviously need to make light of the extra care that has been put into the making of such subtitles without succumbing to the feeling of being patronised. In fact, such subtitles were made with a different audience in mind and should, therefore, be read as such.

As for the last notion, that SDH can only be of help to Deaf and HoH viewers, this could not be any falsier. Indeed, the extra information about sound in intralingual SDH and the care with reading time and reading ease, might be felt as quite unnecessary for the majority of people, but it might be of use to those who, for some reason, do not master the target language. In this group I would include poor readers; non-native speakers trying to learn the language of the subtitles; and a vast number of people with cognitive impairment.

At this point in time, only DVD can offer differentiated solutions in up to 32 available tracks, but with television going digital and

interactive, audiences will be further fragmented and will be looking for a translation solution that best suits their specific needs. This will mean that subtitles will be viewed on call, and open subtitling, as we now know it, will no longer make sense in its undifferentiated existence. The option of a translation solution will obviously require that multiple solutions (dubbing, interlingual subtitles, intralingual and interlingual SDH, adapted subtitling) be produced for each audiovisual programme. The question of financial feasibility and cost effectiveness is clearly pertinent. Language transfer of any kind costs money and it is difficult to foresee whether providers of audiovisual materials will be willing to pay for various versions of the same programme to suit all needs and preferences.

In short, the special care that goes into making SDH easily read would most certainly be welcome in all sorts of subtitling solutions and particularly helpful to many viewers who, not being hearing-impaired, are less proficient readers. The extra information about sound, music and paralinguistic features, quite unnecessary features for hearing viewers, might be seen to raise aesthetic awareness and to those who are competent audiovisual consumers provide an additional information channel. I truly believe that, rather than SDH, subtitles for the Deaf (SD) are essential for this particular group, helpful to the HoH, and not necessarily disruptive or annoying to many hearers, provided that they are made with sensitivity, sensibility and coherence.

Notes

1. See Hands & Voices (www.handsandvoices.org/resource_guide/19_definitions.html) for detailed definitions.
2. The original *Le Cri de la mouette* was published in 1994 and has since been translated into a great number of languages. It is widely accepted by the Deaf community as being one of the most illustrative accounts of the difficulties the Deaf person finds in trying to be part of the hearing society.
3. In the knowledge that the Deaf use smileys in their SMS messages, a set of eight smileys were used in Portuguese subtitles to depict emotions and tone of voice. After being tested on cards with a restricted group of Deaf people, they were introduced in the subtitling of the Brazilian soap *Mulheres Apaixonadas*, aired daily in Portugal by SIC, a commercial channel which introduced SDH, via teletext, for the first time on 6 September 2004.

:(sad
:) happy
:-/ angry
:-(surprised
:-& confused (drunk, dizzy, ...)

- :-) irony/second meanings
- :-(acting out to be sad or angry
- :-O screaming
- :-o speaking softly

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