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Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling for
the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

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Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

by

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Abstract

The present thesis is a study of Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (SDH) with special focus on the Portuguese context. On the one hand, it accounts for a descriptive analysis of SDH in various European countries with the aim of arriving at the norms that govern present practices and that may be found in the form of guidelines and / or in actual subtitled products. On the other hand, it is the result of an Action Research project that aimed at contributing towards the improvement of SDH practices in Portugal. These two lines of research are brought together in the proposal of a set of guidelines – *Sistema de Legendagem vKv* – for the provision of SDH on Portuguese television.

This research positions itself within the theoretical framework of Translation Studies (TS) by taking a descriptive approach to its subject. Nonetheless, it takes a step beyond to seek reasons and to propose change rather than to simply describe objects and actions. Given its topic and methodological approach, this research also drank from other fields of knowledge such as Deaf Studies, Sociology, Linguistics and Cinema Studies, among others.

In this context, SDH is addressed as a service to Deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers, thus implying a functional approach to all that it entails. In order to arrive at an encompassing understanding of the subject, in the body of this work, we may find a summary of the history of SDH, as well as an overview of the overriding and specific issues that characterise this type of subtitling. Following this, the Portuguese situation is made known through the account of five case studies that were carried out in the course of 2002 and 2003.

In response to the needs and requirements of Portuguese Deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers, the proposed set of guidelines is based on the special concern for adequacy and readability and is envisaged as a useful tool for students and practitioners of SDH.

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"A utopia está para cá do impossível."

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Shortened Forms

AACS – *Alta Autoridade para a Comunicação Social*

AENOR – *Asociación Española de Normalización y Certificación*

APT – *Associação Portuguesa de Tradutores*

APTEC – *Associação Pessoas e Tecnologias na Inserção Social*

APS – *Associação Portuguesa de Tradutores*

AR – Action Research

ASBS – Australian Special Broadcasting Service

AVT – Audiovisual translation

BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation

CENELEC – European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization

CERTIC – *Centro de Engenharia de Reabilitação em Tecnologias de Informação e Comunicação*

CMP – Captioned Media Program

DBC – Deaf Broadcasting Council

EAO – European Audiovisual Observatory

EBU – European Broadcasting Union

EEC – European Economic Community

ESTG Leiria – *Escola Superior de Tecnologia e Gestão de Leiria*

FCC – Federal Communications Commission

HoH – Hard-of-Hearing

ILO – International Labour Organization.

INE – *Instituto Nacional de Estatística*

ITC – Independent Television Commission

MA – *Mulheres Apaixonadas*

MSI – *Missão para a Sociedade da Informação*

NCAM – National Center for Accessible Media

NCI – National Captioning Institute

NIDCD – National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders

OBERCOM – *Observatório da Comunicação*

OFCOM – Office of Communications

RNIB – Royal National Institute for the Blind
RNID – Royal National Institute for the Deaf
RTP – *Rádio e Televisão de Portugal* (Formerly *Rádio Televisão Portuguesa*)
SBS – Special Broadcasting Services
SDH – Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing
SIC – *Sociedade Independente de Televisão, SA*
SL – Sign Language
STT – Speech-to-text
TDT – Terrestrial Digital Television
TS – Translation Studies
TVi – *Televisão Independente, SA*
TWF Directive (TWFD) – Television Without Frontiers Directive
UMIC – *Unidade de Missão Inovavação e Conhecimento*
UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
vKv Subtitling System – *Sistema de legendagem vKv – Vozes k se Vêem*
VTT – Voice-to-text

Specific Terms

deaf – Medically and clinically speaking, a hearing loss which is so severe that the person is unable to process linguistic information through hearing alone.

Deaf – Socially, when used with a capital letter "D", Deaf refers to the cultural heritage and community of deaf individuals, *i.e.*, the Deaf culture or community. In this context, it applies to those whose primary receptive channel of communication is visual, a signed language.

I. Introduction

In order for an individual to fully participate in our modern "Information Society" they must have full access to all available communication and information channels.

(Gybels 2003)

If anything is to distinguish modern society from those in the past, it is the explicit understanding that all persons are equal in rights and obligations, regardless of their differences. This premise, to be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNESCO 1948), is underlying to all laws and regulations determining that all should be done to guarantee such equality, be it in basic needs such as health and education or in complex issues such as political and religious beliefs and cultural expression. A brief reading of articles 21, on non-discrimination, and 26, on the integration of persons with disabilities, of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000/C 364/01), reveals the awareness that people with special conditions have special needs. This concern for the integration and welfare of people with disabilities gained body in the year 2003, designated by the European Commission and the disability movement as being the European Year of People with Disabilities. In order to "highlight barriers and discrimination faced by disabled people and to improve the lives of those of us who have a disability" (EU 2002a), various actions were taken¹, both at national and international levels, to raise awareness and to promote change, thus providing people with impairment with a better chance to lead a "normal" life.

It is in this context that it is pertinent to mention the right to equal access to information and culture and the need for special conditions for those who, for some reason, do not

¹ See www.eypd2003.org.

have sufficient access to messages that are conveyed via audiovisual media. Among these, the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (HoH) require special solutions if they are to gain the above mentioned access. It is in this context too that this research project has taken place. On the one hand, its main objective is the study of Subtitling for the Deaf and HoH (SDH) within the context of Audiovisual Translation (AVT) and Translation Studies. This is done through the descriptive analysis of SDH in various European countries with the aim of arriving at norms that govern present practices and that may be found in the form of guidelines and/or in actual subtitled products. On the other hand, it has taken upon itself the aim of being an instrument for change within the Portuguese context, thus the decision to take Action Research (AR) as a methodological approach. These two lines of research are accounted for in this thesis, which sums up the various theoretical and practical issues that characterise SDH, in general, and within the Portuguese context, in particular. A practical outcome may be found in the proposal of a set of guidelines – *Sistema de Legendagem vKv* – for the provision of SDH on Portuguese television (*appendix 1*).

Audiovisual translation, in general, might be seen as a form of guaranteeing such rights given that its main objective is to bridge gaps that may derive from linguistic or sensorial problems. Dubbing, subtitling for hearers or for the Deaf and HoH, and audio description for the blind and the partially sighted, among others, only come to reinforce Gambier's view (2003b:179) that "the key word in screen translation is now **accessibility**" for their only *raison d'être* resides in bringing the text to receivers who would otherwise be deprived of the full message. As Egoyan and Balfour (2004:30) comment: "Subtitles offer a way into worlds outside of ourselves. They are a complex formal apparatus that allows the viewer an astounding degree of access and interaction. Subtitles embed us".

History shows that subtitling has been a visible form of accessibility to audiovisual texts ever since the early days of silent movies, when they were called intertitles. Be it in the form of interlingual or of intralingual subtitles, written renderings of speech have allowed many people throughout the world to understand messages that would otherwise be partially or totally inaccessible for reasons such as not knowing the language of the original text or not

being able to hear or perceive sound. In fact, subtitling has served so many purposes that, in different places and times, the term “subtitle(s)” has come to refer to different realities.

Originally, the term “subtitle” belonged to newspaper jargon: the secondary title under the main title. But it was in the world of cinema that the term gained a new life. When silent movies came into being, cards were raised between scenes, rendering comments or dialogue exchanges that could be intuitively understood through mime or lip reading. Later, these cards gave way to “intertitles” that were filmed and placed between scenes serving the same purpose of the cards previously used. In many respects, those intertitles might be seen as direct precursors of present day SDH. According to Cushman (1940:7), further to the *spoken titles* which provided the exact words spoken by the characters in the film, there would be *explanatory titles* giving information about the *how* and *why* something happened in the film, *informative titles* adding information about the *where* and *when* and the *who* and *emphatic titles*, which drew the attention to certain details. Nowadays, interlingual subtitles tend to relay speech alone, but to a certain extent, SDH provides answers to somewhat similar questions, when such information is not obvious in the image.

Even though, according to Egoyan and Balfour (2004:22) “the subtitle was actually introduced as early as 1907, that is to say, still in the era of intertitles”, it was only with the introduction of “talkies” that subtitling came as an appropriate means to translate Hollywood productions for European audiences². Countries such as Spain, France, Germany and Italy turned to dubbing as a form to make films accessible to their publics. Portugal, Greece, Wales, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Luxembourg, Ireland and parts of Belgium preferred subtitling for a variety of reasons that pertained to local politics and economic factors (cf. Vöge 1977; Danan 1991; Díaz-Cintas 1999a:36 and 2004a:50; Ballester Casado 2001:111)³. Subtitling proved to be a cheaper option than

² This does not exclude the inverse situation of subtitling European films for American audiences, or subtitling European films for European audiences, but this happened to a lesser extent.

³ This tendency is mainly found in translation for the cinema. Different options are often followed when translating for television, where subtitling, dubbing and voice-over are chosen in view of programme types, regardless of the overall national tendencies, thus making this dichotomy more and more diluted. On Portuguese cable TV, for instance,

dubbing and it became the preferred solution for countries whose language had a weaker stand. Given that the first forms of subtitles in these countries were mainly used to translate films for hearers, the term “subtitling” became inherently connoted with interlingual language transfer of oral speech into written strings of synchronised words presented on audiovisual texts. In countries such as the UK, where interlingual subtitling has had less relevance, the term “subtitle(s)” was to have a different meaning, due to the prominence of teletext subtitling for television. In this country subtitling is mainly intralingual, produced for the benefit of the hearing impaired and often considered to be a close written rendering of speech. Further to relaying orality, these subtitles usually provide complementary information, in the form of comments, to help deaf viewers gain access to sound effects (e.g., bell ringing) and colours to help identify speakers.

The use of a common term for different realities has, at times, led to confusion and people frequently adopt the American term “captioning” to refer to subtitling for the hearing impaired, leaving the term “subtitle(s)” to refer to translated subtitles. However, this too could be confusing. Ivarsson (1992:14) makes a difference between “subtitle” and “caption” and clarifies that the latter is used “for texts that have been inserted in the original picture by the maker of the film or the programme (or titles that replace these)”. Resource to the term “insert” would, in this case, dissolve ambiguities. Most of the times, there is a need to contextualise the use of the term to grasp its intended meaning. This comes to prove that further thought needs to be given to the nomenclature in use in the field.

As it is, there is no consensus as to the term to be used to refer to the particular kind of subtitles analysed in this research. In the industry, the most common situation is the simple usage of the term “subtitling” regardless of the intralingual or interlingual language transfer situation or of the intended receiver perspective. Disambiguation comes, again, with context. At times, there is a clear intention to focus on the fact that certain subtitles

some films are dubbed into Brazilian Portuguese. This is an unusual situation in the Portuguese context and goes against the long tradition of subtitling rather than dubbing feature films. Sometimes, when subtitles are made available in these channels they also come in Brazilian Portuguese.

have particular audiences in mind and expressions such as “subtitling for the hearing impaired”, “subtitling for the deaf” and “subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing” are used. In practice, these all highlight the fact that the subtitles in case will be different given that they have special audiences in view. This obviously calls for the clarification of who these audiences are and what special needs they may have. Focus upon receiver profile seems most necessary given that the Deaf and the hard-of-hearing have different profiles, as can be seen in chapter IV, thus requiring different subtitling solutions if they are to gain accessibility to the audiovisual text (*cf.* chapter V).

In countries that traditionally subtitle films for hearers, it has taken some time for people to acknowledge the need for different subtitling solutions for people with hearing impairment. In Portugal, where most films shown at the cinema are Hollywood productions⁴, people have only recently become sensitive to the needs of special audiences. Even so, no effort has been made so far to make any adaptation of foreign spoken audiovisual texts presented in any medium (cinema, VHS/DVD or television) for the benefit of impaired hearers. As it is, even Portuguese productions shown at the cinema or distributed on VHS/DVD do not provide subtitling for these viewers (*cf.* chapter VI). Portuguese television channels, the state held RTP – Radio e Televisão de Portugal – in the lead, have gradually come to offer subtitling in Portuguese spoken programmes. These have been mostly done according to norms that are followed in interlingual subtitling (for hearers) thus proving to be most inadequate for the needs of these special audiences.

Regardless of the medium (television, VHS/DVD, cinema, realtime media, or other) or the language (intralingual or interlingual transfer) in which subtitles may be provided, there are some issues that determine the nature of the subtitles that are made to cater for the special needs of receivers who cannot fully perceive sound. Deafness, and hearing impairment in general, are complex circumstances that go across a broad spectrum of conditions. This

⁴ According to the Report of the Inter-Ministerial Commission for the Audiovisual Sector (*Ministério da Cultura de Portugal*) as presented by the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO 1997), 93% of the films that premiered in Portuguese cinemas between July 96 and June 97 were made in the US. Even though these figures cannot be exacted for 2004, Hollywood productions continue to be favoured in cinemas, video and DVD rental houses and on television.

means that it is difficult to decide upon any one subtitling solution that will be equally adequate for all. Different types of deafness will result in different degrees of perception of sound. It is a fact that the on-set of deafness and the impact that might have on the acquisition of language will greatly determine each person's command of the national (oral) language in case. Frequently, this will also be relevant to these people's educational process. Up until recently, hearing impaired children were placed in schools with hearing peers and were forced to vocalise and use the oral language, even though it was clear that they were not able to hear any sound, not even their own, when forced to pronounce words. This situation often leads to unsuccessful academic experiences and, frequently, these youngsters become adults with very low literacy skills. The introduction of sign language in the education of the deaf and the recognition of the Deaf culture have gradually brought about changes in the living conditions of many. It is now widely accepted that deafness, when addressed as a social rather than as a medical condition, must be viewed as a difference rather than as a disability. As a social group, each Deaf community shares a sign language, its mother tongue, thus bonding together to form culturally distinct groups. This, in itself, gives way to the questioning of the validity of collectively addressing the Deaf and the Hard-of-Hearing as one group when providing subtitling. In fact, we are in face of quite different profiles (*cf.* chapter IV). However, it needs to be clarified from the start that, in order to study this type of subtitling as it is now offered, we need to place it in reference to two different social pictures. On the one hand the Deaf who accept sign language as their mother tongue, thus reading written text as a second language, and, on the other hand, the Hard-of-Hearing, who belong to the hearing community and read the written text as an instance of their mother tongue to which they relate, either through residual hearing, or, in the case of progressive deafness, through a memory of sound once heard.

Given the apparent impossibility, for economic and procedural reasons, to provide a range of different subtitling solutions to suit the needs of different viewers, it becomes paramount to achieve a compromise, thus providing subtitles that will be reasonably adequate to the greatest possible number of people. This may be seen as utopian for the

fact that no solution will be adequate for all, and the complexity which characterises the medium will further hinder standardisation. If the issue is addressed in a systematic way so as to determine the factors that constrain and those that improve practices, we may arrive at a proposal that may add to the quality standards most people would like to have.

Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, as addressed in this thesis, is to be taken as any type of subtitling that has been consciously devised to cater for the needs of viewers who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing.

The use of this umbrella term will hopefully revisit previously held concepts that have lost validity for circumstances that have derived from the introduction of digital technology and of a growing understanding of the Deaf community. As Díaz-Cintas (2003a:199) points out, “the classical typology of subtitling is [...] under constant review” and this is particularly so in the case of SDH. Until recently, subtitling for the hearing impaired was exclusively seen as being intralingual and/or provided as closed captions or teletext subtitling on television. It has often been placed in opposition to open interlingual subtitles for hearers. De Linde and Kay (1999:1) reinforce this distinction in the opening of their book, *The Semiotics of Subtitling*, by making it explicit that “there are two distinct types of subtitling: intralingual subtitling (for the deaf and hard-of-hearing) and interlingual subtitling (for foreign language films)”. This emphasis on the receiver on the one hand and on the language issue on the other is certainly questionable nowadays. With the introduction of multiple tracks with intralingual and/or interlingual subtitling for the hearing impaired on DVDs⁵, with the provision of open intralingual subtitling in cinema screenings and with the forthcoming convergence of media⁶, previously held frontiers are definitely blurred and it no longer makes sense to keep to notions that belong to the past. Further, as Díaz-Cintas (2003a:200) puts it:

failing to account for this type of [interlingual SDH] 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

⁵ Most DVD covers show the expression “for the hearing impaired” in their special features list.

⁶ An example of such convergence may be found in Microsoft’s *Windows Media Center Edition 2005* that brings the computer into the living room as an interactive multimedia device.

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 dilution of pre-conceived frontiers will finally place SDH within the realm of Translation Studies, for it has often been questioned whether intralingual subtitling might even be considered to be a type of translation for reasons that De Linde and Kay (1999:1) relate to the fact that “the roots of subtitling for deaf and hard-of-hearing lie in industry and assistive technology”. In fact, it is often found that professionals working on SDH are not translators as such and, in some cases, have no special qualifications for the job.

Another issue that the expression “subtitling for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing” assumes is the placement of emphasis on two distinct types of receivers “Deaf” and “hard-of-hearing” rather than keeping to the commonly used expression “hearing impaired” that refers to a mixed group of receivers who are marked by a lack rather than by a difference. Even though Deaf and HoH audiences are in themselves two perfectly distinct groups – the former have a lingua-culture of their own and consider themselves as a minority group, whilst the latter see themselves as part of the hearing majority – they must, for practical and commercial reasons, be grouped together as a homogenous whole as far as subtitling is concerned. This poses major problems to this kind of subtitling for there are significant differences in the way in which each of these groups perceive the world and subsequently in the way they relate to audiovisual texts which means that, in ideal circumstances, they ought to be getting different sets of subtitles. Even if present technological and economic conditions make distinctive subtitling solutions impractical, though not impossible, it is essential to be aware of such differences for, as Nord (2000:198) posits:

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.

In the near future technology may offer the possibility of providing tailor-made subtitles for these different audiences at acceptable costs. When that happens, the term SDH will no

longer be relevant and new approaches to the whole issue will be in order. Until that happens, whatever subtitling solution may be arrived at for these addressees will always be in response to a compromise between the needs of the first and those of the latter, never being perfectly adequate to any of the two but hopefully being as effective as possible for both.

In addition to the problems stated above, there is also inconsistency as to the terms used to refer to different types of subtitles. Apart from the intralingual/interlingual dichotomy mentioned above, further confusion derives from the use of terms such as “live”, “real-time”, “on-line” subtitling as opposed to “(pre-)prepared”, “(pre-)recorded”, “off-line” subtitling⁷. In an effort to clarify ambiguities, Gambier (2003a:26) offers yet another option, “live subtitles” as opposed to “live subtitling”, by saying that “live subtitling is different from live subtitles which are prepared in advance but inserted by the subtitler during transmission of the TV programme or film”. This enormous diversity may result from the fact that nomenclature is localised, and may be accounted for in terms of countries, media, technology or even individual providers.

Companies supplying subtitling workstation software use different terms as well to refer to similar realities. For instance, SysMedia makes a distinction between “live” and “offline” subtitling, the first meaning subtitling on the spot, whether writing out subtitles from scratch or adapting and cueing in previously written text (case of subtitles using newsdesk prompts). “Offline” is the term used for any subtitling that is done in advance with no further interference at the time of transmission. Softel, on the other hand, uses the term “live” in the sense done by SysMedia but distinguishes between “real-time” (subtitles that are written and cued at the time of transmission) and “pre-prepared” (subtitles that have been prepared beforehand and are just cued in manually at the time of transmission). Softel prefers to use the term “pre-recorded” subtitles to refer to subtitles that have been created and cued beforehand.

⁷ More terms could be presented here, NCAM (n/d accessed 2004) uses terms such as “time-of air captioning”, “live-display captioning” and “newsroom captioning” to refer to different types of captioning solutions that are available for subtitling live broadcastings and “pre-recorded captioning” to refer to subtitles that have been previously prepared, cued and recorded.

Basically, terms such as “live”, “real-time” and “on-line” refer to subtitling that takes place while the event that is being broadcast and subtitled is actually happening. This has always been equated with intralingual subtitling for the hearing impaired and with television programmes and the news. This situation is definitely changing. A proof of this may be found in experiences such as those being carried out by NOB Hilversum in the Netherlands, where interlingual translation is broadcast as live subtitling.⁸

Live subtitling calls for techniques that range from those used in interpreting to those used in stenographic transcription, used in courtrooms. In some cases, using palantype, velotype, stenotype or Grandjean keyboards, subtitlers transcribe speech to be cued in as subtitles that can appear with a 2-3 second lag and at a speed of up to 250 w.p.m., with a minimum accuracy rate of 99% (cf. *The Captioning Group Inc.* n/d). Computer suites now allow regular keyboards to be used to produce live subtitling by offering special features such as shortforms, automatic correctors, dictionaries and glossaries. In these cases, live subtitling is a teamwork activity that requires memorisation, condensation and editing techniques, as well as touch typing skills. Live subtitles are usually presented in closed captions or teletext subtitling and, with the present technology, very little can be done to improve the quality of automatic output. Live subtitles are subject to the constraints of the medium and can be presented in three different styles. Most European live subtitling is done using “pop-on” subtitles that can have 1 to 4 lines. They appear on screen as a block and remain visible for one to several seconds before they disappear to give way to a new set of subtitles. Most broadcasters prefer to keep subtitles to two lines so as to keep the image clear; however, three-liners are also frequently used, while four-liners are less common. In verbatim transcriptions, the “roll-up” and the “paint-on” methods are sometimes used. In the first case, each subtitle “rolls up” to three lines. The top line

⁸ At the conference *In So Many Words*, held in London, on 5-7 February 2004, Corien den Boer presented a paper on how programmes were being subtitled live in the Netherlands, with simultaneous interlingual interpreting. Special reference was made to interlingual live subtitling made available in programmes such as *Tribute to Heroes*, a live benefit concert after 9/11, with English and Dutch as language pair. Reference was also made to the experience had during the war in Iraq where Dutch live subtitling was used to present texts spoken in English, French and Arabic. Den Boer also mentioned similar experiments in Sweden where Hans Blix’s reports in the United Nations had been made accessible through interlingual live subtitling. Detailed information on live subtitling in the Netherlands may be found in den Boer (2001).

disappears to give way to a new bottom line. This continuous rolling up of lines allows for greater speed because lines are fed in a continuum with no stops, thus allowing more reading time and wasting no time between subtitles. In the case of “painted-on” subtitles, individual words appear on screen, coming in from the left, as they are typed. This method is also used in conference subtitling where subtitles can be shown on screens or on led screens placed above the speakers.



Fig. 1 – Subtitler doing live subtitling at the Forum Barcelona (June 2004)



Fig. 2 – Live subtitling at the Forum Barcelona (June 2004)

Even though subtitles and actual speech come in close synchrony, this technique does make reading more difficult for it is common to have words coming up on screen and then being corrected in-view and such changes can be rather disrupting.

The whole issue of subtitling live programmes or events will not be central to this research project for it has implications that go beyond the scope of this study. Yet, given its complexity and importance, this is a topic that deserves further analysis and research. It is a fast changing area that will see significant developments in the times to come, for the greater demand for live subtitling will call for more adequate technical solutions to improve quality standards and ease of production. These will most certainly involve speech-to-text technology posing problems that may not be obvious at this stage.

Advances in dedicated subtitling software and the introduction of speech recognition is changing the way live subtitling is being done, and the skills that are required for the task are bound to change in the course of time. The BBC has been using speech recognition since 2000, initially for the subtitling of sports events and weather broadcasts. Voice-to-text (VTT) technology has recently started being used to subtitle other programmes. According to Evans (2003:12):

the system radically increases the capacity and flexibility of BBC television services. In the first few months alone, it is envisaged that the system will be used to subtitle events including Wimbledon Tennis Championship and the BBC Parliament Services, as well as a very large amount of regional news and other live programmes.

Research into the use of speech recognition for live subtitling is not exclusive to the BBC. VRT, the Flemish television broadcaster, may be found among those developing voice recognition tools to be used in live subtitling of news bulletins.

The Voice project (<http://voice.jrc.it/>) has been spurring on initiatives in different European countries and various television broadcasters are turning to speech recognition tools to increase the volume of subtitling and reduce costs.



Fig. 3 – Live subtitling at conference⁹
Voice Project



Fig. 4 – Video conference
Voice Project

⁹ Figures 3 and 4 were taken from Voice (n/d) where detailed information may be found on voice-to-text technology.

Voice recognition is also being used for subtitling in other contexts. At the European Commission's Joint Research Centre closing event for the Year of People with Disabilities 2003, the conference *eAccessibility*, held at Barza/Ispra on 24 and 25 November 2003, voice recognition was used to provide live subtitling both for speakers at the conference and for those taking part through videoconferencing systems. The systems used resulted from the development of VTT technology within the Joint Research Centre (JRC) Voice project. According to Pirelli (2003):

VTT recognition packages enable the creation of documents without using a keyboard, offering great advantages for the hearing, blind and physically impaired, as well as people without special needs. The JRC VOICE demonstrator turns voice-recognition engines into a subtitling system by integrating standard hardware and widely available software into flexible applications, ensuring low costs and ease of use.

At this stage, and in the case of live subtitling, there is much to be done to improve readability and adequacy to the needs of the Deaf and HoH. Most of the times, subtitlers aim at providing verbatim or close to verbatim subtitles and details such as line breaks, adaptation or reading time are not sought for reasons that are pertaining to present technology and techniques. Perhaps language technology will come to feed into software to take care of details such as line breaks, syntactical correction or editing. At present, these and other issues are still in the hands of subtitlers who, as Carroll (2004a) reminds us, are "more likely to be stenographers or typists than language graduates", a trend that needs to be changed if one is to aim at greater awareness and adequacy to the needs of these particular audiences.

As mentioned before, in opposition to "live" subtitling we find terms such as "offline" and "pre-recorded" to refer to subtitles that have been produced and recorded before going to air. These subtitles are particularly used in feature films, series, documentaries and they come both as open and as closed (caption or teletext) subtitles on television, and are shown at the cinema, on VHS/DVD releases and in all types of language combinations (interlingual and intralingual), for hearers and/or for the hearing impaired. These subtitles are usually simply referred to as "subtitles/subtitling" and, by default, are taken to be all subtitling that is not carried out live. Such subtitles are prone to a number of concerns for, at least in

theory, time is available for the implementation of special solutions such as placement on screen, editing or the adjustment of reading speed. This justifies the existence of guidelines or codes of good practice that are often in-house manuals aimed at guaranteeing that all subtitlers keep to the established recommendations. Even though one might agree that a certain amount of normativity regulates subtitling practices in general, there are still differences between the recommendations and actual practice that may be accounted for in terms of technical constraints, preferred solutions or adequacy to specific needs.

When we refer to offline or pre-recorded subtitles, it is legitimate to consider intralingual and interlingual subtitling as separate realities. Then again, the first type is mainly seen to be directed to the hearing impaired and the latter to be devised for hearers. Guidelines and stylebooks usually echo this linguistic dichotomy which, in my view, is not relevant to this study. As I see it, in order to analyse the adequacy of subtitles for Deaf and HoH receivers we need to concentrate on the target text, the subtitles themselves. This will obviously be done with the notion that they will be mediating between a source text and the actual receivers. For all that matters, the language of the source text is a secondary issue. It may be true that different problems will arise from the intralingual and interlingual language transfer; nonetheless, the choices that will have to be made, for the benefit of these specific audiences, will remain the same regardless of the languages involved. In short, whichever medium or language SDH may be provided in, there are a number of particularities that will determine the nature of subtitles that aim at making audiovisual texts accessible to a given group of people.

This thesis addresses all the above mentioned issues to some length. It is structured so as to account for the theoretical and practical issues that derive from the topic itself and the research models that were followed.

Chapter II accounts for the underlying theoretical and methodological framework which places this research within the sphere of Translation Studies and of Action Research. Section 2.4. offers a detailed account of the various cycles that were undertaken within the AR framework and describes the various projects that were conducted in Portugal and the

accounts for the various contributions which led to the making of the set of guidelines presented in appendix I. This chapter can only be fully understood if its reading is complemented by that of the documents contained in appendix II (CD-Rom).

In chapter III special emphasis is placed in the description of the physiological and sociological implications of deafness. This is done to some detail in the belief that it is essential to know our addressees well if we are to provide them with truly useful services. Special emphasis is placed on the description of the linguistic implications of deafness, and of the educational opportunities that are in offer, because these will inevitably affect the way deaf people relate to the written language and, consequently, the way they read subtitles.

Chapter IV is completely dedicated to the discussion of SDH. In section 4.1, one may read a historical overview of SDH since its formal appearance in the time of silent movies to present day developments. Section 4.2 covers some of the main theoretical and practical issues that determine the nature of SDH; to be followed by detailed accounts of important specific issues, in section 4.3. This chapter accounts for the conclusions that may be taken from the analyses of a broad corpus, namely, hundreds of television programmes presented by television broadcasters in Portugal, Spain, France, Switzerland, Germany, Italy and Great Britain and of 15 professional guidelines (cf. section 4.3). Further to this, it is also a theoretical reflection of the outcomes of the AR project that led to the subtitling of over 50 hours of a Brazilian telenovela, broadcast by the Portuguese television channel SIC between October and December 2003.

Given that a great part of this research took place in Portugal, chapter V is dedicated to presenting the Portuguese context which determined many of the outcomes presented in this thesis. Section 5.5 offers a detailed account of the various case studies that are presented as different cycles in the AR log in section 2.4 and is specially revealing of the different methods and methodologies that were adopted in each research cycle. In some respects the very history of SDH in Portugal is intertwined with those case studies for they

were instrumental for recent developments both in the quantity and quality of the SDH in offer.

In chapter V, conclusions and suggestions for further research are put forward in the knowledge that this is only a small contribution in view of the amount of research that needs to be done in this field.

Even if presented in the form of an appendix (appendix I), the desideratum of this research work can be read in a set of guidelines, written in Portuguese, – *Sistema de Legendagem vKv* –, which may be seen as a means to make theory applicable in the professional world.

At the onset of this thesis, and in order to set forward a starting point for my discussion of SDH, I say with Baker *et al.* (1984:31):

generally, subtitling is a series of balancing acts: of choosing between reasonable reading time and fullness of text, between reading time and synchronicity, between pictorial composition and opportunities for lip reading, and between the aims of the programme/author and the needs of the deaf. It is a challenging and rewarding process.

II. Theoretical and Methodological Framework

2.1. Underlying Translation Studies Theoretical Constructs

We are in search of descriptive rules which help us understand the process, not normative rules which we use to monitor and judge the work of others.

(Bell 1991:12)

By focusing my research on Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing I have implicitly placed my work within what Holmes (1972) defined as a product-oriented descriptive study. In addition, at a theoretical level, this study is both text-type restricted and medium restricted. I have delimited my focus to audiovisual translation and particularly to SDH as a special kind of multi-coded text transfer. Special emphasis has been placed on the constraints that the audiovisual medium, with its specific coding systems, imposes on the act of translating. To some extent, and particularly due to the methodological approach taken, this research also addresses translation as a process and discusses its making in view of the function it is to play in a particular socio-cultural context. Still deriving from the methodological approach, in which research and action come together to solve a problem, there is the explicit aim to apply such research to the improvement of present and future practices and conditions. In this particular case, the fact that a set of guidelines are proposed, and given that those very guidelines may be used by practitioners, in translator training programmes and for the development of new technological solutions, it seems equally feasible to inscribe this study in what Holmes considered to be Applied Translation Studies. Actually, by working at various levels, this research has assumed a holistic

approach and has reached across the various branches of Translation Studies proposed in Holmes' map (*ibid.*). By doing so, it may be seen as an example of what this scholar posited when he wrote:

In reality, of course, the relation is a dialectal one, with each of the three branches supplying materials for the other two, and making use of the findings which they in turn provide it (*ibid.*:183).

By spreading this study to a number of different areas, it may be difficult to focus specifically on any particular issue; however, it will allow us to address the problem as a whole, in the knowledge that every element is systemically inter-related and co-dependent at any one time. Considering each matter from a number of angles will also make it possible to clarify how actions and/or products are determined by the cultural and situational contexts in which they are found.

In its complexity, this multi-angled and multi-layered study has found its theoretical framework in a number of different theories of translation. Much has been drawn from systems theories, where particular emphasis is placed on Even-Zohar's Polysystem Theory, Toury's Descriptive Translation Studies and norm theory and Chesterman's norms and causal model. The fact that the above mentioned theories were central to this research makes them deserving of particular attention in this chapter. Other theories, such as Vermeer's *Skopostheorie*, Nord's translation-oriented text analysis and Gutt's relevance theory were often called upon to validate findings and to throw light on complex issues. In spite of this, they will not be discussed at a theoretical level but will be given deeper attention whenever found necessary.

The theories on which I have anchored my work are not specifically directed towards audiovisual translation. Even though, as Díaz-Cintas (2004a:51) reminds us, "many of the translation concepts and theories that have been historically articulated cease to be functional when scholars try to apply them to AVT", they have, in spite of all, cemented the work of many scholars in the field, who have applied them to their purposes and have expanded and developed the aspects found relevant to the issues under address. Those

situations will be accounted for in the discussion of the various issues in this chapter and in other chapters, whenever considered to be relevant.

From Even-Zohar's "Polysystem" to Toury's "Norms"

Among the different constructs to be addressed in this work, that of "norms" is of paramount importance given its centrality to Translation Studies in the last decades and to the various developments thereof. The notion of norms in translation derives from Gideon Toury's works in the 70s, within the context of the Polysystem Theory, as put forward by a fellow Israeli scholar, Even-Zohar. Even-Zohar, whose work stems from that of Russian Formalism and the Structuralism of the School of Prague, posited that the translation of literature lay within the literary polysystem which, in turn, found itself systemically linked to broader historical, social and artistic systems of the target culture.

Not being a translation theorist as such, Even-Zohar observed the role translation played within varying cultural systems. He did this by studying actual translations in relation to the literary systems in which they appeared and within broader sociological contexts, to explain the function of translation within a given culture. However, as Gentzler (2003:20) points out, Even-Zohar's theory only relates texts to "hypothetical structural models and abstract generalizations" missing out on what might be known by the systematic description of concrete texts in context. That which was absent in Even-Zohar's work was developed by Toury, who took actual translations as his object of research, to describe them and to establish the norms that had dictated them in the first place. By doing this, Toury aimed at making Translation Studies an "empirical discipline" that this scholar (1995:1) says to be "devised to account, in a systematic and controlled way, for particular segments of the 'real world'". Toury (*ibid.*:2) envisages Descriptive Translation Studies to be purely descriptive, refraining from value judgements and from the prescriptivism that prevailed in earlier theories of translation.

Toury does see the possibility of using the findings of Descriptive Studies to preview the result of certain actions in particular environments by saying (*ibid.*:16) that:

the cumulative findings of descriptive studies should make it possible to formulate a series of coherent *laws* which would state the inherent relations between all the variables found to be relevant to translation.

To this Toury adds (*ibid.*):

To be sure, the envisaged laws are everything but absolute, designed as they are to state the likelihood that a kind of behaviour, or surface realization, would occur under one set of specifiable conditions or another.

This concern to refrain from a directive attitude is strongly held when Toury posits that regularities in behaviour are to be sought so as to uncover "norms" that are said to be (*ibid.*:55) intersubjective factors lying in the middle ground between absolute rules and pure idiosyncrasies. Such norms, which take a target-oriented approach, are to be accepted as explanatory of the social order in which translations occur. This means that norms are bound by time and space and may be discussed in terms of the various systemic relationships that form the cultural and situational contexts to which they pertain. Further, norms derive from practice and are shaped by those who use them, (or refuse to adhere to them), *i.e.*, in the first place, by the translators themselves, the clients or the commissioners or, at times, by authoritative bodies such as translation critics, scholars or teachers. This means that norms are intrinsically changeable and valid for certain periods of time. It may happen that at one given time, various norms may be co-existent in a particular system. Norms often compete for centrality, and new sets of norms tend to take over previously held ones once they are accepted as mainstream. This organic dynamics justifies the limited scope of any study addressing norms and its restrictions to replicability, because what may be found in one particular case may not be repeated in other contexts. In the knowledge that norms are volatile and that every translation is an actualization of the norms in force, either through the adherence or non-adherence to those very norms, they will determine the very nature of the practices and of the products they inform.

Toury sets forward a number of norms that may be found at various levels of the translation circuit and which he sums up as *initial norms*, *preliminary norms* and *operational*

norms. The first of these are considered to be, for logical reasons, prior to the other two, which are also addressed as *translation norms*. In short, such norms operate in all types of translation, and will determine translation as a product. This means norms will be found at all stages of the translation process.

According to Toury (1995:56-57), *initial norms* regulate the stance translators take towards the source text and towards the culture or language of the target text. Toury clarifies that the initial decision to subject oneself to source norms will determine a target text to be "adequate", whereas, a bias towards the target culture will make a translation "acceptable". Various scholars, such as Chesterman (1997:64) and Hermans (1999:77), consider these two terms confusing for the fact that they might be used with exactly the opposite meaning. For this reason, Hermans (*ibid.*) proposes the use of the expression "source-oriented" instead of "adequate" and "target-oriented" instead of "acceptable". It is known that no translated text can be absolutely adequate or acceptable for choices and shifts will always result from the constraints inherent to any translation. That is very much the case in AVT for the translation will be embedded in the source text which means that the distinction between source text and target text will be less clear. In addition, more often than not, even in the case of communicative translation, the co-existence of the source text will dilute this dichotomy.

Preliminary norms establish the overall strategies taken towards translation within a particular polysystem by addressing two sets of issues. On the one hand, preliminary norms have to do with translation policy in that they determine the types of texts to be brought into the target culture through translation and the place such translations are to hold in that particular system. The importance that translations and translators are given within any culture will be accounted for in simple ways, such as in the inclusion of the translator's name in the translated text. On the other hand, preliminary norms establish directness of translation *i.e.*, the language used as a source in the translation process. This issue is particularly relevant in the translation of texts originally written in minority languages to be translated into a variety of other languages. Quite often, the source text used in the translation is not the original text but rather an intermediate version, a "pivot translation"

(Gottlieb 1994a:117-119) written in a better known language. It is also found that texts in so called "major" languages which have to be translated into minority language are often translated from a "closer" major language. These situations are frequently found in European institutions where minority languages are relayed through English or French to be translated into other languages. The DVD industry takes to similar strategies to produce subtitles in different languages by using an English master list or genesis file as a source text rather than the original text that might be spoken in an "exotic" language. These preliminary norms, as the name implies, have logical and chronological precedence over the operational norms for they will influence these in their making.

Operational norms, which "may be described as serving as a model, in accordance with which translations come into being" (Toury 1995:60) direct the decisions made during the act of translating. "They affect the matrix of the text – *i.e.*, the modes of distributing linguistic material in it – as well as the textual make-up and verbal formulation as such" (*ibid.*:58). These norms subdivide into two categories: *matricial norms* and *textual-linguistic norms*. a) *matricial norms*, address the target text as a whole, and determine location, addition and deletion of its parts, whereas b) *textual-linguistic norms* reveal linguistic and stylistic preferences, that may be general or particular in application depending on whether they pertain to translation as such or to the particular text-type in case.

Toury (1995) goes to great lengths to clarify that norms are to be taken as merely descriptive even though he does propose a "beyond" to Descriptive Studies by tentatively putting forward probabilistic "laws" of translation. These he opposes to "lists of possibilities" and "directives" which leave space for choice and do not involve sanctions should they not be complied with. In fact, Toury only proposes two "laws of translation", the *law of growing standardization* and the *law of interference*, which may be taken as a first step towards "universals of translation". These first attempts at writing up "laws of translation" have been questioned by Munday (2001:118) who suggests that "the *law of interference* needs to be modified, or even a new law proposed, that of *reduced control over linguistic realization in translation*" given the variety of factors that affect the translation process, making the concept of norms more complex than suggested by Toury.

Whereas Toury (1995:54) clarifies that norms stand midway between rules, which are objective and idiosyncrasies that are purely subjective, Hermans (1999:81) sets forth yet another category, that of *conventions*, "open invitations to behave in a certain way", which become norms once they have been accepted as being successful. By doing so, Hermans is reinforcing the fact that norms do have prescriptive force even if Toury doesn't consider that to be the case.

Still, within the discussion of the need for laws of translation, Toury acknowledges the need for descriptive-explanatory inquiries, as proposed by Chesterman (1993), even though he is wary of the risk of directives and guidelines being patronising in their making. He further alerts that such guidelines are not always reflective of actual norms and are often not a "better" strategy, particularly when they are set forward by theoreticians and/or researchers and not by the practitioners themselves. This issue will be later taken up in section 2.3 to the effect that Action Research may provide a new environment for the writing of guidelines, where both practitioners and researchers work together towards the resolution of problems, thus building on each other's expertise to achieve reliable and adequate solutions and proposals.

Toury's norms, which must be seen as descriptive categories identifying translation patterns to be mapped at various levels of the translation polysystem, have been further developed so as to cover important elements that go untouched in the initial formulation. Among the various reformulations, one particular case stands out for its relevance to this study: that set forth by Chesterman, to be addressed below.

Chesterman's "norms"

Taking up Toury's premises that norms are to be analysed descriptively and that they simply portray behavioural tendencies, Chesterman (1993:5) claims that "insofar as they are indeed accepted by a given community as norms, they by definition have prescriptive force within the community". Chesterman finds basic support to his belief in Toury's own words

(1991:187) when this scholar considers that translation laws become "binding norms", thus being accepted as being models or standards of desired behaviour (cf. Chesterman 1993:4). To this notion of implicit prescriptivism, Chesterman adds the notion of quality assessment, as an issue that is also dismissed by Toury (1995:2) who defends that Descriptive Studies must refrain from value judgements and from the presentation of conclusions in the form of recommendations for "proper" behaviour. Chesterman (1993) dwells on this aspect of Toury's theory by referring to the general function of norms in society. Drawing on Bartsch's writings, Chesterman (*ibid.*) clarifies that norms are validated through their internalization by the individuals of a certain society and function to regulate behaviour, to maintain social order and to regulate people's expectations about socially relevant things and events. This means that, and still according to Bartsch (1987:4), norms are "correctness notions" and therefore contain value judgements. Even though norms grow out of common practices they need to be validated as being "good" or "correct" practices and that is done implicitly through acceptance or explicitly by some authority. Quite often, as Chesterman reminds us (1993:7), an "official" norm basically makes explicit what is already common practice, and actual use takes precedence over validation. Even if implicitly, norms need to be validated in order to be accepted as such and in their validation they acquire a status that doesn't mean they are irrefutable or unchangeable. In reality, in their social confinement, they continue to be expressive of the changes within the social groups to which they are bound.

By looking at norms in this new light, Chesterman (*ibid.*:7) does not dismiss Toury's proposed notion of norms, but sets forward a new set of translation norms which divide into 2 sub-sets: *professional norms* and *expectancy norms*. Within professional norms, which are said to result from "competent professional behaviour" (*ibid.*:8), Chesterman lists three higher-order norms, the accountability norm, the communication norm and the relation norm that are respectively ethical, social and textual in nature.

Further to professional norms, Chesterman proposes *expectancy norms* which he says to be "product norms" (*ibid.*) for they determine what receivers take for being "good" or "correct" texts. These expectancy norms, that are validated by the receivers themselves,

who judge whether a particular text is adequate to the specific situation in case, will result directly from the application of professional norms for these will guarantee the former. In quite a different sense from that intended by Hermans, Nord (1997:53) uses the term "conventions" to refer to this notion of "implicit or tacit non-binding regulations of behaviour, based on common knowledge and expectation of what others expect you to expect them [...] to do in a certain situation", which may be seen as the expectancy norms proposed by Chesterman.

By proposing these norms, Chesterman has placed more emphasis on the translation action as such than Toury did. He restricted Toury's "general descriptive laws" to what he called "normative laws of translation" (Chesterman 1993:14) which are said to be norm-directed strategies which are observed to be used (with a given, high, probability) by (a given, large, proportion of) competent professional translators. In short,

norms function as standards or models of a certain kind of behaviour and of a certain kind of behavioural product (*i.e.* a text). Normative translation laws both predict and explain, in a standard empirical sense (as do general translation laws) (*ibid.*).

By considering competent translators' practices to be norm constitutive, Chesterman sets them as paradigms that need to be better understood if they are to be replicated elsewhere. This scholar (*ibid.*:16-18) enumerates the reasons for competent translators' behaviour in yet another set of norms, briefly summarised as:

- (1) *The source text*: A translator performs act A because the source text contained item/feature X).[...]
- (2) *Target language norms*: A translator performs act A because of the expectancy norms of the target language community regarding grammaticality, acceptability, appropriateness, style, textuality, preferred conversations or discourse and the like. [...]
- (3) *Normative translation laws*: A translator performs act A because this act conforms to given normative translation laws. [...]
- (4) *General communication maxims*: A translator performs act A because this act conforms to overall communicative or co-operative maxims, principles which are accepted as valid for any kind of communication, not just translation. [...]

(5) *Ethical values*: A translator performs act A because this act conforms to ethical principles. [...]

Indeed, if one can explain why certain norms come into being, it will be easier to discuss particular issues at a theoretical level and, above all, it will be possible to propose overt prescriptive norms that may be valued by many in the field. Norms may even be validated through their explicit presentation in documents that may be taken as models of previously acknowledged good practices. Experienced (*i.e.* competent) translators and/or researchers (or hopefully both) may compile "portable rules" in the guise of guidelines or codes of good practice to pass on knowledge to young practitioners, in a structured manner, so that they may come to know the makings of good practice without having to wait for experience to acquire certain competences; and further, such guidelines may still be used to remind less proficient translators of ways to improve their practices.

Many theorists shy away from the possibility of present day translation theory providing any sort of prescriptive guidance to translators. Even Chesterman, who proposes the causal model presented above, is weary of openly defending the position that translation theory may be prescriptive in any way. In *Can Theory Help Translators? A Dialogue Between the Ivory Tower and the Wordface* (Chesterman and Wagner 2002), Chesterman places himself among those theorists who "see themselves as studying the translators, not instructing them" (*ibid.*:2). However, throughout his long and interesting debate with the professional translator, Emma Wagner, it becomes clear that the needs of the professional translator call for a serious revision of many of the principles that have guided Descriptive Translation Studies, and translation theory in principle. In response to Chesterman's provocative question of what translation theory should look like, Wagner replies:

In my view, 'theory' should not be just some individual's brain-child: it should arise from observing practice, analyzing practice, and drawing a few general conclusions to provide guidance. These conclusions should naturally be tested in practice. Leading to better guidance: better prescription based on better description (*ibid.*:7).

The exchange between the theorist and the professional is lengthy and enlightening and comes to a few conclusions that are considered relevant to this study. On the one hand, Wagner (*ibid.*:133) is of the opinion that "narrow prescriptive theory wouldn't work" and

suggests "a different kind of theory that we [professionals] could help to create: practice-oriented theory – a theory rooted in best practice, directed at improved practice, and attentive to practitioners throughout the profession", to which Chesterman (*ibid.*:132) agrees by adding that there would be no need "for a radically new kind of theory, although it might mean developing new research methods".

I would like to believe that the path taken in the development of this research starts where Chesterman and Wagner left off. It stands on the premise that Translation Studies may set out to actively co-operate in the making of its research object. By accepting that, further to describing norms, Translation Studies may intervene in the making and validation of those very norms, thus contributing towards a greater adequacy of both practices and outcomes to those involved in a particular *skopos*, I too do not see the need for a new kind of theory, but I do see the need for a "satisfactory theory" that, as Nida (1991:20) puts it:

should help in the recognition of elements which have not been recognized before, as in the case of black holes in astrophysics. A theory should also provide a measure of predictability about the degree of success to be expected from the use of certain principles, given the particular expectations of an audience, the nature of a content, the amount of information carried by the form of discourse, and the circumstances in use.

In the knowledge that this kind of theory can only grow out of new "approaches to the task of translation" and "different orientations which provide helpful insight, and diverse ways of talking about how a message can be transferred from one language to another" (*ibid.*:21), I found the need for new research methods that would take me to a set of guidelines that may be seen as being simultaneously descriptive and prescriptive. These different orientations I believe to have found in a methodological approach that is quite new to Translation Studies, that of Action Research, which favours the type of interaction suggested by Wagner, thus allowing for new theoretical insights into some "black holes" of SDH.

2.2. Translation Studies Research Methods

By focusing on the object of study from many angles we can gain a better understanding of translation and translating.

(Díaz-Cintas 2004:62)

When Chesterman (2000:16) writes that "translation models constrain research models" further to proposing a "causal model" to be used in the identification of cause-effect relationships between the various components of translation (both as an action and a product), he moved away from the purely descriptive framework that has characterised Descriptive Translation Studies in the last years. Chesterman tentatively proposes that description, (answers to "what?"), should give way to understanding, (answers to "why?"), so that norms may gain greater prescriptive force and may be used as quality assessment tools. I see this as a step forward from the previously held belief (1997:52) that "if translation theory is to be a genuinely scientific undertaking, it must of course be descriptive". I do not think that descriptivism and prescriptivism are mutually excluding, for I share Chesterman's opinion (*ibid.*) that prescriptivism is present, in explicit and implicit ways, in all branches of Translation Studies as presented in Holmes' map. This is overtly so in the applied branch, particularly in translator training; it is covertly so in Descriptive Translation Studies, as we have seen in section 2.1; and if for no other reason, the authoritative nature of theory gives it the prescriptive bias it tries to deny.

Even though I do set out to a descriptive analyses of SDH in general (chapter IV), by setting forth a set of guidelines to be used in Subtitling for the Deaf and HoH in Portugal (*appendix I*) I am explicitly making a case for a prescriptive outcome of a descriptive study. I completely agree that special care needs to be taken so that such guidelines may truly reflect the outcome of empirical research. If guidelines come into being in conformity with a basic principle that every portable rule must be a reflection of the "best norms" found in truly descriptive studies, they will not run the risk of being inadequate or misleading.

Furthermore, this will minimise the risk that always goes with saying how things *should* be done for, in the knowledge that guidelines are theorised norms, they do have the weight of authority. Frequently, guidelines are in-house products, written out by more experienced professionals, who compile their knowledge so as to help less qualified or less proficient professionals to do a better job. In this context, they are no more than the written register of norms that may be restricted to a particular company or even to a particular client (case of stylebooks). If professionals see the need for guidelines, as Wagner states it (Chesterman and Wagner 2002:4), why should Translation Studies not accept the challenge of actively contributing towards the making of such guidelines? I am not suggesting that guidelines should be drawn by scholars rather than by professionals. Such guidelines would probably not reflect best practices for they would not have grown out of actual use. Even though translation theorists may describe how things come into being, only those who are actively involved in the making of the product will know why they do things the way they do¹⁰. In events where the professional does things without knowing the underlying reasons, the theorist's empirical expertise will be a valuable aid to clarify the utility of certain choices. What I am suggesting above and what I purport to do in this research project is to show how theory and practice can knit together to arrive at a set of guidelines that are believed to have normative value in that they reflect actual practices that are seen as "better" practices. This belief derives from the fact that every suggestion put forward reflects the best interest of the stakeholders in case. This does not mean that all the solutions are to the interest of all those involved in the process (seen as a communicative whole). It basically means that, in principle, it will be a solution that is considered to be the one that best fulfils the requirements of those involved in a specific moment and place: be it the receiver, the translator, the commissioner, or the original text sender as such.

This may come as contradictory to the initial formulation of the subject of this research work as being "text". Indeed, even though text has been taken as a central element in this

¹⁰ Work such as that by Ivarsson and Carroll (1998), de Barros (1999), Martínez (2004) or Sánchez (2004) show how valuable professionals' insights are to the understanding of the way audiovisual translation is actually carried out in effect.

study, it is to be seen in context and any set of guidelines will aim, in practice and through implementation, at arriving at a text that is perfectly adequate to its context. This also means that the theoretical approach to be taken cannot be one alone, for an overview of the issue needs to be achieved if the guidelines are to be comprehensive and encompassing. This means that the making of a set of guidelines (in this particular case for pre-recorded SDH on Portuguese television) will need to borrow concepts and constructs from various research areas within Translation Studies and from areas that are not often found to relate to translation at all.

This in practice means that this research will hopefully cross over many of the bridges that stand between the linguistic, literary and cultural approaches to Translation Studies. For, if the phenomena of SDH is to be better understood it does not suffice to limit the study to "translation linguistics" (Fawcett 1997:145), even if it is done in a multidirectional way covering issues pertaining to syntax, semantics, pragmatics and text linguistics or discourse analysis. Guidelines that just reflected linguistic issues would certainly be incomplete and inadequate for they would be simply product-oriented. If a functional-oriented approach is to be taken towards the understanding of the communicative purpose underlying any translation activity, this will bring together linguistic and culture oriented methods to engage in the better understanding of the intricate makings of translation. Further, audience design techniques are also needed to bring to the fore an important element in the translation circuit, often only made present in the guise of an abstract addressee. By paying special attention to the Deaf receiver, the guidelines in case will be validated by this authority, and expectancy norms will have been taken into account.

It is often the case that, in order to understand its object, science needs to break it up into manageable parts, so as to describe it as fully as possible. In so doing, it frequently forgets that, by looking at the part, the whole is not grasped. In some respects, this has happened with Translation Studies. In the hope of gaining scientific rigour, research has quite often concentrated on particular issues as if they were wholes in themselves. This may happen because the study of particular issues calls for specific methodologies and these are sometimes incompatible with those used to study issues of a diverse nature. In spite of this,

researchers are becoming aware of the enriching contribution of transversal studies that may bring together the best of different worlds. Among many others who openly acknowledge the interest of taking an area conditioned approach to Translation Studies, Gentzler (2003), posits the interaction between the different branches of Translation Studies as does Beeby (2000) who suggests a holistic research model that may "combine qualitative and quantitative data, have a real and practical application for human translators and integrate theory and practice" (*ibid.*:51).

In working towards a set of guidelines that are hoped to be useful to practitioners of SDH in Portugal and descriptive of the cultural-situational context to which they pertain, I am deliberately aiming at:

- Bridging the gap between theory and practice in a dialogic exchange between concepts and practices and between researchers and practitioners;
- Showing that it is possible and useful to address the same issue through a variety of angles without losing focus of the subject being studied;
- Gaining insight into the makings of SDH through related subjects such as linguistics, social and cultural studies, cinema studies, reception analysis and Deaf studies, among others;
- Finding the prescriptive value of norms and proving the need for the explicitation of such norms in a format that may be useful to those in the field.

As it now appears, my subject of research goes beyond that which I clarified it to be at the beginning of this chapter. The object to be addressed remains the same, SDH. That which broadens the horizon of this research is the approach that was taken to the study of this particular text type. By taking Action Research as a methodological approach, it was possible to address the issue from the inside. Researchers, practitioners and receivers all came together to describe and understand SDH with a will to improve their personal practices and to change the world around them. In fact, it is hoped that through this holistic dialogic approach SDH will be better understood as a whole: as a particular type of text, to be used by a special receiver, therefore to be conceived according to certain parameters, by professionals who know the makings of their endeavour.

2.3. Action Research as a Methodological Approach

Life is not static. Answers and questions will change, as will focus, perspective, and the living form of the individual who is formulating them. In this way his personal and professional life is organic, and his personal theories [...] also. He will develop theories which account for his practice and when that practice occurs, and his stimulus for, and approach to, the process of change will be a consideration for others which are grounded in question and answer.

(McNiff 1988:42)

Even if the term "Action Research" may appear to be self containing in meaning, Reason and Bradbury (2001:1), state that "there is no 'short answer' to the question 'what is Action Research?'" . To this they add a comprehensive explanation:

Action Research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities (*ibid.*).

This dual aim of action and research is also brought to the fore by Dick (1993), when he writes that "action is meant 'to bring about change in some community or organisation or program' and research 'to increase understanding on the part of the researcher or the client, or both (and often some wider community)'" . Directly linked to this, is the fact that some cases of Action Research will be particularly focused on *action* whereas others might be all the more so on *research*. If the primary focus is to be had on action, "the research may take the form of understanding on the part of those most directly involved" and the outcomes will be "change and learning for those who take part" (*ibid.*). Yet, if the primary focus is on research, "more attention is often given to the design of the research than to other aspects" (*ibid.*). However, as Dick (*ibid.*) reinforces, "in both approaches it is possible for action to inform understanding, and understanding to assist action" .

Hopkins (1993:44) also emphasizes this idea that action and research can be reciprocally useful when he states that "Action Research combines a substantive act with a research procedure; it is action disciplined by enquiry, a personal attempt at understanding while engaged in a process of improvement and reform".

This view is also shared by Coghlan and Brannick (2001:xi) who say that "Action Research is an approach to research which aims at both taking action and creating knowledge or theory about that action." These authors compare AR with traditional research approaches stating that "the outcomes [of AR] are both an action and a research outcome, unlike traditional research approaches which aim at creating knowledge only." (*ibid.*) These scholars state further that "Action Research is a generic term that covers many forms of action-oriented research" and that "the array of approaches indicates diversity in theory and practice among Action Researchers and provides a wide choice for potential Action Researchers as to what might be appropriate for their research" (*ibid.*).

There is lack of consensus in the terms used to define AR. Authors divide themselves in seeing it as a methodology (Somekh 1993:28), a method (Cohen and Manion 1985 [1980]:216; Hopkins 1993:47), an approach (McNiff 1988:24; Nunan 1993:41; McTaggart 1994:313; Jennings and Graham 1996:268; Hatim 2001:189) or a paradigm (McWilliam 1992, as quoted in McTaggart 1994:325) and some authors sometimes move between tags whilst referring to different aspects of AR. Dick (1993) introduces AR as a paradigm and sets forth four Action Research methodologies, namely: participatory action research, action science, soft systems methodology and evaluation. This author goes as far as to state that when you start your research it is useful to choose one methodology. He also reminds us that it is important to use it in a critical way and if, in the course of action, you think it doesn't suit your purposes, you may choose a different methodology.

Reason (2003:106), sheds new light on the discussion by clarifying the position he and Bradbury assumed in their 2001 publication:

Action Research must not be seen as simply another methodology in the toolkit of disinterested social science: Action Research is an orientation to inquiry rather than a methodology. It has different purposes, is based in

different relationships, and has different ways of conceiving knowledge and its relation to practice.

For the purpose of this research, it seems to be quite irrelevant to choose any particular tag for what is considered to be a powerful tool for the development of knowledge through reflective practice. It seems appropriate to consider AR as an "approach" or, to take up Reason and Bradbury's metaphor (2001:xxv) of a "family of Action Research approaches", for AR opens itself to multiple uses, methodologies and methods. As a matter of fact, it is possible to envisage AR in projects that, never referring to AR as such, contain many of the principles underlying one or various AR models, such as those found in CAR (Collaborative Action Research), SIAR (Simultaneous-integrated Action Research), EAR (Emancipatory Action Research), CAR (Community-based Action Research) and/or GAR (Generative Action Research), to number a few.

The seminal notion of AR has often been attributed to Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist, working in America in the 1940s, who believed that only by involving scientists and practitioners from the social world under investigation could practice be truly understood and changed. Lewin described AR as a "spiral of steps", in which each circle of the spiral was composed by "planning, action and fact-finding, about the result of the action" (quoted in *Infed the Encyclopaedia of Informal Education*). This image of the "spiral" would come to be the touchstone for all AR to come and has since been worked on to give place to various AR models, all stemming from the notion of successive and/or simultaneous cycles covering a number of varieties of the four staged cycle (reflection, planning, action and observation) proposed by Lewin. Working in a completely different environment, John Collier, US Commissioner of Indian Affairs between 1933 and 1945, is also said to have introduced AR to operate change in society whilst researching burning issues. Even if these two figures are often pointed out as the forerunners of AR, Masters (2000) calls one's attention to the fact that there is evidence of the application of the principles of Action Research by a number of social reformists prior to Lewin, such as the Science in Education Movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One might even trace the origins of AR as far back as Aristotle and Hegel in their dialogic and social concerns.

However uncertain its roots may be, AR has developed in various domains and has gained terrain in areas such as the medical sciences, social work, the arts and management, among others¹¹. Yet, it has been in educational environments that AR has played its most important role in the making of reflective practitioners – teachers who envisage their teaching practices as critically informed action¹². It has also been in the domain of teaching that AR has found its way into Translation Studies. In reality, many teachers, professionals and researchers of translation might have, at some point, used or enacted AR projects quite unaware of the scope or nature of their venture. This often occurs when the professional turns to the scholar for help in the resolution of a problem, when the scholar calls on the professional to provide examples that may substantiate theoretical hypotheses, and as Hatim (2001:7) suggests:

nowadays, it is quite common in the field to have practising translators or teachers of translation (or, more commonly, those who are both) engage in the identification of interesting problem areas, the choice of suitable investigation procedures and the pursuit of research aimed at providing answers to a range of practical issues.

The teaching element has often been seen as the point where theory and practice come together, and as far as AR is concerned, favouring such interaction, it seems natural that teachers of translation should use it, not only to gain insight into their teaching activities, but to generate other forms of enquiry. Díaz-Cintas (2004a:64) sees this "symbiosis that accommodates theory, practice and teaching" as a solution for the big gap that draws apart the university and the industry and sees subtitling as an area where such a symbioses may come about naturally. This scholar (*ibid.*) reinforces the value of this interaction by bringing to the fore its benefits:

It is of little benefit to us or our society to shut ourselves away in an ivory tower and draw up theories with no empirical base, to produce a practical work that has no theoretical base, or to teach processes that have nothing to do with the reality of the workplace and have no solid theory behind

¹¹ Papers/dissertations presenting AR projects abound in a number of areas of research and are profusely publicised both in specialised journals dedicated to Action Research and/or as case studies in scientific journals of all domains. (e.g. Margeris 1973; Lees and Lees 1975; Misumi 1975; Bowers 1977; Parkhouse and Holmen 1978; Fineman and Eden 1979).

¹² Strong movements can presently be found in East Anglia and in Bath in the UK, in Portugal, in the US and in Australia, for instance.

them. To gain visibility and to assure the social welfare of translation, we need to join forces and avoid the creation of an unnecessary schism between the three dimensions, each as indispensable as the others.

Kiraly (2000) offers us ample evidence of how constructivist approaches, and AR in particular, might be used, both in the education and training of future translators and in the training of teachers of translation. This scholar (*ibid.*:101) believes that AR might be “particularly valuable for perpetuating innovation in the often unreflective practice of translator education” and comes forward with examples and proposals for the use of innovative practices in the domain. Other teachers of translation have reported to have used AR in their teaching practices. Cravo (1999) accounts for her use of AR in a longitudinal study, carried out between 1996 and 1998, within a Masters of Education in Supervision, with the dual aim of promoting autonomy in translation students and helping the teacher to find her way through a terrain unknown to her: the teaching of foreign languages for specific purposes to higher education students. Other scholars and teachers of translation have shown an interest in trying out and implementing projects and practices that are in the line of AR; but not much has been published on the issue, which might give us the wrong idea as to its actual use in various places and for different purposes within the sphere of Translation Studies. Hatim (2001:6) presents AR as a “process of encouraging practitioner research” and sees it as a means to bring theory and practice together so that “theory and practice mutually enrich one another” (*ibid.*:7). This scholar reinforces the:

such a practitioner/researcher would be viewed as someone who possesses not only craft knowledge but also analytical knowledge: This would ensure that problems are properly identified and appropriate solutions proposed and duly explained. Solutions can never be definitive, but the research cycle of practice – research – practice would have at least been set in motion.

It now becomes possible to envisage AR as a means to research in TS (*cf.* Cravo and Neves 2004) and this particular research project will give further evidence of the possibilities that derive from a social constructivist approach to research and practice in translation.

2.4. Action Research Log

What is observed and treated as "data" is inseparable from the observation process. (This means it's crucial for the researcher to document his own actions, circumstances, instantaneous interpretations, and emotional responses, because all of these contribute to shaping not only the process of observation but also the findings.)

(Gray 2002)

Every Action Research programme is made up of a journey in which a group of people take to the road to arrive, some time later, at a set goal. As in every journey, even if there is an initial plan, routes, and often the journeymen themselves, change. Even though different people may walk together this does not mean that everybody does so for the same reasons. It does mean that different people interact at particular times and thus contribute towards each other's projects. This research has been an instance of such a journey, bringing together academics, translators, translation trainees, broadcasters and the Deaf community in the development of various different projects that join towards the overriding objective of providing SDH for the Deaf on Portuguese television. The various Action Research cycles that occurred throughout the three years in which this research developed are visualised in the chronogram presented in fig.5 that accounts for the moments in which the different sub-cycles took place. Distinct cycles often occurred simultaneously even if separately while other cycles involved more than one group of agents.

This privileged context resulted in the holistic overview of the issue of SDH in Portugal. Through the variety of approaches taken and the interaction with the various agents, it became possible to understand the diverse *skopoi* in which this service is offered. The insights gained through this approach were of vital importance to the production of the set of guidelines presented in *appendix I*.

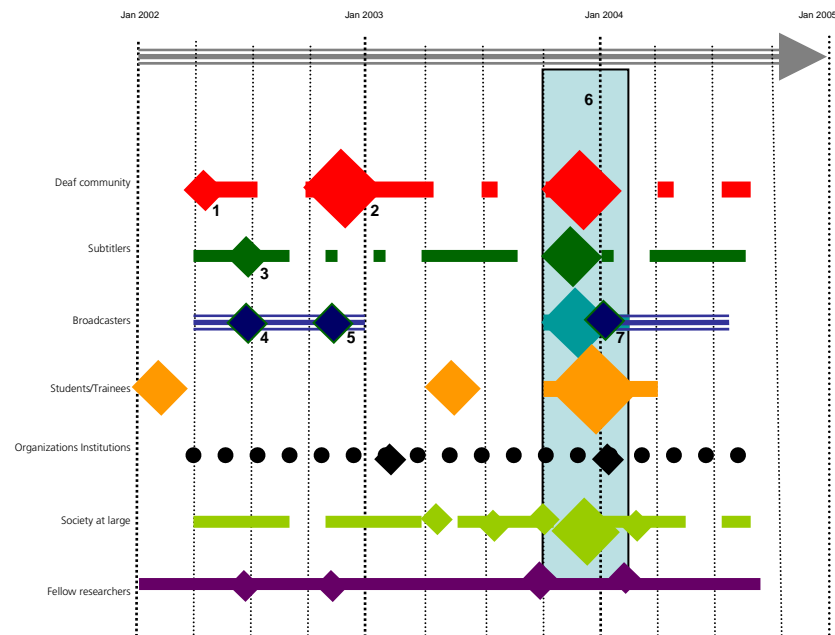


Fig. 5 – Action Research Chronogram¹³

1. Awareness Raising among Deaf Community 2. Questionnaire to Deaf 3. Questionnaire to Subtitlers
4. 24 hrs of Portuguese Television 5. RTP Political Debate 6. *Mulheres Apaixonadas* Project 7. SDH Report

Even though the whole Project may be addressed as one big Action Research cycle, there were three distinct moments in which different research activities took place. In chronological order, one may address an initial awareness raising cycle (2002/2003), in which a number of distinct sub-cycles took place; a focal cycle (late 2003), the *Mulheres Apaixonadas*¹⁴ project, bringing together agents from previous cycles; and a metacycle (2004), in which this thesis was written. Each cycle involved a number of different projects and case studies that are accounted for in this chapter and in chapter V.

In the light of AR, this research lived through the various cycles in a spiralling sequence. Each cycle called for “reflection, planning, action and observation”. Quite often, this was done more than once in each cycle, looping to form smaller cycles. Each cycle led to other

¹³ This chronogram shows the various lines of action which were taken during this research. The line types speak of the nature of the interaction in terms of continuity. Intensity is represented in the form of diamonds, whose size is proportional to the amount of work developed at each particular moment with the different human agents and institutions involved in this research.

¹⁴ *Mulheres Apaixonadas* (2003) is a Brazilian telenovela, shown by SIC in 2003.

cycles and redirected the very research programme. There were cycles that were essentially directed towards research; others, mainly towards action. Regardless of their slant, they were all carried out in a thorough manner and all impressions and results were duly registered and presented to all those involved. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and processed at each stage and results were analysed and viewed as the starting point for further research and further action. All the agents taking part in each cycle did so as active partners. By involving different groups in the study of their own problems, self-awareness and self-esteem were raised. This would also mean empowerment and the will to take action.

As one of the main stakeholders in this research, the Deaf community took an active part in various projects, acting as allies in the effort for the quantitative and qualitative improvement of SDH in Portugal. They were called upon to evaluate the state of the art in Portuguese SDH; they contributed with opinions on possible solutions to improve subtitling practices; and they became an active pressure group, lobbying at a governmental level for SDH on Portuguese television. Taking advantage of 2003 – European Year of People with Disabilities, various actions were planned and carried out with the Deaf community and other socially active groups to raise general awareness to the special needs of this minority. Collaboration with the Deaf has stretched beyond the cycles pertaining to this research and new cycles have been initiated by the Deaf themselves who have taken a proactive attitude in the fight for their rights.

RTP, the first Portuguese broadcaster to offer SDH in Portugal, also accepted to work towards the improvement of their SDH service. This would mean raising awareness among decision makers and working with in-house subtitlers in view of a better quality output. Unfortunately, the organizational situation that RTP was living at the time did not allow for the collaborative action to come full cycle. However, various small cycles took place and present standards speak of the importance of such activities.

Other possible partners were addressed at the onset of this research, in the hope that the issue might be taken up at yet other levels. Commercial television broadcasters were invited

to work in collaborative projects to introduce SDH in their programmes, but efforts were not fruitful at the time. However, one such broadcaster, SIC – *Sociedade Independente de Televisão, SA*, would later come to be one of the main collaborators in this research by hosting the *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project.

Getting professional subtitlers involved in this research project proved to be a challenging task for, until then, most professionals did not see SDH as an activity within their sphere. As Portugal has a long tradition in interlingual subtitling and SDH wasn't, until recently, accepted as a translatory action, it was clear from the beginning that professionals in business had no special interest in SDH and had directed their activity towards interlingual subtitling. In spite of the fact, this sector took part in a case study which was carried out in collaboration with a fellow researcher, working on AVT¹⁵. Special focus was placed on a questionnaire which was designed, distributed, bracketed and analysed so as to collect a comprehensive amount of information on a great variety of issues pertaining to professional AVT practices in Portugal¹⁶.

Further interaction with professional translators occurred with the organisation of a meeting/conference, on September 6, 2003, in a joint effort between Topázio¹⁷ and APT – *Associação Portuguesa de Tradutores* (www.appt.pt), in which close to 70 AVT professionals met up to discuss issues pertaining to their activity as subtitlers.

Truly collaborative interaction was also experienced with two professionals¹⁸ who came to be active partners in the above mentioned project with SIC. Another professional¹⁹ would later join in by offering training opportunities to the students working on the *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project.

¹⁵ Maria José Veiga, Universidade de Aveiro is working on a PhD research project on the translation of humour in feature films.

¹⁶ Close to 100 questionnaires were distributed among Portuguese subtitlers, from which 15 completed questionnaires were collected and analysed in quantitative terms using SPSS software and in qualitative terms by crossing figures and relating data and common practices. The final results of this study will not be presented in this dissertation, but the collected data will be referred to whenever such might be considered relevant.

¹⁷ Topázio: *Formação, Traduções e Informação* (geral@topazio-tfi.com) is a AVT training company.

¹⁸ Ana Paula Mota (Solegendas/Topázio) and Maria Auta de Barros (SIC).

¹⁹ Mafalda Eliseu (Moviola).

This research allowed for action in yet another area: that of teaching/training subtitlers-to-be. With the introduction of SDH in the BA in Translation at ESTG Leiria, students worked on specific projects making it possible for innovative subtitling solutions to be tested as case studies. Students worked with people from the Deaf community, in order to make their subtitling solutions truly adequate to their needs. These projects were taken to the phase of class presentation and acted as a test-tube for other projects.

These initial actions took up most of 2002 and 2003. At the time, they were developed as separate Action Research cycles. However, many cycles touched each other for reasons such as having common collaborators or common goals. This initial phase was fundamental to establish structural conditions for the most challenging Action Research cycle that happened in the last trimester in 2003: the *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project, at SIC. This cycle encapsulated many of the findings of previous cycles and put to test many of the theoretical beliefs and practical proposals suggested in the process.

The opportunity to collaborate with SIC in the implementation of SDH resulted from earlier contacts and derived from the fact that previous interaction had taken place with the person in charge of the subtitling department. It came as an opportunity to test out a set of “guidelines” that were in the making at the time. This project was planned so as to integrate as many of the partners from previous research cycles as possible. On the one hand, a first basic collaborative link was established between the researcher and the television broadcaster. Given that there were no in-house subtitlers to work on SDH, another collaborative link was established with one of the subtitling companies working for SIC in open subtitling. Given that they did not have qualified translators to do SDH, yet another link was created to allow for the training of future SDH professionals. This was done through a training programme that was designed between the subtitling company and ESTG Leiria, so that a group of students, who had received initial training as undergraduates, would go into professional training for the purpose. These graduate students also developed their own AR cycles, for their training programme was addressed within the premises of AR. Further to these, another collaborative tie was established with the Deaf community. A group of volunteer Deaf viewers, from different parts of the

country, monitored the project on a regular basis. Daily emails and periodic reports were a valuable contribution to the quality of the work in progress. The project, which lasted from September to December 2003, was an instance of collaborative Action Research (CAR) and proved that research and action can come hand-in-hand in an integrated manner, sustaining Hatim's belief (2001:3) that "theory and practice are ultimately complementary". Further to this, as a researcher, I was the living example of Hatim's description (*ibid.*:7) of action researchers in TS for I, too, was a teacher of translation, who had become a practitioner so as to better understand the phenomena of SDH, and had found myself engaged in "the identification of investigating problem areas, the choice of suitable investigative procedures, and the pursuit of research aimed at providing answers to a range of practical issues". The will to work on the job personally, derived from the belief, shared by Williams and Chesterman (2002:2), that "it is difficult, if not impossible, to appreciate the thought processes, choices, constraints and mechanisms involved in translation if you have never engaged in the process yourself".

Further to the various cycles described above, and taking it that this thesis results from yet another cycle, a "meta cycle" (Coghlan and Brannick 2001:20) in which a critical analysis of the various cycles that make up the whole is in order, it appears logical to take each of the main cycles and to readdress the methodological choices made in each case. In order to cover the main aspects in each cycle, reference will be made to issues connected to the research process, the position of the researcher, the participants, data collection techniques, bracketing (interpretative procedures for analyzing data), rigour, limitations and ethical issues. This will be done in the form of a log, for research and action were enacted in the first person. A summary of the outcomes and results of each cycle will be discussed in chapter V and in chapter IV.

AR cycles with the Deaf Community

AR with the Deaf Community involved two main cycles and various other smaller cycles, in a continual and still ongoing spiral. One of the main aims of this cycle was getting to know the addressees of SDH better. This implied understanding them as 'real people' and not as an abstraction or a concept. Most of the information at hand about the hearing impaired had been found in specialised bibliography. Most of such literature, written by American and British authors, described realities that were necessarily different from those in Portugal. At the time, and even now, not much information was available about the Deaf in Portugal and the best means available to gain a deeper understanding of the needs of these viewers was seen as empirical research. However, the objective was never to "study the Deaf" but to "understand" their needs. This was the main reason for using Action Research.

Gaining entrance to "worlds of silence" would prove to be a major challenge in that, to the Deaf, I was an outsider, a researcher wanting to study them "as objects". They were wary of my intentions. The researcher figure was kept at arms length for some time and those contacted within the Deaf community were quite uncooperative. The language barrier was initially used as a means to keep the breach. The presence of Portuguese sign language interpreters didn't seem to be helpful. At times, I addressed people as individuals, in the hope of finding empathic connections that might facilitate the next step. At other times, associations were formally approached, in search of statistical information or other elements that might be informative to the study. Both strategies proved to be little more than failures. At times, I was made to feel unwelcome and an intruder. Some time was spent in unfruitful attempts to gain entrance and to collect any sort of information about the Portuguese Deaf. Information was scarce and certainly insufficient to sustain any truly reliable study. As time passed it became all the clearer that, in order to improve or change the practices at the time, in terms of SDH in Portugal, there was an absolute need to break down the wall that had, for social and linguistic reasons, come to divide the Deaf from the prevailing hearing community. In the process of trying to be accepted, I had been made

aware of the many barriers that stood between these two communities and I became all the more determined to invest in bridging the gap, in the knowledge that by doing so, to quote Stringer's words (1999:204), "we come closer to the reality of the people's experience and in the process, increase the potential for creating truly effective services and programs that will enhance the lives of the people we serve." In fact, subtitling was a minor issue for a community who was (and still is) struggling to achieve basic social rights, such as the right to a cultural difference and identity; the right to a language (Portuguese Sign Language); the right to adequate education; the right to equal treatment in the professional world; or even the right to information and culture. In all, my study on SDH could only be seen as valid if, in some way, it could contribute towards improving any of the previously named issues and if I was to get the support of the Deaf community, my research project would have to work "towards the best interest of the other" (McNiff 1992:35) through dialogue. The greatest problem was found in establishing true dialogue with the Deaf community. Not knowing PSL made it difficult to communicate with people who have difficulty in communicating through written Portuguese or any other form of communication, such as vocalisation and/or lip reading. In fact, the first steps towards entrance came when I showed an interest in learning PSL and started performing basic linguistic exchanges. A simple greeting in SL, and often an imperfect gesture for "thank you" or "please" broke the ice. By registering as a member of the Portuguese Deaf Association; by going to the local Deaf club for coffee; by just being around without asking for anything; and particularly by offering to help in their activities (e.g., the organisation of a conference or selling raffles for fund raising) gradually contributed towards acceptance. The painful process of simple entrance would come to provide important insights into particularities of the Portuguese Deaf community such as their habits and routines, their interests and dislikes. I came to understand the reasons underlying their conflicts, both within the Deaf community and with the hearing community. These findings, even if quite qualitative, and of little scientific rigour, would be of utmost importance, for knowing the Deaf community from the inside would allow for a better knowledge of the addressees of SDH in Portugal.

Having gained the trust of a few members of various Deaf associations, I took to one of the most productive cycles in the interaction with the Deaf community: the study of the habits, likes and dislikes of the Deaf community in reference to their use of audiovisual materials (namely TV, video/DVD and cinema). The way to study the issue was discussed with a group of Deaf people and we decided that the easiest and most feasible way to collect a representative amount of data would be by distributing a questionnaire to members of the various Deaf associations in the country. The fact that the Deaf community is not geographically bound, as is the case of many other minority groups, and that there are significant social differences in geographical terms – northern, southern, continental or insular, interior or coastal regions – in respect to living conditions, social habits and therefore, in reference to the consumption of audiovisual materials, made it clear that only with the help of locally based Deaf associations would it be possible to reach people in all regions. Travelling around the country to collect information personally seemed too time consuming and impractical for various reasons and, having experienced the difficult entrance into the group, it appeared almost impracticable. Furthermore, high costs would be involved for there would always be a need for SL interpreting. Moreover, if the survey was to be carried out by an outside researcher, those taking part in the study would obviously see themselves as objects rather than subjects and that would certainly be reflected in the results. An effective way to elicit cooperative action in the collection of the required data came in the form of a CAR project. In the drawing up of the questionnaire, I worked in close interaction with members from the Portuguese Deaf Association (APS – *Associação Portuguesa de Surdos*), who made suggestions on the best way to build the questionnaire so as to elicit the information that needed to be collected. The dialogue that happened around the elaboration of the questionnaire called attention to the fact that the Deaf in Portugal have difficulty in reading and understanding written Portuguese and in solving practical communicative problems, such as filling in a simple questionnaire. The questionnaire went through various versions and the final version (*appendix 2.3.2*) would be the result of various meetings, a number of drafts and multiple changes. It was tested with a small group of Deaf respondents in the Lisbon APS and it was then sent out to all

the Deaf associations in the country, in the knowledge that it would offer some difficulty to many respondents. It was also clear, from the analyses of the preliminary test, that some respondents would only be able to fill in the questionnaire with some guidance. This came to be proved in the fact that 58% of the respondents say they had the help of Sign Language interpreters, friends and teachers, among others.

The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the various Deaf associations who then sent them to me for analyses. In a few cases, the questionnaires were sent to me directly (via email or snail mail), but the most significant effort was carried out by the various Deaf associations who chose to take part. More than 1200 questionnaires were distributed, and the recovery of 135 valid responses proved to be highly positive, as I was often reminded by many people researching on topics related to the Deaf community. The whole process, from devising the questionnaire to collecting the 135 responses for statistical analyses took over eight months which proved to be most enriching in that, once again, they allowed for a clearer understanding of the dynamics of the Portuguese Deaf community. Once the questionnaires were analysed and the results were compiled, these were discussed with APS members confirming Stringer's conviction (1999:203) that

The meaning or significance of any of this information, however, [numbers, statistics, ...], can be determined only by the people who live the culture of the setting, who have the profound understanding that comes from extended immersion in the social and cultural life of that context. Numbers can never tell us what the information "means" or suggest actions to be taken.

Being able to discuss the outcomes of the study with the Deaf was twofold in value. On the one hand, cold, numerical data were interpreted in the light of personal sensitivity; on the other, the crude figures made those analysing them (people from the Deaf community itself) acutely aware of the bare facts and therefore more motivated to take action to change the course of things.

This would be a first formal and complete cycle of a long community-based Action Research experience. From then onwards, the outside researcher would no longer need to take the lead, providing "the impetus, the energy, and the initial framework to question what is" (Oja and Smulyan 1989:162), for members of the Deaf community had gained

motivation to do so themselves. The product of this cycle – an informal report given to the Deaf community (*appendix 2.3.1*) and various presentations of the results at conferences held by the Deaf community (*appendices 2.7.1.2, 2.7.1.3 and 2.7.1.5*), as well as the supply of information and figures to be used in other people's work²⁰ and particularly to be used for backing up demands to television broadcasters and policy makers in Portugal – came to “provide the basis for reformulating practices, policies, programs, and services related to people's occupational or community life” (Stringer 1999:213). Certain outcomes of this cycle soon became visible: in the process, the Deaf community became aware that they were not getting their due in terms of true access to audiovisual information; further, they felt empowered to demand change; they became interested in collaborating and being part of a research project that could help bring about social change; in all, they were soon to take the lead in the process of getting more SDH on Portuguese television channels. They called for help when addressing television providers; they became more assertive in their political stands and they found new lobbying power which resulted not only in a significant increase in SDH on Portuguese spoken programmes, but also in greater visibility for their most significant cause: greater recognition of PSL. A conjunction of efforts, led to legislative outcomes that would impose the offer of SDH and PSL on Portuguese spoken programs on all television channels.

The role that the Deaf community was to play in another important cycle in this research, the SIC project, will be discussed in detail below. Interaction with the Deaf community is still ongoing and intense. Often, it is they who approach other collaborators to enact independent AR cycles, repeating many of the strategies they experienced with us. To some extent, the strategies followed in the two main AR cycles with the Portuguese Deaf communities have been emulated in other projects, with other groups of people (e.g., the blind) and to address similar or quite different problems.

²⁰ Given the various requests for information on this study, all the materials considered of relevance or of public interest were placed on-line at www.estg.ipleiria.pt/~joselia.

AR cycles with RTP

RTP – Radio Televisão Portuguesa (RTP1 and RTP2), the state owned public service channel in Portugal, was the first to offer SDH in Portugal, on April 15, 1999. Until 2003, RTP was the only provider of intralingual subtitling, using teletext (887 on RTP; and 888 on RTP2). The introduction of SDH at RTP was the result of a protocol signed between RTP, the *Secretariado Nacional para a Reabilitação e Integração de Pessoas com Deficiência* and the *Associação Portuguesa de Surdos*, in which RTP committed itself to providing 15 hours of teletext subtitling on Portuguese spoken programmes (*appendix 2.9.1*). Even if such subtitles were offered according to the conventions of open interlingual subtitles and therefore not particularly directed towards deaf audiences, evidence shows²¹ that the initial quantitative objectives were fully achieved in the first year, in which a total of 800 hours with intralingual SDH were offered on a variety of programmes, such as documentaries, soaps, humour and information. Further, this protocol included the demand to have Deaf people working at RTP, in the subtitling department, in a joint effort to provide adequate subtitling solutions for the Deaf and HoH. Through the reading of newspaper articles on the pressures made by the Deaf community so as to get SDH on Portuguese television, (*appendix 2.9.1*), it became clear that RTP had been the only television channel to comply with the request to offer SDH, as a form of public service, whereas the other two (commercial) channels (SIC and TVi), who had also been approached to this effect, had dismissed the possibility of offering SDH on the grounds of the taxing financial implications of such a service.

A first contact with RTP was made in 2001, with the Head of the teletext subtitling department, who promptly agreed on the validity of applying this research project on the improvement of subtitling standards that were known to be poor at the time. Soon after establishing these preliminary contacts, RTP was to undergo innumerable organizational

²¹ News articles on the passing of the first anniversary of the introduction of SDH on Portuguese television all mention this fact (*appendix 2.9*).

changes that would prove to be disruptive in terms of the accomplishment of many of the collaborative projects that were envisaged at an early stage. However, small research cycles did take place, which proved fundamental, both to this research project, and to the life of SDH at RTP. The year of 2002 allowed for the development of various collaborative research cycles. RTP multimedia, the department housing SDH, agreed to work collaboratively towards describing and understanding in-house subtitling practices in the hope that, in a short period of time, conditions might be met to improve quality standards.

Various meetings were held with board members and subtitlers, separately or in interaction with each other and/or with people from the Deaf community and/or governmental institutions (e.g., representatives from the *Centro de Reabilitação da Pessoa com Deficiência*). Time was devoted to watching subtitlers at work; to analysing subtitling procedures; to studying the technical implications of the methods in use, and to addressing strategies for improvement. A questionnaire was passed to the four in-house subtitlers working on SDH at the time (*appendix 2.4.1*) and the findings were presented to the board informally with suggestions on ways to improve practices and quality standards. In short, four basic measures appeared as essential to achieve significant improvements: the first involved the acquisition of new equipment; the second suggested the admittance of qualified subtitlers; the third would imply offering training to the subtitlers at RTP; and the fourth proposed the writing out and implementation of a code of good practice / SDH guidelines. Achieving these four aims seemed feasible through joint effort and various attempts were made at finding solutions for each case: a joint project was drawn up (RTP/ESTG) to apply for POSI funding to buy new equipment; a qualified subtitler (an ESTG graduate with initial training in subtitling) was admitted as a SDH trainee; a set of basic guidelines was drawn up and given to in-house subtitlers (*appendix 2.8.2*); and first attempts were made at subtitling programmes with no script, a situation that had never been tried before at RTP.

The opportunity to enact a truly collaborative project came with the challenge to subtitle a television debate with the five main candidates running for the Portuguese legislative elections of 2002, presented live on RTP1 and to be rerun on RTP2, 12 hours later, with

teletext intralingual subtitling. Technical means were arranged at ESTG Leiria where a team of 4 people (1 teacher and 3 students of AVT) started working on the transcription as soon as the first emission was completed. The whole programme, which lasted little over 2 hours, summing up 17 000 spoken words, (*appendix 2.8.4*), was transcribed and adapted in Leiria to be sent, via email, to RTP in Lisbon, for spotting and insertion. In spite of various technical breakdowns, the experience was considered to be a significant step towards the possibility of offering live subtitling of news bulletins and other live programmes.

The 2002 Election SDH project came full cycle in that all four phases were clearly enacted and the outcome was scrupulously analysed and its conclusions were drawn up and presented to the partners involved, in the form of a report; and to the public, in general, through the media – newspaper articles (*appendix 2.9.2*) and a Web site that would come to be yet another service to the Deaf community, and to the Portuguese public in general, for the full transcription of the political debate was made available on-line to be visited by a significant number of users (*appendix 2.8.4.2*).

Even if collaboration with RTP was to be interrupted for reasons inherent to the internal organisational changes, various projects are still in the waiting. With the change in the Portuguese television broadcasting policies in 2003 and with the overall improvements that came with RTP's new organisation and its move to new modern premises, as well as with the acquisition of new subtitling equipment in 2004, there is hope that some of the suspended projects may be taken up again, in view of further improvement of SDH standards in RTP.

In all the cycles enacted with RTP, the position of the researcher was always that of an outsider, one who "activates the process" (Oja and Smulyan 1989:162); however one whose generative power was not sufficient to keep projects going under adverse conditions. This fact may also account for the relative success of the endeavour. Even though gaining access was particularly easy and many of the people involved in the various cycles were committed to working together towards the improvement of SDH practices in a

full-hearted manner, the necessary links that make action-research projects successful were never truly achieved for all the previously mentioned reasons. This however, shouldn't mean that the overall effort should be seen as unsuccessful or useless. The outcome of AR needn't always be the fulfilment of initial aims. The fact that such aims were left to be accomplished may lead to further reflection and the conclusions may be illustrative and valid starting points for future action.

AR cycle with SIC: The Mulheres Apaixonadas Project

The AR cycle with SIC, which has often been referred to in this chapter, needs to be addressed as a focal point where multiple AR cycles converged. Even though, directly, this cycle might not be seen as a follow-up of any other cycle, for it was absolutely independent in its making, it brings together agents from previous cycles and starts where other cycles left off. In all, it came as the focal point of a pyramid that had slowly been built by the various parallel streams of action, which at several points intertwined with each other to reduce spaces and to join efforts.

In the first place, it needs to be mentioned that this project was the first in this research programme to be consciously addressed as an instance of AR. All the previously described projects had the makings of AR; however, none of them had been formally based on theoretical knowledge of the makings of AR. The fact that this project was deliberately designed to include all the parameters of AR and simultaneously aimed at evaluating the feasibility of using AR in Translation Studies (*cf.* Cravo and Neves, 2004), made the experience particularly enriching and instructive.

Given that this project occurred towards the end of the overall research programme, and that it came as a sequence to previous efforts to work in collaboration towards the improvement of SDH in Portugal, things "fell into place" naturally in a convergent endeavour that accommodated a significant variety of collaborative actions. Given the fact that most of the partners involved had a history of previous collaboration, working actively

together came as a natural step. The various parties involved entered this particular project with different aims, which would come to dictate their degree of involvement and the way they would contribute towards the attainment of the researcher's overriding goal: the introduction of adequate SDH solutions in Portugal.

As mentioned before, the project came into being in the last trimester of 2003, in response to the demand for 5 hours / per week of SDH, in Portuguese spoken programmes, on all analogue television channels. Broadcasters were given 90 days to get the process started which meant that, by the end of December 2003, all channels – public and commercial – were to be presenting close to one hour per day of SDH. This resolution meant that television broadcasters had the choice of the programmes they were to offer with SDH, the time these were to be presented and even the subtitling style they were to use. The fact that Portugal had, until then, little tradition in SDH, allowed broadcasters to make choices between resorting to traditional subtitling methods, used in open interlingual subtitles for all, and providing new subtitling solutions which would obviously mean calling on the work of qualified subtitlers in the field, which were non-existent, at the time, in Portugal.

It is in this context that SIC approached me, as a researcher working on SDH, for assistance in the provision of adequate subtitles for such specific audiences. Even though at the time there was no specific knowledge of the special needs of the Deaf and HoH, regarding the reception of audiovisual text, this broadcaster was willing to experiment with an innovative subtitling solution, provided that it wouldn't cost far more than traditional subtitling would do.

The rules imposed by the broadcaster would prove to be of great importance when planning the project for they determined the pace at which it was to develop. In short, there was little space for trial and error. Experimentation was to be done whilst doing the "real thing". Regardless of what might be involved, within a month from the first meeting, subtitles were to come on screen, on a daily basis, nation-wide. Given the risk and the challenge of experimentation being carried out live and open to scrutiny by all, the option then was to make the project a nationwide experience, involving as many people as

possible (including the viewers as consumers of the product) in a continual dialogue for the improvement of practices and the finding of really useful subtitling solutions.

An overriding plan was designed to accommodate the various cycles and important decisions were taken at an early stage to make sure that central issues were covered from the beginning. Providing a real service meant addressing real problems such as the technical means involved, both in the preparation and the broadcasting of subtitles; the training of subtitlers; the development of guidelines for future use; and, above all, the involvement of the ultimate client (the Deaf community) in the design of this new product. This initial plan allowed all those taking part to place themselves as partners with a difference. It became obvious from the start that each collaborator had personal reasons for getting involved and was therefore expecting to find answers to specific needs. However, all those involved were aware of their collective responsibility in the whole process and they all knew that failing to comply would ultimately mean both personal and collective failure.

This sense of individuality and co-responsibility provided important “generative power” (McNiff *et al.* 1992:39) and a constant drive to find mutual understanding and solutions for the various problems that arose. Keeping individual goals and collective goals synchronised came to be one of the most difficult tasks since, for the most part, in the terms proposed within the context of AR, I was an outside researcher, not truly belonging to any of the groups involved; indeed, the facilitator who took the “responsibility to initiate change, activate the cycles of planning, acting and reflecting” (Oja and Smulyan 1989:162). As mentioned before, here too I had the profile that Hatim (2001:7) found to be the usual case of Action Researchers in translation – a teacher of audiovisual translation who became a practitioner in order to know the intricacies of the trade so as to achieve reflexive attitude towards the skill. Such a profile would prove most useful when negotiation between the parts was called for. Being able to share common ground with each of the groups involved assisted in bridging gaps and to negotiate compromises among the different participants, who obviously sought personal aims in the end. In practice, the project meant finding solutions to four distinct problems: on the one hand, there was a need to provide a service

that would be technically/financially viable (broadcaster); on the other, the client (Deaf community) had to be actively involved in the design of this new public service and in so doing be empowered in its social role; on yet another, subtitlers-to-be had to be trained so as to provide a service that would be equally effective both for the immediate client (the broadcaster) and the end client (the receiver – Deaf audience); and finally, a set of guidelines (code of good practice) needed to be drawn up so that future action might be directed. This last element would prove to be the desideratum of the whole AR project for it would reflect the outcome of this CAR experience: a contribution to theory, improved practice and professional development.

Even though as an AR researcher, I played a number of different roles and took on different degrees of centrality in the various stages of the process, I was, at all times, guiding the other agents, keeping the process in perspective, drawing up conclusions, presenting solutions for problems, reflecting about processes and outcomes in the light of the many readings that were being carried out in a continual manner. It was only through the awareness of my centrality as leading researcher that it was possible to bring all the different experiences together in the formulation of practical proposals to be read in the vKv guidelines and in the theoretical explanations that can be read in this thesis.

Once the initial plan was established various simultaneous and concurrent cycles were set in motion. No single cycle could have lived on its own and gained validity except for its contribution towards the whole process. However, one particular cycle became central, serving as catalyst to the rest of the process: that in which subtitlers-to-be were trained by “doing”.

A group of 9 graduate students volunteered to take part in the project as collaborative researchers in action. Having had initial education in audiovisual translation as undergraduates and having acquired the basics of action research through projects of smaller dimension, these trainees took the lead in their own learning process and played an important role in the development of this particular research project. They were active partners from the start, working in close interaction with me, their teacher and for this

matter the leading researcher, sharing every opportunity to interact with the other collaborators (Deaf community / broadcaster) so as to gain as much insight as possible into the problems pertaining to each system. Such direct interaction proved to have a productive emancipatory effect, allowing the trainees to gear their personal learning processes according to each discovery made. From the very beginning, these trainees were asked to take a reflective stance in their every action and to contribute towards decision making in terms of the subtitling solutions to be adopted. In this process, the teacher/student roles were often inverted and diluted so that the teaching/learning process was dialogic rather than prescriptive, and reflexive rather than directive. Training within the university setting was indeed an asset to this process for, even though subtitles had to be on air at specific times, affording no excuse or delay, space and time were deliberately assigned for monitoring, debate and reflection. Such a balance would be hard to get within the usual professional settings in this country. The sharing of time and space allowed for the exchange of knowledge and experiences. Trainees and teacher/trainer/researcher found common ground for personal and collective growth which obviously fed in to the success of the project.

This project divided itself into 3 main cycles. A first cycle was dedicated to a preliminary phase in which basic norms were devised as a theoretical and functional starting point. This phase included the analysis of various guidelines in use throughout Europe, the enquiry to the Deaf community as to their needs and expectations and the establishment of functional routines of interaction between all collaborators and particularly with the television broadcaster. A methodology was agreed upon so as to guarantee continual interaction between all participants. Given that the work group was physically based in a different region from that of fellow partners – the trainees were in Leiria, the broadcaster and professional translators in Lisbon and the Deaf community scattered all over the country –, communication lines were established at three levels. An open channel was found in the use of e-mail messages that proved to be the most efficient way to overcome physical distance; periodic meetings were arranged so as to guarantee face-to-face interaction among key elements from each group; and formal forums, as was the case of two

conferences (*appendices 2.7.1.2 and 2.7.1.3*) were set up to address the issues in some depth.

This first cycle was rather short and intense and had its focal point in a closed circuit broadcast in which the whole subtitle preparation and broadcasting process was tested. This was carried out via the 888 teletext channel to be used regularly and was carefully followed by the researcher, trainees and a monitoring group of Deaf people. While the subtitled programme was being aired, a group of Deaf viewers was simultaneously watched and monitored so that subtle reactions might be registered and analysed. After the show, an informal meeting was held to analyse the outcomes and decisions were made as to changes to the basic principles that were to underlie the rest of the work. A second and longer cycle then developed, which was to last for about two months and in which smaller sub-cycles were to take place. Each trainee enacted various individual cycles as difficulties were encountered. For instance, finding solutions for culturally bound linguistic elements meant research into bibliography, on-line resources, and the consultation of Brazilian Portuguese native speakers was often seen as a valuable resource. Methodologies and outcomes would always be shared with the rest of the group, both for greater awareness of the implications of language transfer between Brazilian and European Portuguese, and for the sake of overall coherence, for more than 50 episodes were subtitled by 10 people. Trainees monitored their own work as well as that of their colleagues and questions and findings were presented during the weekly meeting in which teacher/trainer/researcher and trainees decided upon subtitling solutions and changes to be made. Every time a problem arose, a sub-cycle of AR would be started, in a recursive process. Research was enacted in various domains. Whenever available, theoretical works were read and relevant information was interwoven with the practical solutions. Other qualitative and quantitative studies were carried out to validate hypotheses and, in the end, theoretical generalisations were drawn in the form of a proposal for guidelines for future use. In all, these experiences proved to be, as McKay (1999:599) puts it, "a mechanism for practical problem solving and for generating and testing theory".

Throughout this training process bonds were nurtured and strengthened with the Deaf community. The trainees started learning Portuguese Sign Language to gain access to their receivers' environment in the knowledge that, to quote Stringer (1999:204): "we come closer to the reality of other people's experience and, in the process, increase the potential for creating truly effective services and programs that will enhance the lives of the people we serve."

Lectures and conferences were held to stimulate general public discussions on issues that were directly and indirectly relevant to the project (*appendices 2.7.1.1 and 2.7.1.4*). Publicity to the new television service brought public awareness to the lack of accessibility available to Deaf audiences and in the process, the Deaf community gained visibility and found itself brought to the front in terms of national recognition, a rewarding situation for the Deaf collaborators who took part in the project from the start. To the extent that there was social change involved in this AR project, its effects went beyond its immediate aims and, even when it came to its end, it had given place to multiple other AR possibilities, some of which are still in course.

Still within this Collaborative Action Research project, an important third and last cycle was to take place. As is known, no AR cycle is complete if conclusions are not drawn up and made public. It might appear natural that the "making public" phase of the project should be a simple presentation of conclusions. In fact, it was proven that it was a full cycle in its right. Drawing personal or in-group conclusions proved to be far more than the end. Writing out reports to distribute to all the collaborators involved came as a natural element and a routine in the process (*appendix 2.5*). All those involved wrote periodic formal reports that were shared and discussed within the project's framework. The (trainee) subtitlers, for instance, wrote several short reports and final thesiss that were discussed at a viva at the end of their training (*appendix 2.5.5*). Special reference also needs to be made to a sequence of 5 reports that were written by the President of a Deaf Association (APTEC) who, further to comments on our work, presented interesting accounts of how the Deaf react to televised information (*appendix 2.5.3*), thus sharing valuable critical insights on issues that had never been verbalised in the first person before. In every case, personal and

collective reflection was scrutinised and fed into the process whenever found relevant and used to support suggestions and actions.

These experiences were also shared with many researchers within the sphere of Translation Studies and related subjects and discussions proved that the findings can feed into theory as an organic device to create other theories that might be applied to different settings. This contradicts positivist traditions in which it is theory that determines practice. Through practice, previously held theoretical principles were questioned. On the other hand, this particular AR project did “make a difference” both for personal and collective reasons and had repercussions on a wider scale. In the restricted circle of the AR group, the researcher was able to contribute towards knowledge by filtering findings in practice and presenting them to the scientific community; the trainees became reflexive practitioners with comprehensive knowledge of the *skopos* of possible future commissions; the Deaf community gained empowerment to play an active role in society; and the broadcaster became the first provider of specially devised SDH in Portugal. In a wider sphere, society in general was to benefit from the social and political awareness that rose from the publicity that covered the project and the visibility that this particular group and, in the process, other groups of impaired citizens, gained.

Further to and within AR

The various cycles, reported above, may substantiate the claim that this research project is, in its overall making, a case for Generative Action Research, for it allowed the researcher to “address many different problems at one time without losing sight of the main issue” (McNiff 1988:45). Each cycle was complex in its making and many spin-off spirals developed at various points, either to perform completely separate cycles or just to open up avenues for further action and certainly for further research. The whole research project did not limit itself to these cycles in which action was the main driving force. Such cycles were often interwoven with other cycles that might be considered more conventional for they

were mainly dedicated to less collaborative endeavours such as researching into related fields in search of theoretical knowledge that may sustain the many decisions that needed to be taken during action. In fact, this is one of the main contributions a researcher can bring to any AR project, for, according to Oja and Smulyan (1989:162), the outside researcher (which I consider myself to have been in the greater part of the research cycles),

may bring a variety of resources to the Action Research project that would not otherwise be available to the participants. These resources include time, specialized knowledge of research methods, and theoretical knowledge, which, if well-used, can support [the other members of the group] developing understanding of their own practice.

Further to these cycles, which were on-going and parallel to all other cycles, there were pauses which were dedicated to solitary research activities, such as the compilation and comparative analysis of a number of subtitling guidelines, in view of a mapping of common ground; the mapping of SDH solutions on DVD (*appendix 2.10.2*); the detailed analyses of subtitling solutions on DVD (*appendix 2.10.1*); the analyses of 24 hours of Portuguese TV broadcasting (*appendix 2.2*); the detailed analyses of SDH practices on all Portuguese analogue channels (*appendix 2.6*); or the quantitative analyses, of questionnaires which were passed round to Portuguese subtitlers in general, to SDH subtitlers at RTP and to the Deaf community, on their viewing habits and later on their reactions to *Mulheres Apaixonadas*. These statistical analyses were always used as a further means to validate information that was obtained via qualitative approaches. They often served as an important source to refer back to for objective data whenever triangulation was called for.

A final cycle needs to be addressed in this chapter, where I aim at presenting a summary account of the multiple phases in this research project: that of the writing up of a set of guidelines to be offered as a possible reference to SDH subtitlers in Portugal and to be set forward as a possible SDH standardisation paradigm in Portugal. The guidelines that are proposed (*appendix 1*) are the result of all the findings that came through the multiple cycles enacted throughout these three years, regardless of whether they were focusing on research or on action. These guidelines are not to be considered to be a finite set of rules, but rather a listing of suggestions for further questioning, even if they might be used in a

prescriptive manner as practical guidelines for SDH on Portuguese television. They are the result of multiple readings and comparative exercises that have been systematically carried out and the result of the tested and tried subtitling strategies, which were proposed in view of the needs of the Deaf community that took part in this research and that I believe to be representative of the target addressee we envisage for SDH in Portugal. Even if these guidelines are to be considered to be local in nature, for they have been designed in view of the Portuguese national context, it is my belief that many of the underlying issues are relevant to SDH in other countries and are not specific to intralingual or interlingual scenarios but applicable to SDH in general. The fact that the outcome of this AR project may be transferable to other contexts contradicts a criticism that is commonly made to AR, and that Cohen and Manion (1985:216) refer to in the following manner:

its [AR's] objective is situational and specific (unlike the scientific method which goes beyond the solution of practical problems); its sample is restricted and unrepresentative; it has little or no control over independent variables; and its findings are not generalisable but generally restricted to the environment in which the research is carried out.

I do agree that individual AR cycles might offer small chances of replicability, for their limited sphere and their "case study" nature. However, if various cycles are concurrent to an overriding programme and if the outcome may be accounted for in terms of a starting point for further action, (that may be limited in time and space, or be open in scope, as is envisaged in this case), then, a contribution will have been made towards knowledge and theory. I tend to share McNiff's belief (1988:43) that "a generative approach views a theory as an organic device to create other theories that may be applied to other settings" and Oja and Smulyan's conviction (1989:210) that "theoretical ideas that are untested by practice are less useful than those which have been tested in action". By coming up with a proposed theory that has been validated through practice, in the process of changing the state of things in a particular setting and time, I posit that AR can be given scientific validity for even though the process may not be canonical to empiricist studies, the results may be equally valid.

In short, in face of the process and outcome of this research project, I consider that the methodology which was followed proved useful to the multiplicity of tasks to be undertaken and adequate to the aims that had been initially established. Even though the approach might have been unusual in Translation Studies it offered itself to research opportunities that wouldn't have been possible otherwise. The fear of losing track of the multiple streams of action was overcome whenever each cycle proved to be a building block towards the making of a concrete product, the set of guidelines, which may be subjected to descriptive analyses and may be seen as the starting point for further study.

To conclude, I consider that I have complied with what is expected from Action Researchers, in that, and according to Oja and Smulyan (1989:210),

Action Researchers must therefore aim for improved practice, contributions to theory, and personal and professional development as they balance decisions about the key issues of [...] relationships, project control and preferred outcomes.

In addition to all that has been said, this research project might also be seen in the light of what Williams and Chesterman (2002:67) called "applied research" in that its aim was "not only to improve translation practice but also to improve theory itself, by testing it against practice. It is thus prescriptive, but based on descriptive evidence".

The outcomes of this research process will be presented in detail in the chapters that follow.

III. Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Addressees

One of the underlying premises of any translation work will always be the understanding of the intended addressee. Knowing the Deaf and the hard-of-hearing better will mean having some notion of issues such as the physiology of hearing and the physical implications of deafness. To this we may add that, if translators wish to provide adequate subtitles for their receivers, they will benefit from a greater knowledge of the social implications of deafness as well as of the educational and linguistic conditions that deaf people are subjected to.

It is often said that deaf people have difficulty in communicating with hearers and in reading and writing (oral) languages. This may be accounted for by their educational background, the type of communication skills acquired as young children and their proficiency in the use of a Sign Language.

In this chapter I will give a brief overview of the implications of deafness so that we may arrive at a better understanding of the main characteristics and needs of those who are the privileged receivers of SDH. This is done in the belief that by knowing our addressees better, as researchers and translators, we will be better equipped to analyse and question practices and to envisage possible solutions for improvement.

3.1. Hearing and Deafness

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.

(Rodda and Grove 1987:43)

Hearing is one of the five senses with which humans perceive and interpret sound. Sound travels through air in the form of waves of varying frequencies that determine the different pitches of the sounds we hear. Roughly speaking, the hearing process involves the perception, conduction and interpretation of sound. The ear captures and translates sound waves into nerve impulses, which the brain receives and interprets.

Hearing impairment arises when, at any point in the hearing mechanism, a problem occurs, impeding the conduction or interpretation of sound waves. Those problems might affect any of the parts of the outer, middle or inner ear. In a simplified way, hearing loss can be classified according to three distinct parameters:

- the location of the problem within the ear – conductive hearing loss, sensorineural hearing loss and mixed hearing loss;
- the onset of hearing loss in relation to language development – prelingual or postlingual;
- the cause of the problem – genetic or non-genetic hearing loss.

Sensorineural hearing loss affects the sensory and neural parts of the ear which are located in the inner ear, preventing the conversion of sound waves into electrical impulses and their transmission to the brain. Sensorineural loss is usually irreversible because there is permanent damage to the inner ear or auditory nerve. There are various causes for sensorineural hearing loss – genetic or congenital conditions, infections within the inner ear, auto-immune disease, perilymphatic fistula, Meniere's Syndrome, tumours of the auditory nerve, head injury or trauma, exposure to ototoxic drugs, noise exposure and aging. Not much can be done to recover hearing once permanent damage occurs. In some situations, hearing loss happens due to problems in various parts of the ear – in the outer,

middle and/or inner ear – this is referred to as “mixed hearing loss”. Depending on the type of disease and the percentage of hearing loss found, there may be a greater or lesser possibility of improving hearing conditions either through medical and/or surgical intervention or with the aid of hearing aids.

Classifying hearing loss according to its onset in relation to language development is of special importance particularly in terms of communication and social integration. Prelingual hearing loss is one that occurs at a very early age, before speech and language develop. This means that such a condition is of congenital or genetic origin or that it appears within the first two years of life, often meaning severe sensory, oral-aural and emotional deprivation. Postlingual hearing loss develops at a later stage, after language development has begun or has been completed, which could be between the second and sixth year of life. The later the onset of hearing impairment the greater linguistic competence will have been gained and therefore the easier interaction with the hearing community.

In order to classify deafness according to the cause of the disease within the ear, one needs to take a closer look at the ones which have genetic origin and those that are nongenetic. Genetic hearing loss is caused by the presence of one or various abnormal gene(s) in one of the forty-six chromosomes that make up each of our cells. Such a situation might have been inherited from one or both parents or might have developed spontaneously in the foetus. Acquired hearing loss can be accounted for by a number of other reasons: ototoxic medication, head injuries and acoustic traumas, to name but a few. Modern societies are particularly exposed to sound pollution that can cause significant damage to the hearing system. Sudden very loud noises or prolonged exposure to loud noise (90 decibels or more²²) put a strain on the hair cells forcing them to respond to noise by adjusting hearing sensitivity, or threshold, to endure such aggression. This could mean a temporary threshold shift or, in cases where exposure to loud noise is repeated, a permanent threshold shift, resulting in a permanent change in one’s sensitivity to sound. Long-term exposure to noise

²² A 90-decibel level can be achieved by the noise of a large truck, a motorcycle or city traffic. A portable stereo with headphones at half-volume measures about 100 and 110 decibels; A jet-engine’s noise measures about 130 decibels. Average conversation levels are around 60 decibels.

can account for the growing hearing loss that often comes with age. Age-related hearing loss, also known as prebycusis, is a gradual process, often beginning between the ages of 40 and 50. Hair cells are killed by excessive, long-term exposure to noise or due to other causes such as high blood pressure or heart disease. The number of people with prebycusis is growing at the rate of aging societies and will account for significant numbers in aging continents such as Europe or America²³.

Regardless of the age at which hearing impairment may have appeared or the reasons which might have led to the condition, there is a need to assess hearing and to determine which sounds if any sounds can be heard, by which ear and under which conditions. This audiological assessment is extremely important when making decisions about remedial strategies, such as choosing to have surgery or to use hearing aids and, particularly in the case of children, when making choices about communication strategies and deciding about education and schooling.

Audiological test procedures will necessarily need to be adjusted to the subject's age and specific condition and may present various degrees of complexity. However, there are two general types of testing that need to be carried out, regardless of the case, which will shed light on the whole issue of hearing impairment: 1) objective or physiological/electrophysiological testing, and/or 2) subjective or behavioural testing.

Given that hearing loss is measured in reference to the lowest sound that can be heard, the amount of hearing still had – residual hearing – will determine not only which sounds can be heard but also how clearly they might be heard. Clarity will be very important in the acquisition of language because if somebody cannot hear speech in a clear and consistent manner, there will be greater difficulty in learning and understanding an aural language.

²³ According to Hay (1994:55), "estimates vary, but approximately 30 percent of all Americans over 65 have some degree of hearing loss. And that percentage increases with age. By some counts, 50 percent of those 75 or older suffer from prebycusis". As for Europe, Carruthers *et al.* mention (1993:158-163) that in 11 countries of the then EEC (excluding Greece), a total of 3,419,000 people were hearing impaired (in a population of about 350 million), 2,528,000 of which are, over the age of 60. Figures presented at the 2003 Conference "Accessibility for All" preview that "in Europe, by 2005, there will be over 81 million adults that are affected by a hearing loss, growing to over 90 million in 2015". In a paper given at the same conference Guido Gybels, from RNID (UK) added that "in effect one in seven adults is affected by hearing problems". He specifies in terms of the UK that "about 2 million people in the UK have hearing aids and another 3 million would benefit from them." (for further details: www.etsi.org/frameset/home.htm?cce/).

Bernero and Bothwell (1966) outline the relationship between the degree of handicap and the effect of hearing loss on understanding language and speech. Their ideas might be systematised as follows²⁴:

| DEGREE OF HANDICAP | EFFECT OF HEARING LOSS ON UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE AND SPEECH |
|--------------------|---|
| SLIGHT | May have difficulty hearing faint or distant speech. Will not usually experience difficulty in school situations. |
| MILD | Understands conversational speech at a distance of 3 – 5 feet (face-to-face). May miss as much as 50% of class discussions if voices are faint or not in line with vision. May exhibit limited vocabulary and speech anomalies. |
| MARKED | Conversation must be loud to be understood. Will have increasing difficulty with school situations requiring participation in group discussions. Is likely to have defective speech. Is likely to be deficient in language usage and comprehension. Will have evidence of limited vocabulary. |
| SEVERE | May hear loud noises about one foot from the ear. May be able to identify environmental sounds. May be able to discriminate vowels but not all consonants. Speech and language defective and likely to deteriorate. Speech and language will not develop spontaneously if loss is present before 1 year of age. |
| EXTREME | May hear some loud sounds but is aware of vibrations more than tonal pattern. Relies on vision rather than hearing as primary avenue for communication. Speech and language defective and likely to deteriorate. Speech and language will not develop spontaneously if loss is present before 1 year. |

Table 1 – Hearing loss and degree of handicap

Source: adapted from Bernero and Bothwell (1966)

The table above shows how hearing acuity is important when perceiving speech and how even mild impairment might influence perception. This becomes even more obvious if we are to consider what is involved in the perception of speech in the case of the hearer. A whole line of research has grown around the study of speech perception taking its name from the phenomenon itself, superimposing the study on the actual activity.

“Speech perception”, Kess (1992:34) explains, “studies how we perceive messages in the acoustic signals produced by the speech organs of other human beings”. This is a complex activity because “language as communication requires us to identify speech as words, phrases, sentences, and discourse – ultimately as messages” (*ibid.*). When we hear sounds,

²⁴ A fuller account of the table may be found in Quigley and Paul (1984:4-5).

our auditory system is tuned to perceive them as speech or as non-speech. We can automatically differentiate speech from the clicks, buzzes, hisses, bangs and clashes of other sounds and we transpose physical units to mental units that do not often correspond to each other on a one-to-one basis. According to Studdert-Kennedy (1976), speech perception involves four interdependent stages: auditory, phonetic, phonological, and the lexical, syntactic, and semantic stages. Kess (1992:35) explains that speech perception will involve “translating the physical properties of acoustic cues into psychological decisions about perceived phonemes” in an interactive process between perception and identification. In other words, “the study of speech perception must take into account not only the nature of the signalling code, but also the psychological processes that we employ in decoding spoken messages” (*ibid.*:34).

Despite the interest and research on the phenomena, speech perception is not yet fully understood. There are still many questions that remain to be answered: How does the brain analyse speech signals so that language units can be identified? How does the brain select auditory information when various speech acts occur simultaneously? How does the brain distinguish between so many sound variations? How does the brain process the immense quantity of slightly modified sound sequences in speech flow? Finding answers to these and other questions has been a slow process for it calls for complex experimental testing which becomes particularly more difficult when carried out on young children (important informants on these issues).

The complex nature of connected speech has made it necessary to conduct research on the perception of isolated sounds, syllables or words. However, as Crystal reminds us (1987:147) “models of speech perception based on the study of isolated sounds and words will be of little value in explaining the processes that operate in relation to connected speech” because “speech perception is a highly active process, with people making good the inadequacies of what they hear, arising out of external noise, omitted sounds, and so on”. Theorists have had some difficulty in defining listeners’ roles in the perception of speech. Some, as Crystal (*ibid.*:148), consider that listeners play an active role “in the sense that when they hear a message, the sounds are decoded with reference to how they would

be produced in speech. The listener's knowledge of articulation acts as a bridge between the acoustic signal and the identification of linguistic units". On the other hand, those who see listeners as passive receptors, consider that "listening is therefore essentially a sensory process, with the pattern of information in the acoustic stimulus directly triggering the neural response" (*ibid*).

All these and many more issues become even more pertinent when we add a new element to the equation: that of hearing impairment. The acquisition of speech and the development of speech perception appear to be at the root of all language acquisition by the hearer, whose first incursion into formal communication comes with the spoken word. The question remains, given that speech recognition is highly affected by hearing impairment, how do deaf people acquire and use language. If their auditory system does not allow for the physical process of sound conduction and perception, how does the brain process the messages that get across through residual hearing or what other processes are required for language and communication to take place?

3.2. Deaf vs. Hard-of-hearing

Whether you are communicating with, for or about Deaf people, your words can influence people's attitudes. There are many misconceptions about deafness, and by understanding and using the right words you can help to dispel the myths.

(BDA n/d)

Given that hearing loss can be found in various degrees and can be classified according to various parameters, there is often difficulty in drawing a line between being hard-of-hearing and being deaf. Deafness may be defined in terms of audiological measurements, focusing on the causes and severity of the impairment, but it can also be seen in terms of social integration and language usage.

If we are to keep within the sphere of strictly audiological parameters, a hard-of-hearing person is said to be someone who has a mild to moderate hearing loss (somewhere roughly between 15 and 60dB).

Rodda and Grove (1987:2) use the term "hard-of-hearing" to refer to "those with lesser but significant degrees of handicap". This definition is rather loose but it is consistent with a general feeling that is expressed by Padden and Humphries in *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture* (1988) and quoted in the article "For Hearing People Only" in *Deaf Life* (n/a 1997:8):

"Hard-of-hearing" can denote a person with a mild-to-moderate hearing loss. Or it can denote a deaf person who doesn't have/want any cultural affiliation with the Deaf community. Or both. The HoH dilemma: in some ways hearing, in some ways deaf, in others neither.

This indefinability may justify the great difficulty that has been found in counting the number of deaf and hard-of-hearing citizens of any one country, let alone in continents such as Northern America or Europe (not to mention the rest of the world). Many people who do have significant degrees of hearing loss may not objectively state their condition for they too might not know how to define themselves. Furthermore, hearing disorders are

sometimes connected to other conditions and above all, deafness can creep in with age and only when it is felt to be incapacitating is it considered to be significant.

A further distinction needs to be made between being “deaf” and “Deaf” (with a capital D). Once again, if we are to return to audiological parameters, then it is feasible to consider “deaf” anybody who has a hearing impairment over 60dB, in other words, people with severe and profound hearing loss. As before, figures might be misleading and must be cautiously used in this context. However, the true difference between deaf/Deaf lies in the realm of sociology and culture. **Basically, “deaf” simply refers to someone who cannot hear well enough to process aural information conveniently. Considering somebody “Deaf” means accepting the fact that that person belongs to the Deaf community that, even if a minority, has rules and codes of conduct that differentiate it from all others**²⁵. The element that is most often referred to as that which best defines a community is its language, “a code whereby ideas about the world are represented by a conventional system of signals for communication” (Bloom and Lahey 1978:4). Most human languages are made up by conventional systems of signals which are grammatically structured and voiced through spoken words. Many deaf people use a language which also has a structured grammar that governs conventionalised movements that convey messages visually: sign(ed) language. Just as there are variations among spoken languages, there are wide varieties of sign languages – different visual/manual modes of communication. There is no clear notion of the number of sign language varieties that may exist in the world. Further to the fact that people from different countries have different sign languages, one sign language, BSL (British Sign Language) or PSL (Portuguese Sign Language, in Portuguese, *LGP – Língua Gestual Portuguesa*) for instance, may have numerous regional varieties or SL pidgin or creoles. Kyle and Allsop (1997:71-72) have cautiously forwarded that “[t]he most realistic estimate of sign users [...] is that 1 in 2000

²⁵ The words used to speak about deaf people are a sensitive issue. The British Deaf Association (www.britishdeafassociation.org.uk/factsheets/factsheet.php?id=58) has listed “taboo words” in a paragraph that reads: “Don’t say ‘the deaf’- or worse, describe someone as ‘suffering from’ or ‘afflicted by’ deafness; or worst of all, ‘trapped in a world of silence’! Do say ‘deaf people’, ‘people who are deaf’ or hard-of-hearing people’. If you are writing about members of the Deaf community who use sign language, opt for ‘Deaf’ over ‘deaf’. Never use ‘deaf and dumb’ or ‘deaf-mute’, and avoid ‘deaf without speech’. These terms are likely to cause offence.” The same sensitivity towards the choice of words has been felt in other languages, such as in Portuguese, French and Spanish.

of the population are Deaf and are sign users". When transposed to the European population this estimate allows one to envisage that, in 1997, there were about 176 000 sign language users distributed among the fifteen European Union countries²⁶.

Unlike many other minorities that may define their circle within a geographic boundary, forming a visibly defined group (through codes of dress, behaviour and speech), the Deaf are spread, for deafness can affect anybody whether born within a particular Deaf culture or not. Many deaf children are born into hearing families and deaf parents do not necessarily give birth to deaf children. Even though many Deaf people marry within their group, more often than not, they come to interact with hearing communities and are forced to adjust themselves to the codes of the majority (hearing) often forcing themselves to less "natural" codes of socialization. This inevitable tension between socialising with hearing and among themselves may account for the fact that the Deaf community is to be looked upon as being a "speech community", in Montgomery's words (1995:175):

a group of people who share (1) a language in common; (2) common ways of using language; (3) common reactions and attitudes to language; and (4) common social bonds (*i.e.* they tend to interact with each other or tend to be linked at least by some form of social organisation). In other words, it is language (use) that lies at the heart of these particular minority groups.

To this description of speech community, and particularly having the "Deaf community" in mind, it appears fit to make use of the sociolinguistic approach presented by Spolsky (1998:25) in which a speech community is not expected to use a single language but "a repertoire of languages or varieties" in "a complex interlocking network of communication". To this the author adds that "[t]here is no theoretical limitation on the location and size of a speech community, which is in practice defined by its sharing a set of language varieties (its repertoire) and a set of norms for using them" (*ibid.*).

To belong to the Deaf community doesn't necessarily mean that someone's hearing capacity is severely impaired. As a matter of fact, hearing and HoH people can be part of the Deaf community if they adhere to the Deaf culture, accepting its social, political and

²⁶ Austria: 4,000; Belgium: 5,027; Denmark: 2,590; Finland: 2,515; France: 28,447; Germany: 40,538; Great Britain: 28,234; Greece: 5,128; Ireland: 1,763; Italy: 28,526; Luxembourg: 2,206; Portugal: 4,931; Spain: 19,436; Sweden: 4,318; Norway: not stated. (www.ea.nl/signingbooks/deaflib/deaflib2.htm).

legal principles and, above all, to their mode of communication. A question remains to be answered; can anybody truly be part of two communities: the Deaf community and the hearing community? Indeed, that appears to be the case of most hearing impaired people, who have been taken through educational programmes that allow them to interact within different groups.

3.3. Communication, Language and Deafness

I simply say that the ability to speak for a Deaf person is the same as the ability to sing for a hearing person. I can talk but no one ever asks me to sing! Deaf people can communicate but not all can speak. I learned long ago that speech does not equal language and speech certainly does not equal intelligence.

(Byrne 1996:115)

People with deafness have a variety of possibilities at their disposal to communicate among themselves and with hearers. These choices are often not given to the people who are affected by deafness but to their parents who decide on the kind of education they want their deaf children to have. In the case of prelingual deafness, parents determine from the outset how they wish to communicate with their youngsters. Such decisions will be crucial for all future outcomes in terms of communication skills. Factors such as the type of deafness, psychological make up, family profile, social context, geographic location and/or national educational systems may be of importance when decisions about communication solutions are made. Trends come and go and what at one stage is considered the best form for deaf people to communicate, at another will be considered inadequate. Furthermore, these trends don't always take into account that each person is an individual case with a particular profile and what might work for one situation may be a complete failure in other circumstances. No particular solution might be considered the best, for each presents strengths and shortcomings. Keeping this in mind, Schwartz (1996) presents us with a comprehensive account of the various communication options available for families with children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, which may be synthesised in 5 main possibilities:

- The Auditory-Verbal Approach
- The Bilingual-Bicultural Approach
- Cued Speech
- The Oral Approach
- Total Communication

The Auditory-Verbal Approach

Many children with hearing impairment have access to spoken language with the aid of cochlear implants and/or powerful hearing aids. The auditory-verbal approach helps those children to listen and to talk with resource to any residual hearing they might have which has been adequately amplified to allow them to hear spoken language. Schwartz (1996:55) clearly states that:

[t]he goal of auditory-verbal practice is that children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can grow up in regular learning and living environments, enabling them to become independent, participating, and contributing citizens in mainstream society.

This approach lies on the premise that, once the individual has been assisted, there is sufficient hearing to allow the person to communicate through the means used by hearers. Success will inevitably depend on the early detection of hearing impairment and adequate therapy to help the child develop his/her communication and social skills. Special attention needs to be given to helping the child monitor his/her own voice and other people's voices so as to be understood and to understand other people's speech. Successful instances of the auditory-verbal approach lead to students following mainstream educational systems and adults that are fully integrated in their social/professional surroundings.

The Bilingual-Bicultural (Bi-Bi) approach

This approach stands on the principle of Deaf culture. Children are educated to use a form of Sign language as their primary language and that is also the language of instruction at school. The national language (English, Portuguese, Spanish) is taught as a second language through reading and writing. This means that these children learn two languages and two cultures. Here too, Schwartz (*ibid.*:90) states the goals of Bi-Bi education to be "[to] help deaf children establish a strong visual first language that will give them the tools they need for thinking and learning and to develop a healthy sense of self through connections with other deaf people".

The Bi-Bi approach is highly appreciated by those who advocate the importance of belonging to a community with a distinct social and cultural profile. This means wanting to belong to a minority and using a manual code as primary form of communication within the group. It is believed that a solid acquisition of a sign language will reflect itself in an overall improvement in academic achievement. It is also believed that proficiency in a particular (sign) language will lead to successful acquisition of a second language (cf. Cummings 1979) in written form. This approach requires special educational facilities – a special school, or special classes and adapted materials. Those in favour of other approaches consider the bi-bi solution segregational and only feasible if the child is brought up in a Deaf environment allowing for peer interaction and contact with Deaf adults who will serve as linguistic models and cultural references.

Cued Speech

Even though cued speech has been used for over 30 years²⁷, not many people have a clear notion of how it works and often think it is the same as sign language. This approach is based on speech and the sounds that letters make, not the letters themselves. Cued speech is made up by eight handshapes that represent consonants and four shapes about the face to represent vowel sounds. Different combinations of handshapes and positioning help to visualise the pronunciation of spoken words. Manual cues, on their own, are absolutely meaningless in connected speech for they represent groups of sounds. They only gain meaning when they complement the speaker's mouth movements and serve to disambiguate what appears unclear.

By using cued speech, deaf people can “see-hear” the language around them. Unlike the aural-oral approach that calls for residual hearing, cued speech can be used by people with any degree of hearing loss. However, cued speech is essentially useful for speech reception.

²⁷ Cued speech was developed by Dr. R. Orin Cornett in 1966 to aid deaf people with reading and to alleviate the ambiguity of reading lips.

Cues may help to understand the spoken language and be used by deaf people to clarify unclear pronunciation but it is not a communication solution on its own.

Cued speech can be particularly useful for deaf children born into hearing families for they can be part of the hearing community and interact with others to an effective degree, provided those around them learn and use such cues consistently. The same will apply to school and classes. Children who are trained to use cued speech may be integrated in mainstream educational systems if their teachers supplement their speech with manual cues and offer clear lip movements that can be easily followed.

The Oral Approach

Given the fact that about 90 percent of deaf and hard-of-hearing children are born to hearing parents (Schwartz 1996:168), a communication approach that will allow for interaction between the deaf child and his/her parents without calling for a new language or a new system of communication comes as natural. In reality, the oral approach is no specific communication method as such but rather a group of different methods that serve to help deaf and HoH children to communicate through spoken language in face-to-face situations.

Most oral methods base their work on any residual hearing (with hearing aids or without) that might be had. Some people are taught to understand and use speech by relying on their residual hearing and by using their sight to lipread. Sometimes teachers turn to touch to help the understanding and production of speech. This method, often called the "multisensory" method, counts on the conjunction of the various senses, hearing, sight and touch. Another oral approach, which has gained the interest of many hearing and deaf people alike, is the acoupedic method, also referred to as "unisensory" for it solely relies on hearing. Those in favour of this method consider that children can acquire sufficient hearing skills to enable them to lead a lifestyle in all similar to that of hearers. In this case, children are encouraged to depend on their hearing alone and any kind of lipreading or hand signalling is strongly discouraged.

Oral methods are highly demanding on the deaf youngster and the degree of success will depend on a variety of factors, such as residual hearing, psychological make up, learning ability and adequate tutoring. It may be true that oralised adults have considerable ease in finding job positions that are often closed to other deaf people; yet, quite often, children who have been educated within an oral approach will turn to forms of signalling as young adults to communicate with their deaf peers.

Total Communication

As suggested in its name, this educational approach offers deaf people the possibility to use or choose between all the communicative possibilities at their disposal in view of successful communicative interaction with deaf and hearing people. Rather than a technique, total communication might be considered a communication philosophy²⁸, which advocates the right to use signs, speech, gestures, speechreading, amplification, and/or fingerspelling simultaneously or separately in view of communicative efficiency.

The possibility of merging different modes (oral and manual) in one communicative act or of using them separately and at will means that different teaching techniques need to be applied. Whenever parents choose to educate their children to use an oral language aided by other modes, such as gestures or lipreading, the main language in use will always be the spoken one (English, French, Portuguese, etc.) that will be supported by (English, French, Portuguese, etc.) manually coded systems. If this method is to be successful the child will have to be trained to use language in a multisensory form and all those involved in his/her education (family, teachers, therapists) need to use similar coding systems for consistency.

Still within the total communication approach, parents might choose to train their deaf children to interact with others (deaf and/or hearers) using distinct modes at different points. This will allow the deaf person to choose the communication skills found most adequate to each communicative act. If a person is to be proficient in more than one form

²⁸ When the term "total communication" appeared in the 70s, it meant "the right of a deaf child to learn to use all communication modalities made available to acquire linguistic competence" (Schwartz 1996:210).

of communication, this will mean that as a child he/she will need to be given the conditions to perfect the skills involved.

Once again, environment, psychological and intellectual characteristics and educational programmes will be of significant importance in this as in other approaches. The total communication approach appears to be the one which offers the greatest variety of opportunities to deaf children, who may later on in life decide on the communication modes that suit their lifestyles best.

3.4. Visual-Gestural vs. Oral Languages

Être sourd ne signifie pas ne pas parler mais seulement ne pas entendre. Les enfants sourds n'ont aucun handicap pour s'approprier la parole dans une langue visuelle-gestuelle.

(Bouvet 2003:1)

Humans are said to have an innate capacity for language, which may be considered a basic biological endowment only to be hampered by limited cognitive, social or psychological factors. Children naturally learn what will be their natural language (their mother tongue) provided they have operative cognitive or processing capacities, access to native speakers, and psychological appetite to learning. According to Bochner and Albertini (1988:20):

Language acquisition therefore occurs within a social milieu in which the learner is an active participant, eliciting and selectively processing input in the course of communicative interactions and constructing language with the assistance of psychological and cognitive mechanisms.

Deaf people are no different from hearers in their language learning capacities and needs. The only distinction lies in the fact that they might not process oral language through hearing; however, they can make up for their loss by relying on their vision, and language becomes visual once it is conveyed through observable signs/signals.

From the language choices mentioned above, one may conclude that deaf people can make use of two sensory modalities (audition and vision), and three types of signals (speech, sign and print) to communicate, as long as these are structurally integrated into codified systems.

Deaf communities have come to use signed languages to communicate among themselves. For many years, signed languages were not considered "languages" as such. They were erroneously considered simple mimics that mirrored oral communication and that many thought to be universally understood. Only in the 60s, particularly with Stokoe's study of the signs used by children attending the Gallaudet College for the Deaf, was a SL (ASL –

the American Sign Language) actually seen as a language in its own right. Stokoe's seminal writings (Stokoe *et al.* 1965) would determine many studies to come on the nature of SL (*cf.* Liddell and Johnson 1989; Coulter and Anderson 1993; Wilbur 1987 and 1993), all of which conclude that sign languages share the main characteristics of any (oral) language.

Like oral languages that take their stand in the form of sequential phonemes that structure into syllables, words, phrases and clauses, manual languages are coded as concurrent "bundles of features" (Bochner and Albertini 1988:21) – cheremes²⁹ – that comprise handshape, orientation, location and contact, equally grouped together to make up words, phrases and clauses. Signed languages use the full potential of non-manual behaviours (facial expression and body movements) to express what is orally given through intonation and in writing through punctuation. Sentence types such as statements, questions and commands are determined by non-manual signalling (*e.g.*, head nods, shoulder movements, eye and/or brow movements) and stress is often conveyed through making a sign more slowly or faster and sharper than normally done.

Like any other language, signed languages only use part of the potential signs available to them and very much as happens with oral languages³⁰, "the meanings expressed by signers exceed what a grammar is capable of encoding" and "the language signal does more than encode symbolic grammatical elements" (Liddell 2003:5).

Further contact points between signed languages and oral languages derive from the fact that, in all cases, there are sets of rules and codes that are systematically used or deliberately changed to attain stylistic effects or to mark variations of different natures (regional, racial/ethnic, gender and age). So even though there may be national sign languages (ASL, BSL or PSL), these will have numerous variations that occur because, as happens with any living language, they are constantly being changed to cater for the specific needs of their users.

²⁹ The term "chereme" was introduced by Stokoe (1960) to refer to the formation of signs in American Sign Language in comparison with the term "phoneme" which is used for oral languages.

³⁰ According to Rodda and Grove (1987:109) the potential number of possible speech sounds is immense: 4,096 to be precise. Natural languages only use a small fraction of the possible speech sounds: "English used around 44, French and German around 36 sounds. No language appears to possess less than 20 or more than about 75 basic sounds" (*ibid.*).

However, signed languages have basic grammatical features that appear to be reasonably consistent throughout variations. Signed languages are highly inflected, resembling other incorporating languages (e.g., Chinese). Such inflections are conveyed simultaneously and ideas that need various words to be expressed in oral languages can be economically synthesised in a single inflected SL sign.

Another distinctive feature resides in the sequencing of signs. Whereas oral languages rely on word order to disambiguate meaning, signed languages are reasonably flexible in this respect thanks to their inflectional characteristics. However, sign languages show preference for topic-comment structures: Thus, what in oral English would be “What is your name?” will be signed YOUR NAME WHAT³¹.

Basic grammatical rules appear consistently in various national sign languages. However, there are significant differences between them; even between ASL and BSL that would be expected to mirror the proximity that characterises spoken American and British English.

In *The Signs of Language*, Bellugi and Klima (1979) synthesise the results of numerous studies on ASL conducted at the Salk Institute which show that, to quote Rodda and Grove (1987:155):

ASL possesses many of the vital attributes of language: (a) hierarchical organization; (b) use of a limited range of distinctive features to enhance redundancy; (c) a tendency to arbitrariness; (d) complex morphology; (e) systematic rules of derivation and compound of signs; (f) means of communicating nonpresent and abstract concepts; and (g) rule-governed acquisition in children. However, it differs from spoken language in exploiting the opportunities visual media offer for simultaneous presentation of lexical and syntactical layers of manual movements.

What has been said about ASL can be extrapolated to other signed languages that might have different forms of realising meaning but that do it in very much the same way.

³¹ Unlike oral languages, that have graphological equivalents in print, signed languages cannot be easily coded into printed format and there is no currently accepted, widely used writing system for SL. Audiovisual facilities allow the registration of signs. In spite of such facilities, there has been a need to find ways to convey and account for SL through writing. Sutton-Spence and Woll (1998:xi-xxi) propose a useful comprehensive notation form that simplifies what is often given in complex notation systems. (It has been conventionalised that, when transcribing sign language into writing, this is to be done using capital letters).

A couple of examples may serve to illustrate some of the most commonly found structures. Features such as pronouns are given through positioning. When something is introduced, it is given a point in space, which is referred back to whenever it is pronominalised. Plurals can also be given through spacial location: e.g., "boys" can simply be given as BOY BOY (repetition); through the sign meaning "many", BOY LOTS; or by signing BOY and then pointing to various points in the space around. Descriptive adjectives such as "big", "small", "thick" will be conveyed through the size of hand shapes or hand movements. The sentence "I saw a big elephant" will be expressed as I SEE FINISH ELEPHANT THIS-BIG (showing the size). As might be seen in the last example, time of action is conveyed through a modifying sign.

To conclude, even if different in nature, sign languages and oral languages share many characteristics that are inherent to any linguistic structure. They are made up of units that "must be assembled in production, disassembled in comprehension, and discovered or created in acquisition" (*ibid.*:23).

3.5. Deafness and Reading

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.

(Laborit 1998:120)

Reading is often taken to be the most efficient means of communication available both to hearers and to deaf alike. In the case of deaf people, Quigley and Frisina (1961) and White and Stevenson (1975) report that reading print is far more effective than the reception of speech, finger spelling or signs, yet, it is also widely known that most people with hearing impairment have trouble with reading.

Difficulty with reading seems to be plaguing modern society and is definitely not exclusive to deaf people. Poor readers, in general, according to Anderson (1981:8):

do not make inferences that integrate information across sentences, do not link what they are reading with what they already know, do not successfully monitor their own comprehension, seldom engage in mental review and self-questioning, and do not make effective use of the structure in a story or text to organize learning and remembering.

This allows us to conclude that to be able to interpret meaning (the main objective of reading) there needs to be experiential, cognitive and linguistic interaction: prior knowledge of the topic; the ability to relate the new information to that previously known; the ability to integrate and process information at word, phrase, sentence and paragraph level; and, finally, the ability to monitor one's reading through self-questioning and inferencing. These skills are not innate, they need to be learnt and improved through practice, in a process that can be long and painful to hearers and deaf people alike.

For hearers, reading comes as a natural bi-product of the primary auditory based language acquired during the early years of infancy. When, at about the age of six, hearing children start learning how to read, they have already internalised their language's structure and go

into this new task with a whole linguistic background that will be there to fall back on whenever necessary. Hearing readers have both visual and phonic access to words and skilled readers have a good knowledge of orthographic redundancy and spelling-to-sound correspondences which they use unconsciously while decoding print. Once readers become proficient they no longer need to concentrate on word-processing and can invest their working memory in higher order processing, such as inferencing and predicting, (often done subconsciously), and planning, monitoring, self-questioning and summarizing (metacognitive techniques that are specific to highly skilled readers).

Unlike hearing children, when most deaf children approach reading, they do not have the experiential, cognitive and linguistic base needed to learn how to read, let alone to read fluently. According to Quigley and Paul (1984:137):

In addition to the lack of substantial knowledge base, deaf children often are lacking in inferential skills and in figurative language and other linguistic skills which develop automatically in young hearing children.

This does not mean that deaf children are less intelligent than hearers, the difference lies in the fact that "the typical deaf child is likely to approach beginning reading with poorly developed general language comprehension skills resulting from experiential deficits, cognitive deficits and linguistic deficits" (*ibid.*:109). Such deficits are not inherent disabilities but result from "an impoverished early background due to lack of appropriate experiential and linguistic input" (*ibid.*).

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, in 1971, as quoted by Rodda and Grove (1987:165) indicate 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)". Drawing on a study conducted by Wilson (1979) Quigley and Paul (1984:131) state that "deaf students tend to plateau at about the third- or fourth-grade level, at 13-14 years of age, and their scores

change very little from then through to at least age 19". However, these pessimistic conclusions still need to be questioned on the basis that such normative studies are fragmental and the results might be misleading. Yet, they shed light on a few of the basic difficulties deaf people have with reading: (1) Deaf children have deficient sight vocabulary which might lead to poor reading comprehension (*cf.* Silverman-Dresner and Guilfoyle 1972); (2) particularly prelingually deaf children have difficulty understanding complex syntactical structures (*cf.* Thompson 1927 and Brasel and Quigley 1975); and (3) deaf people have trouble with dealing with abstract ideas (*cf.* Myklebust 1964).

An early study by Schmitt (1968) set forward the important hypothesis that most reading problems result from the fact that deaf children have internalised language structures that are different from those used in the oral language. This would make us believe that deaf children who are brought up in an oralising environment would do better than others who are not, given that they will have been introduced to the language structure of the oral language at stake.

This hypothesis echoes studies that conclude that phonological decoding plays an important role in the acquisition of reading proficiency³². Miller (2002) has recently questioned the generally held belief that written words are processed more efficiently when recoded phonologically and that prelingually deaf people have difficulty in reading because they do not have phonological references. Miller's study actually confirmed that "phonological coding was found only for the hearing participants and for participants with prelingual deafness who were raised orally" (*ibid.*:325). He further concludes (*ibid.*:325-326) that "there appears to be a causal link between an individual's primary communication background and the nature of his or her word-processing strategy". This serves to support Share's (1995) hypothesis, that prelingually deaf children brought up in signing environments do not have a phonological reading strategy, which results in poorer reading levels than those brought up in oralising environments. This opinion is strongly

³² There is vast publication on the issue. Comprehensive studies might be found in Share (1995 and 1999); Stanovich (1992); Van Orden *et. al.* (1992). Application of such findings to deaf readers may be found in Miller (1997) and Paul (2001).

refuted by those in favour of a Bi-Bi communication approach (*cf.* Cummings 1979; Reynolds 1994 and Schwartz 1996), who believe that children who are consistently brought up within a signing environment will be sufficiently equipped to learn reading as a second language and will have internalised structures that will frame their thinking process and therefore lead to a better acquisition of a second language. This position, however, has led to controversy for lack of evidence (*cf.* Hanson and Lichenstein 1990).

Miller's research on the importance of phonological coding in the reading process approaches a fraction of the reading problems deaf people face. Almost two decades before, Quigley and Paul (1984:138) had postulated similar reasons for poor reading skills among deaf people alongside another problem, that of short temporal-sequential memory:

These two facts, shorter temporal-sequential memory spans and lack of a speech code, could account for some of the language acquisition and reading problems of deaf children. They might also help explain why acquiring a syntax of English (and perhaps of any spoken language) seems to present extreme difficulty for many deaf persons.

Short-term working memory is of great importance in the reading process for it alone will allow the reader to understand complex sentences and linked ideas. The establishment of cohesion and coherence 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 deaf people resort to 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.

This difficulty in storing and processing information can be gradually overcome if children are given adequate stimuli early on in life and if reading is introduced in a systematic way, moving from simple to complex structures and incorporating previously acquired knowledge and skills. This is basically what should happen with any learning situation. Moving from simple to complex structures will allow the learner to gradually incorporate

more difficult structures and improve inferential abilities that will enable relating text to experience and information that has been previously acquired.

It is now known that the more complex the syntactic structure, the more difficult it will be for the deaf reader to keep track. Rodda and Grove (1987:179) quote Brown (1973) on the difficulties deaf people face in terms of English³³:

First the deaf user finds it difficult to cope with the “fine grain” of English grammar: the complex rule systems underlying the use of inflection and auxiliaries within the verb system and the associated subtleties of tense, mood, and passivization; the case structure of the pronoun system; the seemingly arbitrary rules governing the selection of *be* and *have*, and various kinds of prepositions. These kinds of structure, known collectively as functors, are acquired by hearing children more slowly than the contentive words (nouns, verbs, adjectives and so on) which have a relatively direct semantic function. Second, processes such as relativization and complementation, which involve reordering and transformation of whole segments of discourse, appear extremely difficult.

Complex structures such as those found in relative clauses, complements and passive voice – conjunctions, pronominalization, and indirect objects – present particular difficulty to deaf readers. Similar difficulty is found in understanding metaphor and figurative language. As might be expected, when interpreting figurative language, a greater effort is required for reading needs to go beyond the words and structure in sight. The reasons for this difficulty in processing figurative language have not yet been found. Quigley and Paul (1984:129) posit that:

Some of the contrary research findings on figurative language raise the question of whether the problem is with the deaf person’s lack of the form in which the figurative concepts are expressed [...] or the lack of the underlying concepts themselves.

These and many more issues related to how the deaf read are being systematically studied. It may be concluded that reading is part of a general language comprehension process and that, in order to become skilled readers, people must be given adequate reading tools early on in life and must be provided with stimulating opportunities to improve their skills. Because people have a natural tendency to shy away from difficult situations, the best way

³³ This situation is transposable to other languages. Reference is most often made to English in this study, given that the sources that were consulted are American or British.

to enhance reading is offering less skilled readers challenging opportunities where language is presented in a clear, systematic fashion. Subtitled audiovisual texts might be a valuable tool to improve reading standards among the Deaf. The more people read, the better they will do so and moving from easy to more complex structures will be seen as victories rather than as insuperable hurdles.

If we are to take all the above into account when addressing the issue of SDH, many questions may be raised as to the adequacy of present practices and frequently held beliefs as to the way deaf viewers read subtitles, the relevance of verbatim subtitling or the need for disambiguation and explicitation. These issues will be addressed at length in chapter IV.

IV. Subtitling for the Deaf and HoH

Subtitling has been under systematic investigation for rather a short time. Research methodology is still uncertain; problems are sometimes difficult to work out; explanations are groped for in the dark.

(Gambier and Gottlieb 2001:xvii)

Even though it may be true that the last decade has seen a growing interest in the study of AVT in general, a fact attested by the growing number of conferences³⁴ and publications on the theme (cf. Orero 2004:vii), very little has been written at an academic level on Subtitling for the Deaf and HoH. Ever since intralingual subtitling was introduced on television in the form of closed captioning or teletext subtitling in the 70s, research into the matter has been mostly connected to its technical implications. This may be due to the fact that, initially, subtitling for the hearing impaired was addressed as a mechanical process requiring technical expertise rather than linguistic competence. Up until recently, SDH was not seen as translation proper and has therefore been less accounted for in mainstream studies on audiovisual translation. However, this does not mean that scholars and professionals have not addressed SDH in their work.

Further to the numerous in-house guidelines that have been drawn up to aid subtitlers doing the job, some of which are discussed at length in this thesis, most of what has been

³⁴ Special focus was placed on accessibility (SDH and audio description) in the London Conference, *In so many Words*, 6-7 February 2004, in the Berlin Conferences, *Language and the Media*, 4-6 December 2002 and 3-5 November 2004, and the Altea Conference, *III Seminarios Internacionales de Altea: TV digital y accesibilidad para personas discapacitadas en un entorno global de comunicación*. Organised by Universidad Rey Juan Carlos in Altea (Alicante), 18-19 October 2004. The forthcoming conference *Media for All*, to take place in Barcelona 6-8 June 2005 is almost exclusively dedicated to the issue of accessibility.

written about SDH has been done by people connected to the industry or by institutional bodies, such as the RNID, ITC (now Ofcom) or NCI in the case of Great Britain, for instance.

Works written by professionals, (Baker *et al.* 1984, Robson 2004), often share valuable experience and throw light on practical issues and guidance for actual practice. Unlike guidelines that set forward recommendations to be followed by less experienced practitioners or by all those working within a particular context, thus contributing towards standardisation, books and articles aiming at wider publics offer outsiders an inside view of the makings of subtitling. These are unique testimonials that speak of every day issues, offering valuable information to scholars in the field.

Unfortunately, there are not many such books and articles available on SDH. However, even when SDH is not the main topic under address, as is the case of the works by Ivarsson (1992) and Ivarsson and Carroll (1998), special reference is often made to subtitles for the hearing impaired as subtitles that are “prepared specifically for this target group” (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998:129). In the case of these particular contributions, these professionals highlight the interest of the subject by writing that “the subtitling of television programmes for those with impaired hearing is a subject for a whole book rather than a short chapter” (*ibid.*). Even if SDH may have been approached in a summarised manner, attention has been called to important details that have been taken up in this research.

Institutional documents, which often present information on the profile of Deaf and hard-of-hearing addressees, are valuable tools at the disposal of those working on SDH. Such documents, most often presented as reports on case studies, have reverted towards the provision of better subtitling on television. This is the case of reports such as *Switched On: Deaf People's View on Television Subtitling* (Kyle 1992), *Good News for Deaf People: Subtitling of National News Programmes* (Sancho-Aldridge and IFF Research Ltd 1997), *Caption Speed and Viewer Comprehension of Television Programs Final Report* (Jensema 1999) and the *Subtitling Consumer Report* (Gaell 1999).

Further to the examples presented above, translation scholars have also reached out to the study of SDH. Subtitling for the Deaf and HoH has now been accepted as integral to

audiovisual translation and is listed among the different translation types by Gambier (1998, 2003a and 2003b) and by Díaz-Cintas (2001b, 2003a and 2004b), for instance.

In spite of this, very little empirical research on SDH has been accounted for by translation scholars. Special reference is due to the work conducted by De Linde and accounted for in De Linde (1995, 1996, 1997 and 1999) and particularly in De Linde and Kay (1999). This scholar's work has laid down stepping stones for various other studies for it may be considered the first to address the issue in some depth within the framework of Translation Studies. Another instance of valuable research into SDH may be found in Franco and Araújo's research on the way Deaf viewers access television in Brazil. These scholars' study, which is made available in Franco and Araújo (2003) and Araújo (2004), show many findings that coincide with those that were arrived at with this research project. Even if still not available in written form, other on-going projects on the study of SDH have been presented for in meetings and conferences taking place in the past two years. Such is the case of the research carried out by Santamaria, in Spain, presented at the Berlin conference in November 2004.

Recent developments show that Subtitling for the Deaf and HoH is finding itself an established position within Translation Studies. Even if working at different levels, it is often found that the above mentioned sources (professional guidelines and works, institutional reports and academic studies) are addressing similar issues even if through different perspectives. Ideally, the input from each of the different quarters – professionals, institutions and scholars – should be feeding into each other in an enriching exchange.

This particular research might be seen as one of such instances where different worlds are brought together towards a better understanding of the subject under address. It is hoped that the topics to be discussed in this chapter will reflect that very dialogic approach. It is my belief that such findings are relevant both to professionals and scholars. This belief was reinforced by the reading of a very recent report, published by Ofcom on 6 January 2005 (Ofcom 2005), which brings to the fore some of the issues that are addressed in this thesis. In spite of having been carried out independently, in different contexts, by different

researchers and with distinct aims, much is shared and many of the conclusions arrived at are consistently similar, even when questioning previously held beliefs.

If different sources and efforts can arrive at similar conclusions it may be advanced that the issues in case are, indeed, valuable food for thought.

4.1. Historical Overview

Flick on the TV, and there they are: that wonderful piece of magic called "captions". It's like turning on the lights when we enter a room. We don't worry about how they work or how they got there, we just enjoy them.

(CMP n/d)

The advent of Subtitling for the Deaf and HoH, as we know it today, is often said to have been in the 1970s/1980s when, in the USA and in the UK, two different systems were simultaneously developed to allow for the presentation of closed subtitles on television. The product of such systems would come to be known as "closed captioning" in the USA and "teletext subtitling" in the UK, and would determine most of the SDH solutions and strategies to be used throughout the world to the present day. However, the history of SDH did not begin with these two technologies nor is it to stay with them forever. With the emerging digital age, closed captioning and teletext subtitling may soon become obsolete. Further, SDH is not to be offered exclusively on television. It may now be found on audiovisual products of all types, offered on television, on VHS/DVD, on the Internet and video games, among others. Regardless of the directions in which SDH may take us in the future, the germ of SDH will always be found in these two pioneering systems.

Closed Captioning

The origins of captioning/subtitling stem from as far back as the silent era where intertitles were introduced for the benefit of all. According to the Captioning Media Program (CMP n/d), SDH dates back to the late 1940s, when Emerson Romero, a deaf man, himself an actor in the times of silent movies, tried to adapt old films for deaf viewers. He used the techniques available for silent movies and spliced in text reproducing dialogue between frames. This meant that text and image would alternate rather than co-exist as came to

happen later. In 1949, two years after Romero's first experiments, Arthur Rank provided a captioned feature length film at a movie house in London. Skilled hearing operators slid pieces of glass with etched words, in and out of a projector. The captions were shown on a smaller screen to the bottom left of the screen of the movie, in synchrony with the dialogue. This technique was not very successful for it made viewers look away from the action to read the captions; however, the underlying idea would be taken up in Belgium where the first open captions were printed directly onto a master copy of the film. This technique was initially devised to be used for the translation of film dialogue for hearers but soon, two Americans, Edmund Boatner and Clarence O'Conner, the first, superintendent of the American School for the Deaf and the latter, superintendent of the Lexington School in New York, set up Captioning Films for the Deaf (CFD) that aimed at raising funds to provide captioned movies for deaf viewers. The first CFD film to be captioned in the United States was *America the Beautiful*, a 25-minute short, by Warner Brothers, produced to sell war bonds during World War II. By 1958, the CFD had captioned 30 films that circulated among Deaf clubs and schools for a small fee. The lack of financial support made the captioning of films for the deaf difficult even though there was a growing awareness of the utility of SDH for teaching purposes. In 1959, CFD became a federal programme through the passage of Public Law 85-905 which authorised money to procure, caption and distribute suitable films for the deaf. This law, which would later be known as the Captioned Films Act, was soon amended for it only allowed for the captioning of feature films. In 1960, the CFD programme released *Rockets – How They Work*, via an arrangement with Encyclopaedia Britannica. This was the first captioned educational film. In 1962 this law was modified by the passage of the Public Law 87-715 and later, in 1965, by Public Law 89-258, which guaranteed funding for training, production, acquisition and distribution of educational media and allowed for research in the area, as well as the purchase of equipment to be used in schools and programmes for the Deaf.

The growing interest in captioning for the Deaf led to the organization of a number of seminars and workshops on the subject. These became initial forums for the discussion of

what would come to be captioning on television. The first preview of a captioned TV programme happened at the First National Conference on Television for the Hearing Impaired, held at the University of Tennessee in 1971. This conference is seen as an important date in the history of captioning for it brought together representatives of all major TV networks in the United States (ABC, NBC, CBS and PBS), producers, federal agencies, Deaf/hearing-impaired persons, professionals, parents and teachers to discuss important issues that ranged from technology to the needs of consumers with hearing impairment. The first TV programme to be aired with captioning for the deaf was an episode of the *French Clef* to be followed by an episode of the *Mod Squad*, both broadcast in 1972. These first captions were open and one year later, in 1973, the first captioning of news bulletins happened when PBS began re-broadcasting news programmes using open captioning.

The research carried out at PBS at the time resulted in the development of two competing closed-captioning systems. The first, which broadcast the captions off the edge of the screen, lost the battle against the “Line 21” technique that placed hidden captions in line 21 of the vertical blanking interval (VBI) of the video signal.³⁵ Even though the viewing of these captions called for a special decoder, which meant technical changes in television sets and broadcasting equipment, the system imposed itself and gave way to a new era in captioning for the deaf. In 1976, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) set aside line 21 for the transmission of closed captions in the USA. On 16 March 1980, various television broadcasters offered programmes with closed captions for the first time: ABC provided the ABC Sunday night movie *Force 10 from Navarone*; NBC, *The Wonderful World of Disney*; and PBS, *Masterpiece Theatre*. In 1980, American deaf audiences were offered 16 hours per week of captioned programmes on television, a number which has

³⁵ The VBI of a television signal consists of a number of “lines” of video. The method of encoding used in North America allows for two characters of information to be placed on each frame of video and there are 30 frames in a second. This corresponds roughly to 60 characters per second, or about 600 wpm. The system allows for very little beyond basic letters, numbers and symbols. Even though there is some flexibility as to stylistic standards of closed captions, technological constraints have standardised closed captions in the USA to be basically written in uppercase because caption decoders push up lowercase letters containing descenders (e.g., j, q, y), making them difficult to read. Closed captioning does not support block graphics or multiple pages but it can support italic typeface and uses up to 8 colours.

since grown exponentially³⁶. In 1982 the National Captioning Institute (NCI) developed real-time captioning, a process for the captioning of news bulletins, live broadcasts and sports events as they are aired on television. The techniques to be used in pre-recorded programmes and real-time captioning were substantially different and will be addressed in greater detail below.

Presently, thanks to the Television Decoder Circuitry Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-431 which came into effect on 1 July 1993), all analogue television sets with a 13 inch or larger screen, manufactured for sale in the USA, incorporate built-in line 21 decoders. The system has remained popular to the present day and has been transmitting subtitles on line 21 of NTSC/525 in North America and parts of South America. Even though the National Captioning Institute did try to introduce line 21 captioning in Europe, their efforts were not very successful due to the strong position held by the British teletext system, both in the UK and in other European countries.

Teletext Subtitling

Unlike what happened in the USA, the first subtitling efforts in Europe were not directed towards making films accessible to people with hearing impairment. Instead, they aimed at translating Hollywood talkies for European audiences. Different countries took to different audiovisual translation solutions, mainly dubbing or subtitling, for a variety of reasons, explained at length by authors such as Vöge (1977); Danan (1991); Díaz-Cintas (1999a:36 and 2004a:50) and Ballester Casado (2001:111), but, on the whole, subtitling was to offer a cheaper alternative to the dubbing of English spoken films produced by the Hollywood film industry. Subtitling techniques changed with time and adapted themselves to the technical means available in different places at different times. In many countries where

³⁶ FCC has set benchmarks establishing that by January 2006, 100% of all new programming, that is, "all English language programming prepared or formatted for display on analogue television and first shown on or after January 1, 1998 as well as programming prepared or formatted for display on digital television that was first published or exhibited after July 1, 2002" (FCC 2003), must be shown with closed captioning. These benchmarks also determine that "all Spanish language programming first shown after January 1, 1998, must be captioned by 2010" (*ibid.*).

open interlingual subtitling became available, hearers and deaf alike gained access to foreign language spoken films without it being taken into account that people with hearing impairment had special needs when viewing audiovisual materials. In Europe, awareness of such needs came with the growing understanding of the existence of a Deaf culture and became particularly felt in Great Britain where the Deaf community gained visibility and lobbying force. In the 70s, the British followed the American footsteps and set out to providing subtitling for the Deaf and HoH on television using the teletext system that, like the closed captioning system used in the USA, concealed the teletext signal in the VBI. However, instead of resorting to line 21 alone, the teletext system allows for the concealment of information at the end of each of lines 6 to 22 and 318 to 335.

Teletext was developed in the early 1970s as an engineering project, bringing together engineers from the BBC, ITC (then known as ITA – Independent Television Authority) and researchers from the University of Southampton, who were seeking a solution that would be economically viable to provide subtitles on television for the hearing impaired. The system that was originally developed, named Ceefax (internally known as Teledata), was announced to the public by the BBC in October 1972 and put into experimental use in 1974. Simultaneously ITC was developing its own system, named ORACLE (Optical Reception of Announcements by Coded Line Electronics). Both systems used a common format, CEPT1, which was standardised in 1974, ensuring that future television receivers would get teletext at a reduced price. Aspects such as decoders, character sets and the use of colours were agreed upon, and in 1976, “the world’s first public teletext service was put into general use in England” (NCAM n/d accessed 2004).

Robson (n/d), one of the members of the editorial team that worked on Ceefax from 1974, recalls that the first attempts to provide subtitles for the hearing impaired using the newly developed teletext system were little more than personal trials using “yellow punched paper tape” with the subtitles that would be loaded onto the screen by pressing “the ENTER key when it was time for that subtitle” (*ibid.*). Still using this technique, the BBC broadcasted the opera *Carmina Burana* with subtitles in 1976, translating into English the words sung in Italian.

While such experiments were taking place in Great Britain, in France, another system with similar aims was being set up, the ANTIOPE (Acquisition Numérique et Télévisualisation d'Image organisées en Pages d'Ecriture). This system, which was first used in 1977 and aimed at transmitting data over telephone lines, wasn't very successful and was substituted by the European Teletext at the beginning of the 90s.

The teletext system developed in the UK has since been adopted by various countries throughout Europe, Asia, Africa and the Pacific, primarily with PAL and SECAM systems and has evolved with the passing of time³⁷. Presently, teletext systems offer two distinct services. On the one hand, there is an information service, organized in pages, covering an enormous variety of topics (news, sports, culture, economy, etc.), and presented independently of programmes being broadcast. On the other hand, they provide what has come to be generally accepted as "subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing". Basically, teletext subtitles are hidden from vision and are called up at will to provide written renderings of the oral (and sometimes the aural) component of television programmes. These subtitles, which are usually written in the language of the programme in case, are transmitted via a teletext page that has been set for the purpose³⁸. Teletext subtitling can be prepared in advance (films, series and pre-recorded programmes) or provided live or in real time (news bulletins, and live coverage of events, such as sports and talk shows). Both solutions call for distinct techniques and have demanded development of specific subtitling software and equipment. The growing demand for subtitling on live broadcasts has resulted in the improvement of subtitling software packages that have taken on from previously used equipment such as Palantype or Stenograph machines. Further to the development of dedicated software, as that proposed by companies such as SysMedia, Cavena, Screen and Softel, among others, broadcasters such as BBC in the UK and DR in

³⁷ Among the countries using teletext in Europe we find: Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom. Outside Europe: Armenia, Australia, Hong Kong, India, Israel, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, United Arab Emirates and Vietnam.

³⁸ According to the draft cross-table on television broadcasters and their approaches to teletext subtitling, (<http://voice.jrc.it/tv>) [accessed 20 June 2002] teletext subtitling is presented on page 888 in the UK; 199/299/399 in Belgium and the Netherlands; on page 888 in the most of Spain; 150 and 777 in Germany; 777 in Italy; 887/888 in Portugal; 777 in Switzerland.

Denmark are now turning to speech recognition software. At present, such software is particularly dedicated to the English language and it may take a few more years for such technology to be adapted to other languages. The last years have also seen a significant development of systems using voice recognition to offer real-time subtitles³⁹. Such systems were initially used in programmes that were repetitive in nature (weather reports and sports) and, even if at present they may still be somewhat limited to language and programme type, there is evidence that speech-to-text technology might be the way forward in SDH in the very near future (*cf.* Voice n/d). The number of TV hours broadcast with teletext subtitling is steadily growing in Europe thanks to the work of lobbying groups and to European directives that have led to an increase in general awareness. Gerry Stallard (quoted in DBC 2000) presents us with figures on the situation of subtitling in Europe in 2000:

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Belgium | No legislation at present but under consideration for 2002. One channel provides 365 hours of subtitling and 170 hours of signing. Another channel provides 1,250 hours of subtitling and approx 30% of Dutch spoken programmes are accessible by closed captioning. Programmes in other languages have open captions |
| Denmark | 630 hours subtitling which is 23.82% of programming |
| Finland | 624 hours subtitling and 24 hours signing |
| France | There are 3 channels: 624 hours subtitling and 24 hours signing plus 500 hours foreign language programming with burnt in subtitles 1,500 hours subtitling (17%) and 17 hours signing 1,820 hours subtitling (21%) |
| Germany | 530 hours (6%) to be increased to 666 hours = 7.5% subtitling |
| Greece | 30 hours subtitling |
| Hungary | 312 hours (5% to be increased to 10%) subtitling |
| Iceland | 30 hours subtitling and 60 hrs signing |
| Italy | 7pm to 12am – 3,604hrs (13%) to be increased to 4,500 hours (17%) |
| Netherlands | 5,000 hours (65%) subtitling which includes in-vision subtitling and 70 hours signing |
| Norway | 4,000 hours subtitling, 130 hours signing (to be increased to 700 hours) |
| Slovenia | 2,000 hours subtitling (20%) and 200 hours signing (1.5%) |
| Spain | 782 hours subtitling – to be increased to 1,200 hours this year |

³⁹ An explicit expression of such a situation was seen at *Languages & The Media*, 5th International Conference and Exhibition on Language Transfer in Audiovisual Media, held in Berlin, 3 to 5 November 2004, where various speakers presented on-going projects that show that voice-recognition and automatic subtitling is not only possible, but has now started being used in professional and commercial contexts.

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Sweden | 38% of programming subtitled plus 50% of translated programming. Educational channel carries 30 hours subtitling which is 30% access. |
| Switzerland | 2,310 hours subtitling |
| UK | So much access there's no room to give it (!) |

Table 2 – Subtitling in Europe in 2002

Source: DBC (2000)

Even though subtitle preparation systems have improved greatly in recent years, analogue television teletext subtitling and closed caption systems are still hampered by a number of drawbacks. Further to the text-type limitations mentioned above, other problems are still felt by users. Among them, one may recall the fact that most video recorders do not capture the teletext signal. This makes it almost impossible for deaf people to record programmes with subtitles for later viewings⁴⁰. Another problem that is often referred to lies in the fact that subtitles need to be switched off when zapping from channel to channel. The use of different subtitle pages in different countries and particularly different pages by different broadcasters in the same country also comes as confusing. Further to these problems that are particularly felt by users, there is another one that is often referred to by providers: the difficulty in exchanging files. Initial experiments have taken place to allow for the exchange of data between the UK and the USA, as well as within Europe itself. An EBU (European Broadcast Union) standard format has been established to facilitate the exchange of subtitling files among European Union members, and the BBC now exchanges subtitle files with the Australian Caption Centre on a regular basis. This is not, however, common practice for, further to linguistic issues, different countries use different subtitling conventions which makes file exchange difficult.

The number of programmes containing teletext subtitles has grown exponentially in the last years. The UK has kept in the lead in Europe ever since the 1990 Broadcasting Act⁴¹ determined that subtitling on analogue television should be gradually increased so as to attain 90% by 2010. In fact, the BBC has committed itself to attain 100% subtitling by 2008. Other European countries have followed suit, thanks to European legislation that has

⁴⁰ There are a few video recorders in the market that capture teletext subtitles. Among them we may name SANYO VHR296E (VHSP53) and AKAI VS G878.

⁴¹ Available at: http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1990/Ukpga_19900042_en_1.htm. [accessed 25 May 2004].

grown since the 80s. Special reference needs to be made to the Television Without Frontiers Directive (TWF Directive / TWFD) of 1989 (Directive 552/89, as updated by Directive 36/1997). Even though this Directive does not account for Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing as such, it did give way to discussions at a European level on a number of issues pertaining to Public Service Broadcasting.

During 2003, European Year for People with Disabilities, a number of initiatives led to the discussion of the access to culture and information by people with sensorial impairment (deaf and blind in particular). These efforts, linked in with those directed by the TWF Directive, have ultimately led to the debate over the standardisation of services, among which is that of subtitling for the hearing impaired. On 29 July 2002, on behalf of the RNID, EFHOH and FEPEDA, Mark Hoda submitted a document to The European Commission on subtitling and sign language for the report on the application of the TWF Directive. This report recommends that policy makers, European and National Regulatory Authorities, broadcasters, subtitling companies, consumer electronics manufacturers and researchers take action so as to review the TWF Directive, which is said to be “designed to ensure the freedom to provide and to receive broadcasting services in the European Union”, encompassing all platforms, “terrestrial, cable, satellite, as well as television services provided through other means such as services ‘with a return path’. E.g. the internet and video on demand” (*ibid.*:14). Further, the TWF Directive “cornerstone of the European broadcasting policy” (Aubry 2000) sets forward the possibility of finding uniformity in the emerging DVB generation,⁴² which will mean the convergence of television services with telephone and internet services.

In this respect, European directives such as the Framework Directive 2002/21/EC and the Universal Service Directive 2002/22/EC spurred on a number of initiatives that have led to a growing interest in accessibility issues particularly relevant to the introduction of digital television. The Workshop “TV Broadcasting for All”, organised by CEN, Cenelec and ETSI in

⁴² DVB (Digital Video Broadcasting) is a consortium of around 300 companies of Broadcasting, Manufacturing, Network Operation and Regulatory matters that have come together to establish common international standards for the move from analogue to digital broadcasting (cf. O’Leary 2000).

Seville on 13-14 June 2002 set in motion a Virtual Working Group to look at particular standardisation requirements to be applied on digital television and interactive services. Two other meetings were held in Barcelona, on 28 October 2003, and in Brussels, 25 February 2004. The most significant outcome of these efforts may be read in Stallard's *Final Report to Cenelec on TV for All* (2003) which sets forward standardisation requirements for access to digital TV and interactive services by disabled people. This report proposes recommendations for the production, transmission and reception of assistive services such as subtitling, audio description and signing as well as for receiver terminals, peripherals and interactive equipment, among others.

This desire for standardisation comes with the introduction of digital technology and the whole concept of closed captioning and teletext subtitling seen hitherto is bound to change. In practice, many of the above mentioned problems found on analogue television will be automatically solved. For instance, with digital television, subtitles will be embedded in the image as bit-maps allowing for a variety of fonts, graphics and colours as well as permitting subtitles to be easily recorded. Furthermore, information will no longer be stored on "pages", so page numbers will not be used and, once selected, subtitles will remain active, regardless of the programme changes that may occur when zapping.

Even though digital television is a promising advance for subtitle users, it poses a number of problems that are presently being dealt with by experts and institutions. Among the various issues, one has already been subject to an EBU Recommendation (R-110-2004): the existence of two different DVB subtitling systems. The DVB Project has developed two subtitling systems. The first, "Teletext via DVB" (ETSI EN 300 742), has the receiver transcoding the teletext lines in the VBI of the analogue TV signal, thus making it possible for subtitles to be viewed on most television sets. The second, "DVB Subtitling" (ETSI EN 300 743), opens up to more innovative features (fonts, colours, etc.) but cannot be viewed by all the receivers presently in the market. The latter is, however, the preferred solution recommended by the EBU, who also determines that "consumer electronics manufacturers ensure the compliance of DVB set-top boxes and IRDs with the DVB Subtitling System" (EBU 2004a).

In spite of the multiple efforts to achieve uniformity, to the benefit of all those involved – manufacturers, service providers and the consumer – no consensus has yet been reached at a global level. As far as broadcasting standards are concerned, three regional standards are taking form. The DVB standards will be adopted in Europe, India, Australia and parts of Africa; however, Canada and the USA are adopting the ATSC (Advanced Television System Committee) standard; and Japan is developing yet another standard, the ISDB (Integrated Services Digital Broadcasting).

As far as the provision of accessibility services on television is concerned, this may mean that there will continue to be significant differences between the solutions proposed by each standard and the two main strategies found in the past in captioning and teletext subtitling may continue to be implemented even if the technological implications may be of a different kind.

It is obvious that the future of SDH will go beyond the scope of television. Even though television will always be a privileged scenario for its democratic and far reaching existence, for being the best means to disseminate knowledge and therefore subject to the special effort of having to guarantee accessibility to all, SDH is gaining importance in the growing DVD market and is also becoming a common feature in the cinema. More and more DVDs are now reserving one or more of their 32 tracks for the provision of SDH. In most cases, English intralingual SDH is the only SDH variety offered, but interlingual SDH is becoming a growing feature on DVD releases, notably from English into German and Italian⁴³. SDH in the cinema is now growing in offer. Rear window systems may be found in some cinemas in the USA and in Europe, allowing deaf people to sit alongside hearers in the same viewing. This means that, instead of having special showings with open SDH, deaf people may request the service to be activated at any cinema where the system is available. Rear view systems comprise a transparent reflector pad that is attached to seats in position to reflect subtitles that are projected in reverse on a led panel at the back of the cinema room.

⁴³ In the study of 250 DVDs, selected at random among commercial releases available at Portuguese video rental shops (Jan 2004-November 2004) only 63 offered intralingual subtitling for the hearing impaired (English); 15 contained interlingual subtitling for the hearing impaired (12 into German and 3 into Italian).

This solution is particularly popular in the USA; however, just as happened in the early days of SDH, there is a need to split focus between the cinema screen and the subtitle screen, making the film viewing experience less comfortable. This situation is in many ways similar to that which happens with surtitling in opera, where people have to split their attention between what is happening on stage and the titles that are presented on a screen or on led lights above the stage. In Europe, preference tends to go for special sessions that are duly publicised as offering SDH. This is now becoming common practice in the UK⁴⁴ and the trend is slowly spreading across Europe, a task that proves easier with the introduction of DTS subtitling systems since it allows for subtitles to be projected on screen rather than being burnt on film. This type of subtitling is known in the profession as “electronic subtitling”.

As has been mentioned above, the introduction of digital technology is bound to change present notions of distinct media. The once dissimilar cinema, VHS/DVD, television and computer are now coming together in the form of interactive solutions, converging to make multimedia products available, bringing along new challenges and growing potential. Audiovisual translation, and subtitling in particular, is bound to change with the new prospects. If until recently receivers had to adjust to the subtitles that were given to them, very soon, it may be possible for viewers to choose the type of subtitles they want to view. It will mean that subtitles will be selected and adjusted to suit the likes and needs of different viewers. This may mean a change in font, colour or position on screen, but it may also mean being able to choose graded subtitles to preferred reading speeds or degree of complexity. The debate over verbatim and condensed subtitles will no longer be pertinent and the question of including comments about sound effects will also need no answer, for people will be able to select what they consider best in view of their needs. However utopian such situation might appear at this stage, particularly for the economic implications of the provision of such differentiated offers, I strongly believe that this is a natural step

⁴⁴ UK cinemas offering SDH are publicised on the Web at sites such as “Subtitles @ your local cinema” (<http://www.yourlocalcinema.com/index.2.html>). In October 2004 it was advertised that “almost a quarter of UK cinemas (124) can now screen most popular releases with subtitles and audio description”.

forward in the present context. Globalisation will have to make space for individual choice and the breaking down of masses will come with the possibility of multi-layered offers that may be picked and mixed on call. Perhaps, with the technology that is presently in use it may appear impracticable for various types of subtitles to be offered for any one product; however, it is predictable that with new technological developments a variety of solutions may be made available without implying prohibitive costs. All this can be feasible when standardisation and technical convergence makes it possible to share products between media and between countries: a future that may be just a few steps away.

4.2. Theoretical and Practical Overriding Issues

*Descriptive Translation Studies may go in the wrong direction if the prescriptive **what should be done** is replaced only by the armchair translologist's **what is done**, and **why** is never supplemented by what **could be done**.*

(Gottlieb, 1997d:220)

In order to arrive at a comprehensive description of SDH, as it is presently commercially offered, one will need to address the issue from a number of different perspectives. As concluded in section 2.2, there is still very little theoretical development on the matter, even though Ivarsson (1992:7) states that, contrary to what happens with regards to (interlingual) subtitling (for hearers), “a lot of research has been done and the findings published [in the area of] those with impaired hearing”. If this may have been the case in the early 90s, for very little existed then in terms of subtitling in general, the turn of the century has witnessed a significant increase in research on the topic, but only a very small portion of recently published works has been directed towards SDH. On the other hand, the growing interest in interlingual subtitling in general has led to an increase in publications which have drawn the attention of scholars from a variety of areas to the specificities of this particular type of language transfer⁴⁵.

As it is, many of the issues that need to be addressed in terms of SDH are shared with those pertaining to subtitling in general. De Linde and Kay (1999:1) synthesise the shared ground in the following manner:

In interlingual and intralingual subtitling language is being transferred between distinct linguistic systems, between two separate languages and/or between different modes of a single language, while functioning interdependently with another, visual, semiotic system.

⁴⁵ The recent publication by Egoyan and Belfour (2004) is an example of the interest that subtitling has raised in scholars and professionals of a wide range of areas. Among them, writers, poets, journalists, film makers, cultural and political analysts, historians, philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, teachers of languages, literature or cinema studies look at subtitling from new perspectives, opening new avenues for research in the area.

Gambier (2003b:179) places emphasis on the role of all AVT as a means for accessibility and lists a number of features to be found in all audiovisual translation types that are particularly relevant to SDH in particular:

acceptability, related to language norm, stylistic choice, rhetorical patterns, terminology, etc.

legibility, defined – for subtitling – in terms of fonts, position of subtitles, subtitle rates, etc.

readability, also defined for subtitling in terms of reading speed rates, reading habits, text complexity, information density, semantic load, shot changes and speech rates, etc.

synchronicity, defined – for dubbing, voice over and commentary – as appropriateness of the speech to lip movements, of the utterance in relation to the non-verbal elements, of what is said to what is shown (images), etc.

relevance, in terms of what information is to be conveyed, deleted or clarified in order not to increase the cognitive effort involved in listening or reading.

domestication strategies, defined in cultural terms. To what extent might we accept the new narrative modes, expressed values and behaviours depicted in the audiovisual product?

It needs to be added, however, that in SDH all these factors need to be addressed in view of one important element that is central to this particular type of subtitling: the addressee's profile. In this case, the functional aim of subtitling takes us beyond this list to which an overriding item needs to be added: *adequacy* to the special needs of Deaf and hard-of-hearing receivers. To a certain extent, it may be argued that *relevance*, as seen by Gambier, will cover the main elements inherent to the notion of adequacy. However, beyond the "what information is to be conveyed", we also need to address the "how can such information be conveyed". The issue is *how* subtitles can be adequately rendered to guarantee acceptability, legibility, readability, synchronicity and relevance so that they will serve the needs of particular addressees with special needs in terms of accessibility.

4.2.1. The importance of determining the profile of SDH receivers

By 'recipients' I do not mean the totality of the people who just happen to have received the product, but that group of the general public that have consciously consumed the product and to which the target product is addressed.

(Karamitroglou, 2000:76)

By introducing the notion of dynamic equivalence in opposition to formal equivalence in his seminal work "Principles of correspondence", Nida (2000 [1964]) calls our attention to the fact that translations must be seen in terms of the audiences they are produced for. 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", thus addressing reception in context. In so doing, Nida has put an emphasis on the reception end of the communication process and has shifted the communication relationship from a sender/receiver to a message/receiver perspective. Schleimacher (1992 [1813]:42) takes the equation from a different angle by saying that "[e]ither the translator leaves the writer alone as much as possible and moves the reader towards the writer, or he leaves the reader alone as much as possible and moves the writer towards the reader". In the second part of this formulation a similar concern for guaranteeing accessibility might be felt, and the role of translation is brought to the fore as that of mediation for a new receiver.

Scholars studying audiovisual translation, such as Gambier (1998, 2003b), Gottlieb (1997a, 2000) and Díaz-Cintas (2001b, 2003b), have also echoed this need for functional adequacy of AVT to audiences' needs. However, not much empirical research has been carried out to provide reliable data that might shed light on the profile of actual receivers. These, when available, usually derive from marketing efforts that aim at characterising audiences for the sake of shares and advertisement campaigns. Such data rarely feeds into other departments, such as those where subtitling is provided. This need for reception studies in audiovisual translation has been underlined by Gambier (2003b:178) and this derives from

the awareness that AVT has unique particularities in terms of reception⁴⁶. Furthermore, if we are to consider subtitling as “translational action” (Vermeer 2000 [1989]:221) that serves 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 translators themselves, are not completely aware of the particular needs of their end-users for not much is given to them in terms of audience design or reception analysis regarding these particular receivers⁴⁷. Very few research projects get to be known by the professionals who actually do the subtitling, a fact that hinders progress towards the improvement of quality standards. Only by knowing the distinctive features of the target audience will translators be reasonably aware of the possible effects their work may produce on their receivers. 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) or, as Nida puts it (2000 [1964]:129), where “the relationship between receptor and message [is] substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message”.

It may be rightfully argued that in the case of Deaf and HoH audiences this is impossible for audiovisual texts are not originally created for people with hearing impairment. Messages are conveyed through two distinct channels of communication that “take place at the same time, thus forming a coherent and cohesive text, a multidimensional unit” (Chaume 1997:316) that is devised, in principle, for addressees who can capture the messages conveyed both by the visual and by the acoustic channels. The fact that the receivers of SDH are significantly different from the addressees of the original text, for reasons that go beyond linguistic differences, makes reception awareness all the more essential for, in

⁴⁶ Even though the need for studies on reception is often mentioned as needed, not many in-depth studies have been carried out. In an effort to analyse the reception of humour, Fuentes (2000) presents us with an illustrative description of the reception of humour in Max brothers’ films. Reference is also due to works by Hatim and Mason (1997), Mayoral (2001), Bartrina (2001) and Chaume (2002b), who speak of the importance of the study of reception.

⁴⁷ Special reference needs to be made to studies conducted by ITC such as *Dial 888: Subtitling for Deaf Children* (Kyle 1996), and *Good News for Deaf People: Subtitling of National News Programmes* (Sancho-Aldridge 1997), where valuable data is made available for the understanding of how deaf viewers react to subtitles; and to more recent work published by De Linde and Kay (1999) and Franco and Araújo (2003) that account for experimental research with deaf audiences.

principle, these receivers are also significantly different from the translators themselves. Ideally, as mentioned before, the translators should aim at producing equivalent effects on their audience as those produced in the target audience of the original. But, as Gutt puts it (1991:384),

[t]his 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 translators working into their mother tongue and translating for an audience with whom they have shared values. But when it comes to subtitling for the Deaf, hearing translators rarely have true knowledge of the cognitive and social environment of their target audience. This might be due to the lack of specific training in the area, or even due to the fact that translators are not aware that their "translation action" is specifically directed towards addressees who do not share their language and/or culture. According to Gutt's approach to relevance (*ibid.*:386):

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, [...], 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 found in SDH. Most often than not, translators have a general idea of who their addressee(s) might be. However, one should bear in mind that, to quote Nord (2000:196), an addressee:

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.

It often happens that, in the case of Deaf and HoH addressees, even the very “concept” might be a second hand construction built upon what is commonly said about them. Unless translators actually interact with Deaf people and actually watch them in the context of viewing audiovisual text, there will be few chances of arriving at a conceptual representation of these addressees that will relate to reality.

Kovačič (1995:376) questions the meaning of reception of television subtitling, to see it as a multilayered construct in which crucial importance is given to 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.

Gambier (2003a: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”, doubtlessly important, particularly when the receivers in our case have characteristics that differentiate them from audiences at large.

In principle, SDH addressees are receivers who have partial or no access to the aural component of the audiovisual text in all its forms - linguistic dimension, paralinguistic features, sound effects and music – for reasons of physical nature. However, this premise alone does not allow one to draw upon the needs or the solutions that this group of people may require in order to gain access to texts that were not originally devised for receivers with similar profiles. Deriving from the four aspects proposed above by Kovačič, further questions need to be answered if we are to come close to the main issues that distinguish SDH from subtitling in general:

- How do the Deaf and the Hard-of-Hearing relate to the world around them?
- Do they perceive sound? If so, how?
- What do they “read” in audiovisual texts?
- How do they read words (subtitles)?
- How much information do they need for meaning to be fully retrieved?
- When are words too much or too many?
- When are they not enough?

Answers to these questions will help translators determine their addressees' profiles with greater accuracy. This will allow them to decide about issues such as how much and which information is to be presented in subtitles; 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).

4.2.2. Gaining access to audiovisual texts

El texto audiovisual es, pues, un constructo semiótico compuesto por varios códigos de significación que operan simultáneamente en la producción de sentido.

(Chaume 2004a:19)

The wish to understand the makings of audiovisual texts as a specific text type has led scholars to summarise their distinguishing features in comparison with the whole array of text types available. Typologies have derived from a number of perspectives focusing on particularities of texts such as their communicative, pragmatic and semiotic dimensions, their subject matter or their medium. Drawing upon Zabalbeascoa's (1997:340) classification of texts "according to mode of perception and the verbal non-verbal distinction", Sokoli (2000:18) synthesises the special nature of audiovisual text as being:

- Reception through two channels: acoustic and visual.
- Vital presence of nonverbal elements.
- Synchrony between verbal and nonverbal elements.
- Appearance on screen – reproducible material.
- Predetermined succession of moving images – recorded material.

Sokoli was only taking conventional films as her stereotype, for some of these features may not be found in instances such as live broadcasts, where the succession of moving images might not be that predetermined. Neither was she considering art films where some of these conventions are deliberately bent for stylistic reasons. On the other hand, the

possibility of reproduction is not exclusive to audiovisual texts. Blandford *et al.* (2001:239) consider reproducibility to be inherent to any text type. "Text" as defined by these scholars is to be seen as "a 'readable' structure of meanings" (*ibid.*), which proves to be a particularly interesting definition when applied to audiovisual texts. One of the distinguishing features of audiovisual texts is precisely the way meaning is structured and "read". Chaume (2004a:19), quoted above, encapsulates the very structure that makes audiovisual texts unique: they are semiotic constructs that create meaning through a variety of codes that interact with each other simultaneously. At times, these codes interact simultaneously or contiguously, but there is no doubt that meaning is only gained through the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations that the variously encoded messages create as they interact with each other. One aspect is however relevant: regardless of the codes to be used and of the ways they may be interrelated, audiovisual texts can only be fully perceived through the interactive conjunction of sound and image that convey verbal and non-verbal messages, thus offering a wide variety of "readings".

In general terms, the audiovisual text may contain codes that are exclusive to its making, often referred to as cinematic or filmic codes, which may include: genre, camerawork (shot size, focus, angle, lens choice, lens movement, camera movement, composition), editing (cuts and fades, cutting rate and rhythm), manipulation of time (compression, flashbacks, flashforwards, slow and fast motion), lighting, colour, sound (soundtrack, music), graphics, and narrative style. Further to these, it may include extracinematic codes which are not unique to this text-type but may be found in other text types as well. Among these, we will find codes pertaining to language, narrative, gesture, and costume. According to Bordwell and Thompson (1997:84), all these codes concur towards the construction of plots, which they say is "everything visibly and audibly present in the film before us". Such plots, in turn, tell us stories that are "the set of all events in the narrative, both the ones explicitly presented and those the viewer infers" (*ibid.*). Stories are told through narrative techniques whose key element "is getting the right balance between plot and story, between the explicit and the implicit" (Blandford *et al.* 2001:227). In other words, audiovisual texts are

all about conveying narratives by structured plots that come across through image, sound and speech.

Reading audiovisual text is therefore a complex process. Receivers of audiovisual materials are simultaneously expected to be viewers, listeners and readers. They need to process information through various levels of de-coding. The whole reception activity is often done in a semi-automatic holistic manner, particularly once de-coding patterns and competence have been acquired. In fact, receivers, who have very little control over the audiovisual text, are expected to follow it at whichever rate is imposed on them. In normal circumstances, they will take a passive stance to their reception activity, being expected to activate all their reception skills to keep up with the polysemiotic messages that are given to them through a variety of sources. While it is possible to determine speed when reading a book or change the tempo of speech through interaction with our interlocutors, it is not natural to impose our will on audiovisual material that has been previously constructed to be presented at a pre-determined speed. In addition, different genres will have different rhythms and speeds. Films with a tight dialogue have often got a slower tempo, whereas films with a lot of action tend to be less wordy than the first. Complexity grows when both tempos are rapid (e.g., disaster movies) and the receiver has to grip multiple messages flashing at different and often high speeds with no real possibility of slowing any of the components.

It is problematic to say that full access to audiovisual texts is ever attained, even in the case of people with no impairment. People naturally select the information that is most relevant to them. As Gambier (2003b:187) puts it:

some viewers prefer to focus on images (iconic attention), others on the plot (narrative attention), or on the dialogue and/or the subtitles (verbal attention). Attention can be active or passive, partial/selective or global, linear or synthetic, etc..

This would seem to justify why reception will always remain a matter of individual choice and of personal interpretative capacity. In accepting the dialectic interaction between the producer and the receiver in the construction of meaning, and in the knowledge that the audiovisual text is a perceptive whole that does not equal the sum of its parts, it comes 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 understanding the messages easier and it is only when there is no direct access to one of the elements, (either for some sensorial impairment or for lack of knowledge of the source language) that audiovisual translation, and subtitles in particular gain importance.

Interlingual subtitles usually bridge the gap between the source language and that of the target audience. Intralingual subtitles, the most common form of SDH, however, sit in for more than speech since 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 of reception rather than adding to the load of decoding effort. Díaz-Cintas (2003a: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.

According to Nida and Taber (1969:198), the "channel capacity" of communication is conditioned by the personal qualities of receivers as well as their cultural background. The narrower the channel capacity, the more redundancy is needed to lighten the communication load.

In the case of subtitled audiovisual texts, disruption can occur at various levels. If the receivers do not master the linguistic codes used in the verbal text, if they do not have adequate reading skills or if they have a physical disability that compromises the perception of a number of encoded signals, reception will be made impossible or too overloaded to allow for any comfort. People with sensorial and/or cognitive impairment will be among those receivers who need greater communicative reinforcement. In the case of the hearing impaired, redundancy, which naturally characterises language and is to be found in all

forms of communication, will have to be concentrated in visual media so that it may be meaningful. To the Deaf and HoH, subtitles are essential, rather than redundant. They are the visual face of sound. For the Hard-of-Hearing 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 complete audiovisual construct. In successful instances, subtitles will be integrated with the original text and even if the receivers do not understand the source language they will be able to complement the reading of subtitles with the paralinguistic information that comes with the tone of voice and with all the other complementary information deriving from sound effects and music. In these cases, as Servais (1972:5) underlines, subtitles do not serve to "complete" our information on the original film, rather they become an integral part of our whole audiovisual perception. However, deaf receivers will only be given a small part of what the audio component contains. The subtitles will only convey a fragment of the acoustic features and even the linguistic elements will only be partially relayed for, as has been said before, there is more to speech than what is conveyed through the linguistic form.

Most SDH solutions in use today do take into account the fact that deaf people do not have full access both to the verbal and non-verbal aural component, and they do add supplementary information to fill in some important aspects of the message that may derive from the non-verbal acoustic coding systems. In some cases, this is done through an exercise of trans-coding⁴⁸, transferring non-verbal messages into verbal codes. This practice often results in an overload of the visual component. It alters the value of each constituent and, above all, adds enormous strain to the reading effort, for much of what hearers perceive through sound needs to be made explicit in writing. The extra effort that has to be put into reading subtitles often bears on the overall reading of the audiovisual text and can

⁴⁸ I do not share Georgakopoulou's (2003:85) notion of transcoding as being "the switch from the spoken to the written medium" for in that case the code is still the verbal code. I see transcoding in the sense of intersemiotic translation as proposed by Jakobson (2000 [1959]:114), where messages are recoded in completely different coding systems.

diminish the enjoyment of watching it for some viewers, a fact which is equally valid for SDH and common subtitling.

In the knowledge that the deaf receiver will have little (or no) access to many of the messages deriving from acoustic codes, the translator, who will need to be a proficient "reader" of intersemiotic text, will re-word both the verbal and non-verbal aural elements and find ways to express them through visual codes, usually written words, although they could also be of a different nature. When subtitling for these specific audiences, it is up to the translator to turn into visual codes both the dialogues that are heard and the sound effects that are only perceived in such a manner that they will be integrated with the whole in as natural a manner as possible.

4.2.3. Readability

Reading the subtitles is more or less automatically initiated behaviour. Subtitles are such a familiar phenomenon that one simply cannot escape reading them.

Gielen and d'Ydewalle (1992:249)

It is common knowledge that reading subtitles is no easy task for most viewers, a fact that is particularly so for people who are not proficient readers in general. It is often found that people with hearing impairment are to be included among those who have difficulty in reading written texts for the reasons that have been explained in chapter II. However, it is believed that subtitling may be of great help for the improvement of linguistic skills, for they may offer reading practice that will revert towards making reading more enjoyable and effective, thus allowing for general improvement of language and communication skills as a whole. Interesting examples of research into this matter may be found in Koolstra's studies on the influence of subtitle reading in children's linguistic and cognitive development. On the one hand, Koolstra *et al.* (1997) suggest that the development of decoding skills is promoted by watching subtitled foreign television programmes. On the

other, Koolstra and Beentjes (1999) have proved that subtitled television programmes seem to provide a rich context for foreign language acquisition. These findings can be easily extrapolated to viewers in general, for learning opportunities are open to them as well.

This notion that subtitling may be a useful pedagogical tool has been emphasised by many researchers who describe the various advantages of using subtitling for didactic purposes. Dollerup (1974), describes the use of interlingual subtitling for foreign language learning. Vanderplank (1988) talks about the use of teletext in order to teach English. Danan (1992) reports on an experiment using 3 viewing methods: French audio only, standard subtitling (English subtitles) and reversed subtitling (English dialogue with French subtitles) for language learning. She concludes that the most successful method is the reversed subtitling arguing that it can be explained by the way translation facilitates foreign language encoding. Díaz-Cintas (1995) discusses the use of subtitling in the teaching of modern languages presenting the argument that it is fun, it uses audiovisual material and exploits skills such as aural, writing and gist summaries, among others. Veiga (2001) discusses the usefulness of subtitle reading for the learning of Portuguese as a foreign language. Neves (2002 and 2004a) draws out on the advantages of using subtitling in translator training. All summed up, there is enough evidence to show that subtitling is, in practice, a valuable asset to education.

Given the fact that subtitles are used, in principle, to make audiovisual text accessible to viewers who would otherwise have limited access to the original text, it appears obvious that one of the main concerns for all those involved in the process will be to make subtitles as readable as possible. To some extent, this task will be in the hands of the translators themselves, but there are aspects that will be determined by the constraints imposed by the medium in use. As a matter of fact, this double facet is implicit in the very term "readable". The *Webster's Dictionary* (1996:1606) defines "readable" as something that is "1. easy or interesting to read; 2. capable of being read; legible", whereas "legible" (*ibid.*:1099) is said to be something that is "1. capable of being read or deciphered, esp. with ease, as writing or printing, easily readable. 2. capable of being discerned or distinguished". At first sight, these two terms seem to be inter-changeable; however, in the interest of this discussion,

and following Gambier's approach (2003b:179), I will see them as complementary rather than the same for the first may be said to focus on content, and the latter, on form. In other words, technical aspects such as font, colour and placement on screen will revert towards legibility, whereas the choice of lexis and syntax will determine the degree of readability. I would like to go further into the discussion by positing that readability may go hand in hand with the very notion of adequacy (*cf.* section 4.2.1) for adequate subtitles will, in the end, be easily read and understood.

But readability will result from more than simply the subtitles themselves. It will be intimately related to the way in which those very subtitles interact with the intersemiotic whole. Subtitles, which are usually made up by strings of words placed at the bottom of the screen, are obtrusive and imposing by nature. Taking a somewhat extreme position, Sinha (2004:174) sees subtitling as "an evil necessity, a product conceived as an after thought rather than a natural component of the film". He was most certainly referring to the habitual use of subtitles, which is most unlike the case of that in films such as Patricia Rosema's debut short *Desperanto* (1991) where subtitles interact with the actors who literally drink them or let themselves be carried away on floating strings of words. Another form of integrated subtitles may be found in films where a second language is spoken, such as in the Australian film *Head On* (1998), where the dialogues spoken in Greek appear with English subtitles for English speaking audiences. Another interesting example of this phenomenon may be found in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994). Whenever Charles (Hugh Grant) speaks to his Deaf brother using sign language, English subtitles come up in the original version for the benefit of English speaking viewers who do not know sign language. At times, this may lead to situations of double translation for there will necessarily be a translation of the subtitles that have been placed in the original text into other languages in the case of interlingual subtitling for foreign publics. Sinha's scepticism is shared by many who prefer dubbing to subtitling and/or who do not really need subtitles in order to access audiovisual messages.

Rich (2004:168), among those in favour of subtitling, believes that "subtitles allow us to hear people's voices intact and give us full access to their subjectivity". In the case of SDH,

subtitles *are* people's voices and are thus expected to offer far more than what is needed by hearers, for these audiences cannot "hear people's voices intact". As far as subjectivity is concerned, sociological pointers that come with tone of voice and inflection, for instance, will never be captured by people with hearing impairment. Further still, all the compositional subjectivity that comes with mood and atmosphere and is most often conveyed through sound effects and music, is also lost to them. In other words, if SDH is to offer as much as possible of what is conveyed through sound, these subtitles will tend to be heavily loaded for their reading will go unaided by redundant information that derives from the aural component. This also means that more information needs to be added for messages to make sense. But the whole issue reduces itself to one main problem: how can so much information be included in subtitles that must keep in sync with the images whilst allowing also for enough reading time?

It is a known fact that Deaf people in general do not enjoy reading very much and are lacking in reading skills that are fundamental to their reading of subtitles, (*cf.* chapter II). Whereas hearers complement their reading of subtitles with the auditory information that is conveyed through paralinguistic and sound effects, the deaf can only count on visual references to support their reading process. This means that they need to capture all the visual messages that derive from facial expression, body language and filmic composition. Whereas hearers process reading with the help of inner speech (Schochat and Stam 1985:46), many Deaf people cannot relate the written word to its aural counterpart, a fact that makes the reading process far more demanding. Another reason why reading subtitles is particularly difficult for this group of people may be found in the fact that many Deaf readers have not developed the skills that allow them to take a step forward from simple word-processing to processing of a higher order such as inferencing and predicting, (often done subconsciously by the hearer), and planning, monitoring, self-questioning and summarizing (metacognitive techniques that are specific to highly skilled readers) (*cf.* Quigley and Paul 1984:112). These skills become particularly useful when reading subtitles for, quite often, the written words can only be understood in view of what can be inferred from or complemented by the various aural and visual cues that accompany the verbal

message. If some of these cues are not perceived, inferencing and predicting will be far more difficult. Furthermore, the fact that subtitles present only a few lines of text at a time, not allowing for back-tracking to previously presented text, makes this reading process even more complex. De Linde and Kay (1999:25) suggest that Deaf people who master a sign language show a better command of reading skills. This would mean that such viewers would find reading subtitles easier. Even though no exact data was collected to substantiate this belief, the study that was carried out with Portuguese Deaf people (*cf.* section 5.2.4.) would seem to confirm this tendency. However, this matter needs further analysis, since people who have a good command of Portuguese Sign Language also reveal difficulty reading subtitles, even though they are far more literate and have greater ease in reading and writing than those who do not master sign language.

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 devising them. Such parameters vary in nature. Some pertain to the audiovisual programme itself (genre and global rhythm, type of action); others to the nature of subtitles (spatial and temporal features; position of subtitles on the screen; pauses between subtitles; density of information); and others still to textual and paratextual features (semantic coherence and syntactic cohesion; register; role of punctuation) (*cf.* Gambier 2003a:31). Further to these constraints many more will derive from factors such as the medium (cinema, VHS/DVD, analogue or digital TV, Web); 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 audience in view. These factors have contributed towards the establishment of different norms that relate to each particular case.

One of the aspects that is highly conventionalised and that is considered to be fundamental to the achievement of readable subtitles is reading speed. It is a fact that, in general, cinema and VHS/DVD subtitles achieve higher reading rates than subtitles on television programmes. This is justified by the fact that cinema goers and DVD users are usually younger and more literate in the reading of audiovisual text (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998:65-66; Diaz-Cintas 2003b:36-43). This means they will devote less processing effort to

integrating the reading of subtitles with their overall film viewing experience. Studies on the way younger and older people watch subtitled television, conducted by d'Ydewalle *et al.* (1989) and Gielen and d'Ydewalle (1992) reveal that older people have more difficulty reading subtitles than younger people. Although the cause for this was not clarified, these specialists attribute it to the fact that growing older is "accompanied by a decreased total available processing capacity" (d'Ydewalle *et al.* 1989:42), which makes it more difficult to split attention between image and subtitles. The doubt remains whether the above mentioned differences are exclusively age bound. It can be argued that other factors, such as educational level, professional experience or subtitle reading habits, will most certainly contribute towards reading performance regardless of the age factor⁴⁹.

Another issue that needs to be taken into consideration is the environmental conditions in which the audiovisual programme is watched. When sitting in a cinema room, people are primarily occupied with watching the movie, a situation that is somewhat similar when watching a film on VHS/DVD. When watching television, people usually divide their attention between the TV screen and what is happening around them. Such distractions will affect their concentration and slow down their reading speed. Quite often, people watch television while carrying out other household activities, meaning that they only direct their attention towards the screen when stimuli, usually acoustic in nature, make them focus. The fact that most of the times people watch television without ensuring an ideal viewing distance or seating position may also have a negative impact in the overall reading experience. Another factor that contributes to greater difficulty in reading subtitles on television may be found on the screen size and on poor picture quality. This often means that the fonts used in subtitles are not very legible, a situation that is particularly felt in closed subtitling. Font types are so important to guarantee legibility that a special type, the Tiresias Screenfont (www.tiresias.org), has been specifically created for digital television in the UK and has also been adopted for European digital television. According to the RNIB (2000) the Tiresias Screenfont:

⁴⁹ In Portugal the age issue is also connected with social and educational opportunities. Many people over 60 have very low educational levels, a factor that is directly linked to the dictatorship in which they were brought up.

has been designed to have characters that are easy to distinguish from each other. The design was carried out, with specific reference to persons with visual impairments, on the philosophy that good design for visually impaired persons is good design for everybody.

This matter of legibility obviously goes beyond typeface. Issues such as positioning of subtitles on the screen and the colours used will determine greater or lesser ease in reading such subtitles. Teletext systems allow for a range of colour mixes that result in a varied degree of legibility. Drawing on a previous study on text display (Silver *et al.* 1995), Silver and fellow researchers (Silver *et al.* 2000) clarify that “recent research using CRT displays has shown that white on black is preferred by the largest number of people, with white on dark blue being the second choice”. The first choice of white on black seems to gain consensus on behalf of most subtitle providers; however it has now become a trend to use different colours to identify speakers or distinguish subtitlers’ comments. I posit that the use of coloured subtitles quite often loads the decoding effort and can become a disruptive instance of noise. Particularly in films and series with many characters, it is found that the colour pallet available is not broad enough to allow for a different colour for each character. This may mean that colours need to be repeated and it often happens that two characters to whom the same colour has been attributed come on screen simultaneously. The problem is usually solved by switching the colour of one of the subtitles, but that obviously causes confusion. In addition, coloured subtitles can lose contrast when placed over colourful images. Given that most films are very colourful, this may be a problem, particularly for people who are partially sighted, a condition that frequently comes hand-in-hand with deafness.

All the issues discussed above need to be seriously addressed if we are to aim at proposing solutions to improve the legibility and readability of subtitles for the Deaf and HoH. To all these concerns, we need to add yet another problematic issue regarding subtitle rates and reading speeds. Luyken *et al.* (1991) suggest that average subtitling reading speeds should be from 150 to 180 words per minute. This number will necessarily vary 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. De Linde and Kay (1997:7) reinforce this norm by saying that

actual subtitle presentation rates vary from company to company but in general correspond roughly to three seconds per line. Depending on programme content, this may be interpreted as about three seconds for a full text line, five to six seconds for two lines, and eight seconds for three lines.

D’Ydewalle *et al.* (1987), who studied the variables that determined subtitle reading speed, support the six second rule on the bases of three findings which seem particularly interesting:

the subjects don’t spend more time in the subtitle when the spoken language is not available [...] reading a written message is faster and more efficient than listening to the same message, as the text still stays on the screen while a spoken voice immediately vanishes [and] subjects reported more problems in reading a subtitle with one line than with two lines (*ibid.*:320-321).

Even though this might suggest that not much difference should be found in terms of Deaf viewers’ subtitle reading rates, d’Ydewalle considers that the 6-second rule should be replaced by a 9-second rule as deaf viewers are typically slow readers (personal communication). If we are to confront this belief with other findings set forth by Koolstra *et al.* (1999) in terms of the longer time taken by children to read subtitles, and the often mentioned fact that deaf adults tend to have the reading ability of a nine-year-old hearing child, then subtitling for these two publics will necessarily call for similar solutions, a belief that is tentatively suggested by de Linde and Kay (1999:6-7).

In Sinha’s words (2004:173), for hearers subtitles might be seen as “*the third dimension*” for they “come from the outside to make sense of the inside”, but for the Deaf, I see them as the other side of sound. They still come from the outside to make sense of the inside but they are the second dimension, and by no means an expendable extra. This makes it all the more essential that these subtitles be as carefully devised as possible so that, through their reading alone, deaf viewers may see and understand the voices they cannot hear.

However contradictory it may seem, true readability will result in “invisible” subtitles in any type of subtitling, for maximum adequacy will make subtitles less distracting, thus allowing

for attention to divide itself between themselves, image and sound. Taking things to the extreme, Thompson (2000) considers that you either “stop reading the subtitles altogether, or conversely, see little of the film except the texts”. Ideally, neither case will happen if subtitles are thoughtfully divided to blend as naturally as possible with sound and image. In the case of SDH, such blending will be improved if subtitles are synchronised with the image, rather than with the sound, thus allowing for redundancy between image and subtitle to take place. This does not mean sound cues are to be completely ignored, it only reinforces the fact that, particularly for people with profound deafness, visual cues are far more effective because they allow the viewer to identify the source of sound and speech, thus making processing far easier. Other strategies may be explored to promote readability and enhance reading speed. Special care in the writing of subtitles reflected in line breaks, subtitle division, clear syntax and careful editing will result in less obtrusive subtitles that will be easier to read and to interrelate with the visual messages. These and other strategies will be reflected in the guideline proposals compiled in *appendix I*, where examples in the Portuguese language will clarify the suggested solutions.

In short, in the case of SDH, where sound is central to the question, the deed will be done when subtitles (1) offer as much of the speech and acoustic information as possible, (2) in the clearest possible manner and all this (3) in perfect synchronicity with the image and (4) at an adequate pace to allow reading to happen. In order to achieve the above mentioned conditions, which will obviously revert towards readability, much needs to be taken into account. All these particular issues will be dealt with in detail in section 4.3.

4.2.4. Verbatim vs. Adaptation

All types of translation involve loss of information, addition of information, and/or skewing of information.

(Nida 1975:27)

When dealing with the issue of readability in section 4.2.3, various problematic notions were brought to the fore that will necessarily need to be readdressed within the context of subtitling for the Deaf and HoH and particularly in view of the discussion to be held around the matter of verbatim or adapted subtitles. Various statements have been made on the way hearers complete their reading of subtitles with their listening of the original soundtrack. It comes as obvious that, to these people, both activities – *i.e.* reading and listening – interrelate to the degree of conditioning each other. Reading subtitles becomes integrated with the overall perception of the audiovisual whole, for the written words are complemented by acoustic information conveyed through paralinguistic features, found in voice inflection, and non-linguistic information, conveyed both through image and sound. Reading is, thus, spurred on by acoustic cues. D'Ydewalle *et al.* (1987:321), suggest that people read faster than they hear. It is also suggested that people tend to read faster when subtitles are longer, and that 2 liners are preferable because less time is spent screening between image and subtitles, allowing for more time to be devoted to subtitle reading. Karamitroglou (1998) complements this information and reinforces the notion that hearers direct their reading through their hearing by suggesting that the reading of subtitles is somewhat determined by the actual cadence of the verbal utterances. He clarifies that

the reason is that viewers expect a correct and faithful representation of the original text and one of the basic means to check this is by noticing if the number of the spoken utterances coincides with the number of the subtitled sentences (*ibid.*).

All these arguments may lead us to think that subtitles ought to be as complete as possible, to the point of believing that, in the case of intralingual subtitles, verbatim subtitles are perfectly readable and desirable. However, these are all questionable issues, even in terms of hearing receivers, but far more so in the case of people with hearing impairment.

Intralingual subtitles are particularly directed towards specific audiences. Bartoll (2004) refers to these subtitles as “transcriptions” which he divides into two groups: “transcriptions aimed at the hard-of-hearing [and] complete transcriptions, aimed at language students or amateur singers (as in the case of karaoke)” (*ibid.*:57). I understand that Bartoll wishes to draw a line between subtitles for impaired hearers and those for language learners. However, except for the word “complete” he presents no real distinction between the two forms of transcription. I cannot see how transcription might not be complete since it can be argued that the moment it is not complete, it will automatically be an adaptation of the original. Drawing upon Nord’s terminology, and still addressing the notion of different addressees and different degrees of “completeness”, Bartoll suggests a new classification of the above mentioned subtitles as “instrumental” or “documental” (*ibid.*), a set of classifiers that seems relevant to the study of SDH. This new dichotomy takes care of a misconception in relation to subtitling for the Deaf and HoH: that SDH is always intralingual (a matter that has been discussed in the introduction and in section 4.1). In addition, Bartoll highlights the functional nature of subtitling for hearing impaired audiences.

With all the above in mind, it needs to be clarified that:

- 1) SDH is not necessarily intralingual;
- 2) Intralingual subtitles are not necessarily for the Deaf and HoH; and
- 3) Intralingual subtitles are not necessarily instrumental.

However, in order to proceed with this discussion, I will consider SDH to be, above all, instrumental and the whole notion of completeness will be addressed in the light of such instrumentality.

Even though it may be necessary to focus on intralingual subtitling in order to discuss the issue of completeness, I do not see the problem as being language-bound. Furthermore, I do not see it in terms of being dictated by technical constraints such as synchrony or space, either. I see it exclusively in terms of adequacy to the real needs of hearing impaired receivers. In my opinion, this means that the whole debate will be more fertile if it focuses

on the issue of adaptation. This also means that the underlying principle of the discussion will reside in my firm belief that “complete transcription” or “verbatim subtitles” cannot be truly adequate to the needs of people with hearing impairment. As a matter of fact, I even question if they may be adequate for hearing receivers in the first place. Even though the arguments set forward by d’Ydewalle’s research teams make one believe that it is possible for hearers to actually read verbatim transcriptions, it would be interesting to check whether they actually “read” the subtitles or whether they skim through them to work at a gap-filling exercise where information from various sources converges towards the composition of meaning.

For the benefit of this discussion, and before discussing the implications of adaptation in SDH, it seems appropriate to look at what is presently seen as “verbatim subtitles” in the profession. “Verbatim”, as addressed here, will be understood as the exact (and complete) written transcription of speech⁵⁰. This simply means taking spoken words into the written mode within the same language. The demand for verbatim transcriptions has become a banner for Deaf associations and movements, who consider any kind of editing as a form of censorship. They defend that equal rights will be achieved when the Deaf are given exactly the same information as that which hearers get when watching television or other audiovisual materials.

Initially, the issue of verbatim subtitling was intrinsically connected to live subtitling and particularly so to news broadcasting. In the following quote, Erard (2001) comments on the way subtitling rates have increased in the USA:

In the early days even high-quality captions used simple grammar and assumed a slow reading speed (120 words or so per minute), because the deaf were thought to be poor readers. Consequently, a lot of material was left out. In the late 1980s the deaf community lobbied for captions closer to verbatim. Now says Jeff Hutchins, the executive vice-president of planning at VITAC, “the job of the captioner is to convey all the information that the hearing person gets.” Today captions sometimes reach 250 words a minute.

⁵⁰ Columbia Tristar has a video collection called *Speak Up* where speech is transcribed with exactness. These videos are aimed at people learning English.

These rates are also flagged by companies providing live subtitling solutions as part of their achievement. In most cases, such subtitles use the scroll up or paint-on technique which makes them more difficult to read. An initial question needs to be posed at this point. If interlingual subtitling (for hearers) has a reading speed which hovers around the 170-180wpm, and editing is often done so that subtitles keep to such rates to ensure reading time, how sensible is it to present subtitles at higher rates? It may be argued that these rates are used in news reports where most often the newsreader is static and there isn't much action to distract people from reading the subtitles. This might indeed be true when the reporter is reading the information at the news desk; however, it is often the case that live reports from the exterior are rich in action and motion, thus placing extra strain on the reception end. Even though it may be arguable that people read faster than what they hear because speech has pauses and fillers that do not appear in the subtitles, it is still questionable if viewers in general can keep up with the speech rates that are used in many live broadcasts of news events. If we are to take into account what was mentioned in section 4.2.3, subtitled news bulletins are shown on television at times of the day when there is often so much going on in people's houses (lunch time and dinner time) that it makes it even more difficult for people to concentrate on what they are seeing and reading on the screen.

Although many television broadcasters are still pushing for verbatim subtitling in their news programmes, this seems to be quite an inadequate situation. This belief is substantiated by empirical research that proves that verbatim transcription does not guarantee true accessibility. Sancho-Aldridge and IFF Research Ltd (1996:24) provides evidence of such a circumstance in their conclusions to the ITC report *Good News for Deaf People: Subtitling of National News Programmes*, when they state that:

For many deaf people verbatim subtitling was a political, rather than a practical issue. There was a need to disentangle the politically sensitive issue of 'access' from the practical issue of which style, in real terms, provided deaf viewers with most information.

In the body of the report, this conclusion is effectively explained:

Whether news subtitles should provide a verbatim or summarised account was a politically sensitive issue. Many deaf people felt they should have the same information as everyone else. Initially, over half (54%) the respondents said they wanted word-for-word subtitles, while 33% opted for summarised (13% had no preference). When respondents were asked to consider the practical difficulties of reading word-for-word subtitles however, 10% fewer chose them, resulting in an even division between the two methods – word-for-word (45%) versus summary (43%) (*ibid.*:7).

I absolutely agree with the remark that “it is one thing to believe in the principle that news subtitles should provide full information, and quite another actually to access verbatim subtitles” (*ibid.*:22) for there is more than enough evidence to show that such a situation is quite unrealistic. Studies with Deaf television viewers in Portugal, conducted within this research, proved that they had difficulty following subtitles at a rate of 180 wpm that had been pre-recorded and devised with special care to ensure greater readability, *i.e.*, with careful line breaks and synchrony with image. Matters got worse when these viewers read subtitles that had not been devised with special parameters in mind.

Araújo (2004:211) reports on similar findings as a result of two studies which were designed and tested in Brazil by saying that “the two reception studies carried out so far demonstrated that condensation and editing are key elements in enabling deaf viewers to enjoy a better reception of subtitled programmes.”

Although these studies provide sufficient evidence to make the whole issue of verbatim subtitling questionable, it seems to bear very little on actual practices. The trend towards producing more verbatim subtitles has also moved to the area of pre-recorded and pre-prepared subtitling, both on television and in other media. Those in favour of verbatim transcriptions defend that many deaf people aid their reading of subtitles with lip-reading and, as Kyle (1996) puts it, “there is a belief that the precise words spoken are the key to the story, then the deviations from the spoken word will be very evident.” But even this seems to be a weak argument if we take into account that only few audiovisual programmes dwell upon faces for long enough for successful lip-reading to take place. However, most DVDs offering subtitling for the hearing impaired have close-to-verbatim subtitles with high subtitle rates. Even though DVD viewers are likely to be younger and

more film literate than the average TV viewer, it cannot be forgotten that even younger deaf people have usually lower reading speeds than their hearing peers. As De Linde and Kay (1999:12) remind us, "Deaf people are at a disadvantage on two accounts; not only are their reading levels lower than average but their breadth of knowledge is also restricted by a limited access to information throughout their education".

Once again, the issue gains further complexity when no clear distinction is made between Deaf and hard-of-hearing receivers. As has already been mentioned, there are great differences between being prelingually deaf or postlingually deaf and then too, between people with different types and degrees of deafness and with people who have followed different communicative and educational approaches. By providing a set of subtitles for all we risk the chance of not catering for the needs of any. Most reported studies on subtitle reception have been carried out within the context of Deaf communities, leading one to address the issue in the light of reactions of people who do not have an oral language as their mother tongue. As suggested by many scholars dealing with deafness, and repeated by De Linde and Kay (1999:21), deaf children who are exposed to effective communication at an early age will become better readers. This means that deaf people who have acquired a form of structured language will be more proficient and able to communicate effectively for they will have gained some form of "inner speech". With the gradual changes in the education of deaf children, there are reasons to believe that in the future things will improve and deaf people will be more literate. However, at present, and taking a diversity of factors into account, a great number of deaf viewers do not have the necessary skills to keep up with the reading of subtitles at the rate that some of them are offered.

An issue here is that hearing impaired people seldom acknowledge that they cannot keep up with the reading speeds imposed by some subtitles. This happens because even people with low reading skills use compensation techniques to enhance their comprehension. Although they do not read the subtitles effectively, and they do miss out on parts of the message, they usually manage to proceed with selective reception techniques, a practice that is common in all types of communicative interaction. One only becomes aware of the amount of information that is left out when objective questioning takes place and it

becomes obvious that important information was not adequately received. Further research needs to be carried out in this domain, both with deaf and hearing viewers for it is believed that this situation might not be exclusive to hearing impaired receivers but common among all types of audiovisual text receivers.

Kyle (1996) confirms much of the above in the light of the research project *Switched On: Deaf People's Views on Television Subtitling*:

Speed remains an issue and one which cannot easily be solved. If presenters and actors speak fast, then the subtitles will be faster if they are to keep up. Where the personal reading level is lower, the viewer may be unable to watch subtitles and see the programme images. They will tend to suggest that they have been reading the programme and not watching it.

All said, I advocate that serious thought be devoted to the implications of verbatim subtitling. It may be true that with speech recognition technology verbatim subtitling will be in order⁵¹. It may even be a welcome solution to many who believe that then equal opportunities will finally be achieved. The results of the various empirical research projects that have been carried out within this research give me reasons to affirm that verbatim subtitles offer reading problems to hearing and deaf receivers alike. Greater difficulty will obviously be felt by those with weaker reading skills, among whom many deaf viewers will inevitably be placed.

This statement opens up a new issue. By assuming that editing or adapting is always in order to achieve readable subtitles, there is a need to address the ways and degrees to which such changes may be made. Distinctions are now made between "near-verbatim", "edited" and "adapted" subtitles. The industry and Deaf organizations seem to simply allow for verbatim, near-verbatim or edited subtitles. This last approach appears to be exclusively applied when dealing with programmes for younger publics. This position may be found in statements such as the following by the NIDCD (2002):

Captions can be produced as either edited or verbatim captions. Edited captions summarize ideas and shorten phrases. Verbatim captions include all of what is said. Although there are situations in which edited captions have been preferred for ease in reading (such as for children's programs),

⁵¹ At present, in speech-to-text technology there is still space for the manipulation of text in the process of respeaking.

most people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing prefer the full access provided by verbatim texts.

The concern for minimal interference with the original oral text is also obvious in comments such as this by WGBH (2001):

When editing becomes necessary because of limited reading time, try to maintain precisely the original meaning and flavour of the language as the personality of the speaker. Avoid editing only one single word from a sentence as this does not really extend reading time. Similarly, avoid substituting one longer word for two shorter words (or a shorter word for a longer word) or simply making a contraction from two words (e.g. "should not" to "shouldn't").

The *ITC Guidance on Standards for Subtitling* (1999:4) presents a different view of what might be done to improve readability. Instead of proposing verbatim or near-verbatim subtitling, ITC offers the following guideline as one of the priorities in subtitling:

Without making unnecessary changes to the spoken word, construct subtitles which contain easily-read and commonly-used English sentences in a tidy and sensible format.

This proposal would seem to justify adaptation, for most oral speech does not come in a "tidy and sensible format". Orality tries to mitigate the effect of external noise through reiteration and reinforcement, which often results in utterances that are more inferential than explicit and, quite often, untidy or, in extreme cases, ungrammatical. Any change that may go beyond simple editing, which I interpret as being the clipping of redundant features and the reduction of affordable information, will necessarily fall into the category of adaptation. As it is, simple editing may result in the loading of the reading effort.

Reducing the amount of information is not, in my opinion, the way out to justify this need for extra processing time. Reduction is often achieved through the omission of accessory information or, as stated by Hatim and Mason (2000 [1997]:431) by sacrificing certain aspects of interpersonal pragmatics and politeness features.

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 greater processing effort on

behalf of the reader/viewer. In effect, subtitling goes against the grain of most translatory practices in that, rather than drawing out, 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 reading rather taxing, particularly to 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 restraint and excess. Economy cannot be had if it is at the expense of meaning. There are priorities when subtitling for these particular audiences: 1) Bring through the same proposition as fully as possible; 2) in as readable a manner as possible; and then only, 3) in as condensed a form as possible. Quite often, extra reading time might have 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 with sound or image and having subtitles coming in a little earlier or staying on a little longer, thus adding to reading comfort.

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 (facial expressions, postural and proxemic signs, gestures, and even some linguistic features, such as fillers (e.g., *ummm*) "are likely to be the most cross-culturally interpretable" (Cruse 2000:8), but also the source of potential 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 their full reach. Whenever such signs have informative value, there seems to be a need for explicitation, considered by Toury as one of the "universals of translation" (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 straight forward to describe, but expressing those messages that are conveyed through the tone of voice (irony, sadness, irritation, happiness, *etc.*), 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 their true selves in spite of their words. This could mean that adding extra information might alter the intended pace of the narrative or cut down on the tension. Finding adequate solutions for the problem is a challenge for those working in the area. While the introduction of paralinguistic information 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.

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 adequate phrasal breaks (not separating on to different lines the article from the noun, for instance), will ease comprehension and make the reading of subtitles far more effective. This does not mean, of course, that Deaf people cannot cope with complex vocabulary. Actually, subtitles may be addressed as a useful means to improve the reading skills of Deaf viewers, as well as an opportunity to enrich both their active and passive vocabulary. However, difficult vocabulary should only be used when put to some useful purpose, and provided there is enough available time for the processing of meaning. This principle could also apply to all sorts of subtitling. When talking about interlingual subtitling, Ivarsson and Carroll (1998:89) remind us that “it is easier for viewers to absorb and it takes them less time to read simple, familiar words than unusual ones”; and, 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. Transcribing every utterance, is not, in my view, serving the needs of this particular audience. Not having enough time to read subtitles; not having useful time 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, might mean achieving functional relevance for the benefit of the target audience. Borrowing Reiss's terminology (2000 [1971]:161), in subtitling for the Deaf and HoH we need to make "intentional changes" for our readers are definitely not those intended for the original text. In order to widen accessibility for those who cannot hear, we need to strive for "adequacy of the TL reverbalization in accordance with the 'foreign function'" (*ibid.*) that is being aimed at. Gutt (1991:377) also sheds light on this issue when he states:

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.

All said, there are reasons to reinforce the belief that adaptation is in order if we want to ensure greater accessibility to subtitled programmes. Even though the circumstances in which live subtitling takes place do not permit the adaptation of subtitles to the degree that might be achieved in pre-recorded subtitles, there should be a conscience that verbatim subtitling might not be an ideal solution. "Tidying up" may mean more than simple editing, and editing alone may not be sufficient to guarantee full access to the audiovisual message. This should be seen as a field for further research and a challenge to speech recognition technology. Subtitling requires more than language transfer, it needs

language processing. Messages will need to be decoded and re-encoded, perhaps in another mode or in another linguistic system. If subtitling is to be “instrumental”, speech will necessarily need to be adapted to a written format that will suit the needs of these specific addressees.

4.2.5. Translation and adaptation (Transadaptation)

In translation, one translates texts; in interpreting one interprets people. What do we do when we subtitle?

(Gambier 2003a:28)

By advocating adapted subtitles as the best way to guarantee fuller access to audiovisual texts to people with hearing impairment, it seems pertinent to start by clarifying that, for some authors, adaptation is not exclusive to SDH but a feature that is shared with (interlingual) subtitling (for hearers). This is defended by Nir (1984:91) who places all the language transfer that occurs in subtitling under the sphere of adaptation:

the transfer of the original dialogues to printed captions involves a triple adaptation: translating a text into a target language (interlanguage conversion), transforming a spoken utterance into a written text (intermedia conversion), and finally reducing the discourse in accordance with the technical constraints of projection time and width of screen.

Díaz-Cintas (2003a:194), opposes the idea of using the term *adaptation* to refer to interlingual subtitling, considering that the term *translation* should be ample enough “to subsume new and potential translation activities within its boundaries”.

The meaning that I propose for the word *adaptation* in this context is quite different from that offered by Nir and needn’t be seen as contradictory to Díaz-Cintas’ position, for it basically stems from the intention to make a subtitled text adequate to the needs of a special public. In the case of SDH this means that whichever the language shift (intralingual or intralingual) involved, whenever special care is taken to adjust subtitling, in more than purely linguistic terms, to the needs of these audiences, more than translation is required.

As shown in chapter III, it is essential to reinforce the notion that we are placing together two different groups of addressees that would require quite distinct subtitling solutions should it be commercially viable to cater for the needs of each group in particular. Furthermore, we must also keep it in mind that, when referring to the Deaf, we are addressing people whose mother tongue is a sign language and who read subtitles as their second language. However questionable this may be, the Deaf see themselves as members of a distinct cultural and linguistic community, even if much is necessarily shared with the hearing communities with whom they interact socially. When referring to the Hard-of-Hearing we are clearly referring to people who have enough residual hearing to make it possible for them to perceive certain amounts of sound and partake of the national oral language as their native tongue. A last element that needs to be brought into the equation is the fact that translators and subtitlers, in general, do not share the same cultural context as that of their Deaf receivers. This places these professionals in the awkward position of producing a text for receivers whose cultural, linguistic and even physical conditions are substantially different from their own. This means that, in the case of interlingual SDH, translators are transferring messages between two different cultures without belonging to either of them. This situation may be seen as an extreme incarnation of what Hatim and Mason (1990:1) mean when they state that:

In creating a new act of communication out of a previously existing one translators are inevitably acting under the pressure of their own social conditioning while at the same time trying to assist the negotiation of meaning between the producer of the source-text (ST) and the reader of the target-text (TT), both of whom exist within their own, different social frameworks.

It is never enough to reinforce the fact that it is essential to know and understand the receivers' profile so as to produce an adequate text. In this case, in order to know what and how to adapt when subtitling, it is fundamental to understand how deaf people (in the broadest of senses) perceive the world and relate to the audiovisual text.

All this makes us understand that what is now at stake is not the translation act, *per se*, but the effect such an act will place on the reception of an original text. It does not make much sense to think in terms of a target text and a source text in audiovisual translation. In the

case of texts with interlingual subtitling there is a superimposition of the translation over the audiovisual original and in that of intralingual subtitling there is a superimposition of a written rendering of speech (and sometimes an intersemiotic translation of sound) over an original object that maintains itself intrinsically untouched. This means that subtitles will not be seen as a substitution of an original text but as a substitution or complement of the acoustically encoded messages within a multi-coded whole. It may be argued that in interlingual subtitling (for hearers) all that is translated is the verbal content. It is true that, in order to translate words in an audiovisual text, there is a need to de-code messages that may be conveyed through other codes. And then again, such translation will always need to take linguistic and cultural elements into account in the knowledge that, to quote Ménacère (1999:346), "one way that culture is accessed and appreciated is through the medium of language, and in turn language is the main carrier for its voice and expression". Notwithstanding, what is actually translated is only a small part of the whole audiovisual construct. In some cases, the linguistic component may be of lesser importance in the overall cinematic construct, and even so, it will be the only element to undergo translatorial action.

In the case of SDH, translation will happen at two levels. On the one hand, with interlingual SDH, it will happen in the transfer between two different languages. On the other hand, intersemiotic translation will occur when non-linguistic acoustic messages are translated into verbal messages in the written mode. In intralinguistic SDH, the transfer between languages is not in order but there is still (intersemiotic) translation when comments on sound effects are included. These instances of translation alone are not enough to characterise the adaptation effort in SDH. In whichever situation, interlinguistic or intralinguistic subtitling, different degrees of adaptation will be needed in order to make subtitles both readable and meaningful to people who cannot perceive sound fully and thus cannot complement their reading of the visual components with acoustic cues.

It is within this context that I see SDH as "transadaptation". I do not use the term as it is used by Gambier (2003a and 2003b) to refer to all types of language transfer within audiovisual translation, neither do I use it to refer to instances of intertextuality (Gambier

2004). I use it, in a very limited sense, to refer to a subtitling solution that implies the *translation* of messages from different verbal and non-verbal acoustic codes into verbal and/or non-verbal visual codes; and the *adaptation* of such visual codes to the needs of people with hearing impairment so as to guarantee readability and thus greater accessibility.

Transadaptation can be best achieved in pre-recorded subtitling, for it calls for the manipulation of language, an activity that is time consuming and that calls for strategies that cannot be readily applied in live subtitling. The underlying principles, however, could be applied to every type of SDH for there are solutions that could be carried out with a certain degree of automation. Small changes often result in the improvement of subtitling standards and make reading far easier. If it may be difficult in live subtitling (or even undesirable) to adapt the content, adaptation could happen at a surface or syntactic level. Simple actions such as careful line breaks and punctuation or the introduction of cohesive devices can mean greater ease in the reading of the subtitles.

In short, the translation and adaptation efforts which I here include within a new notion of transadaptation will imply the linguistic transfer of messages across borders, pertaining to languages and codes, in search of an optimal conveyance of the full meaning potential of an original audiovisual text to receivers with hearing impairment.

4.2.6. Linguistic transfer of acoustic messages

At the same time, text represents choice. A text is 'what is meant', selected by the total set of options that constitute what can be meant. In other words, text can be defined as actualised meaning potential.

(Halliday 1978:109)

In order to focus on the different variants that concur towards the transfer of meaning that happens through SDH, it may be useful to recall what we take an audiovisual text to be and what subtitling in general implies. I understand audiovisual text to be the result of the interaction of multi-coded messages that come together, through redundancy or divergence, as essential and indispensable parts of a meaningful whole. This means that the full text will comprise sub-texts that may be seen as independent in their making but that are interlinked so as to build a perceivable cohesive construct. The inability to receive any such messages may imply the disruption of the communication act implied in the polysemiotic text. If an audiovisual product is to be read as "text" it will need to guarantee the five properties that Halliday (2002 [1981]:222) sees as essential to text: structure, coherence, function, development and character.

It is my understanding that SDH, as any other type of text, must guarantee that these five properties remain intact in the final text. In the case of SDH, and keeping in mind that the final text also contains the original text, what is desired is the re-establishment of the properties that may have been originally encoded through acoustic elements. Such properties will have been lost, however, by those who cannot access acoustically encoded messages.

Still within a Hallidayan systemic functionalist approach, it needs to be said that SDH will always result in negotiated meaning(s). In the de-wording/re-wording process inherent to translation, meanings are actualised and offered as new meaning potential. This implies that, in principle, through the action of a mediator (translator), the receiver will be able to reconstruct the meanings of the original text(s) as set forth by its initial sender (the film/programme director) so that they may confer meaning potential to specific receivers. It

is here that, by knowing their addressees' profile, translators will be able to fill in what may be obscured to the receiver for reasons of physical, cognitive, social and/or linguistic nature.

In general terms, the translator will have to reconstruct verbal messages, taking them from the oral to the written mode, making the necessary changes (adaptations) to allow for reading to take place in a natural manner. This is a concern for all types of subtitling, but a bigger matter for SDH because a great number of people with hearing impairment have poor reading skills. It is often the case that translators will need to integrate and/or explicitate paralinguistic information that may reinforce or alter the meaning of the spoken words in their oral form. And finally, all the messages that are conveyed through the soundtrack (voice identification and source, sound effects and music) will need to be identified, interpreted and re-encoded in a visual manner. These elements that apparently fall outside the sphere of linguistic transfer must be brought into it for, as posited by Bell and Garrett (1998:3), "the music and sound effects of modern media can act in similar ways to prosodic features in spoken texts – grouping items, marking boundaries, indicating historical periods or distant locations, and so on".

In SDH, both verbal and non-verbal acoustic messages will be subjected to linguistic transfer that will need to ensure that the final text will continue to show structure, coherence, function, development and character. However, these particularities will need to be evident, not to people in general, but to the hearing impaired. And this is where the main problem resides. Hearing translators will need to find ways to make a final "soundless" audiovisual text still convey all the meanings that were contained in the original text with all the sound elements included. As mentioned in section 4.2.2, to the profoundly deaf, subtitles do not complement sound, they substitute sound itself. This means that, in order to substitute sound in its function, translators need to know what function sound plays in the polymorphic text.

Most of the time, hearers make very little effort to process sound. Sound is taken for granted and not much thinking is needed to attribute meaning to the common sounds that inhabit their lives. It is easy to identify sound as belonging to a person (female / male adult

or child) or to an animal. Sounds gain certain connotations and familiar sounds even go without hearing. Silence is often more difficult to endure than sound because modern societies live in noisy atmospheres. It also happens that, at times, sound is not meaningful at all, it is just there and until it gains a function, it goes unheard or is simply perceived as noise. Music, however, holds a different place in the world of hearers. It has a function, it is consciously created and used instrumentally to produce a number of effects. Often enough, music is not used to convey messages but to produce contexts, such as particular moods. In those circumstances, music is hardly perceived as such, it is assimilated in the form of atmospheres, and the words or even the rhythm and melody become secondary to the overall ambience that is produced. Still within the realm of sound, speech is the most complex of all sound systems. It contains linguistic and paralinguistic information that hearers interrelate in their de-coding effort. Here, too, voice quality, tone, pitch and cadence convey implied meanings that hearers unravel to different degrees of proficiency thanks to de-coding tools that are gained through social interaction.

Given that audiovisual texts are formal constructs that result from multiple production efforts, every element plays an important role in their make-up. As happens with most elements used in the composition of audiovisual texts, sound plays a significant part in their narrative force. In audiovisual texts sound comes in the form of speech (linguistic and paralinguistic components), natural sounds, background sound effects and/or music. Unlike speech, that requires cognitive effort to be decoded, sound effects and instrumental music convey meanings in a discreet way. According to Monaco (1977:179), "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".

Branigan (1984:99) actually considers sound to be far more meaningful than image in films because:

Sound draws our attention to a particular motion-event and thus achieves a greater "intimacy" than light because it seems to put the spectator directly in touch with a nearby action through a medium of air which transverses space, touching both spectator and represented event.

Contrary to speech and to some paralinguistic features pertaining to oral expression, sound and music need no translation when the receivers are hearers. A hearer will quite easily pick up the suggested meanings transmitted through sound effects that often underline images and/or sustain them, guaranteeing continuity and connectivity. Processing music in films is somewhat more difficult. However, hearing viewers have grown to understand filmic conventions and have come to associate musical types with certain genres and 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 meanings are strongly felt even if its existence is subtle and little more than a suggestion. Its function is multifarious and a key element in filmic language. Kivy (1997:322) describes the function of music in films in the following way:

These more subtle cues that may be lost in the filmic image, even when it speaks, and the absence of which the audience "feels", "senses", "intuits" as an emotive vacuum, a vacuum that [...] music helps to fill. [...] It warms the emotional climate, even though it cannot substitute for the emotive cues that are lost.

It cannot be denied that modern audiovisual texts depend greatly on their soundtrack. Even silent movies were all but soundless. Further to the explanations that were provided by a commentator, piano music and later orchestral music was, from early times, a fundamental element in the cinematic experience. The development of technology has allowed sound to be incorporated to great degrees of sophistication and modern films of all genres have exploited sound to heightened effects. Film producers have become perfectly aware that all investment in the perfecting of sound effects to be given to cinema goes through potent Dolby Surround systems mean profit in the end. This shows that the full potential of sound has been understood by cinema makers and its commercial exploitation has often led to the sale of CDs with the soundtracks of films.

Monaco (1977:182) talks of the compositional interplay of sound in movies by saying that "it makes no difference whether we are dealing with speech, music, or environmental sound: all three are at times variously parallel or counterpunctual, actual or commentative,

synchronous or asynchronous”, and it is in this interplay that filmic meaning grows beyond the images and the whole becomes artistically expressive.

In order to proceed with linguistic transfer of acoustic messages, translators 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. In so doing they will be making the best translation possible, which, to quote Forster’s words (1958:6), “fulfills the same purpose in the new language as the original did in the language in which it was written”. If we are to transpose this notion to the context of sound, subtitles will need to serve the purpose of the acoustic component of the audiovisual text in all its effects.

Although it may be difficult to find words that fully convey the expressive force of sound, the translator should try to produce an equivalent narrative and aesthetic effect that will be meaningful to people who might have never perceived sound before. But most important of all, translators will need to see how these elements interact with speech, explicitly or implicitly modifying the spoken words, and with the images that go with them. They must be aware that silences are equally meaningful because they are intentionally built into the audiovisual construct. They must listen to every nuance so that intentional effects may be conveyed as fully as possible. All these matters will be fully discussed in section 4.3.

4.2.7. Relevance

[A]ctual translation work, however, is pragmatic; the translator resolves for the one of the possible solutions which promises a maximum of effect with a minimum of effort.

(Levý 2000 [1967]:156)

Transadaptation, as proposed in part 4.2.5, stems from the awareness that, in order to provide a service to the hearing impaired, there is a need to translate and to adapt audiovisual texts in special ways so that they may be meaningful and fully accessible to such receivers. In 4.2.6, it became clear that the greatest effort should be made to turn all

the verbal and non-verbal messages visible so that they may be integrated with the visual component of the audiovisual text. All this has to be seen in the light of how non-visual messages might be literally “read” in the form of subtitles thus guaranteeing true accessibility to those who would otherwise only gain partial access to audiovisual texts.

This aim to facilitate the reception of “foreign” works is not new to Translation Studies and much has been said about issues such as fidelity, literal *versus* free translation and communicative *versus* semantic translation, among others. In this context, it appears obvious that the direction to be taken is that in which all is done so that reception may be easier, more enjoyable and rewarding. Even though full respect is due to the original text, which remains present at the point of reception, there is no doubt that the primal aim of SDH will always be found in the achievement of “equivalent effects”, thus allowing people with hearing impairment to enjoy audiovisual texts (in any language) as their hearing counterparts might do.

Nida’s notion of dynamic equivalence (2000 [1964]:136) as “the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message” seems most appropriate to what is sought in SDH. It may seem quite unnatural to transcode acoustic messages into visual signs for these are intrinsically different in the form they communicate messages. Naturalness will necessarily be bound to the fact that sound itself is not “natural” to the deaf. By finding different, yet equivalent solutions to render the acoustic messages in the original text, translators will need to find a way to make such information blend in naturally with the visual component of the still present original text, whilst guaranteeing that all that is written in the subtitles makes sense, and is thus relevant, to their receivers. In SDH this balance is hard to achieve. Translating contextually occurring sound and music into written language will demand transcoding expertise that will pull the translator between the intended meaning of the acoustic messages, their function in the text and the effect any rendering may produce on the deaf viewer. The achievement of what Nida calls a “natural rendering” (*ibid.*) will be a difficult aim, particularly because relevance is receptor bound, and most translators doing SDH seldom truly understand their receivers’ socio-cultural context. Nida (*ibid.*) clarifies what is expected of such “natural” renderings by saying that they “must fit (1) the receptor

language and culture as a whole, (2) the context of the particular message, and (3) the receptor-language audience". The whole focus is definitely on the way the receivers perceive the message and much less on the way that message resembles the original.

This concern for the receiver has been taken further by Gutt (2000:378) who advocates relevance as a prime of translation. To this respect this scholar posits that translation should resemble the original:

only in those respects that can be expected to make it adequately relevant to the receptor language audience. They determine also that the translation should be clear and natural in expression in the sense that it should not be unnecessarily difficult to understand.

Drawing upon Levý's "minimax effect" (2000 [1967]:156), where minimal effort should result in maximum effect, Gutt (2000:377) reinforces this priority by expressing that translation must be done "in such a manner that it yields the intended interpretation without putting the audience to unnecessary processing effort". Gutt (*ibid.*:390) describes the importance of the minimax effect within the context of interpreting because of the physical immediacy involved, clarifying that:

since the stream of speech flows on, the audience cannot be expected to sit and ponder difficult renderings – otherwise it will lose the subsequent utterances; hence it needs to be able to recover the intended meaning instantly.

This is most certainly equally valid within the context of subtitling in general, and of SDH in particular. Subtitling has often enough been placed along-side interpreting for the time constraints it implies (Luyken *et al.* 1991; Gambier 1994; Gottlieb 1994a and 1994b; Díaz-Cintas 2001b:127; Neves 2004b). In the case of SDH this is even more evident for poorer reading abilities may require the expenditure of more time to decipher difficult renderings, leaving less time to enjoy the overall effect.

The issue of relevance will also take us to the issue of verbatim or adapted subtitles (section 4.2.4.). Quite often, speech is rounded with semantically irrelevant fillers that are used to gain time or to compensate for the loss of coherence and cohesion. In other occasions, speech is elliptical and leaves out information that needs to be inferred by the interlocutor. Simply transcribing speech or even editing a little so as to obtain near-verbatim subtitles

might not be a way towards guaranteeing equivalence or, in effect, relevance. Achieving equivalent effect may require editing, re-phrasing or even adding information. This may come as a nuisance to hearers or those hard-of-hearing viewers who will easily identify such changes, but it will be most useful to those who cannot rely on sound at all to understand audiovisual texts.

In so saying, we are facing a problem that SDH has not been able to solve, for the reasons that have been amply discussed in section 4.1. Should it be possible to provide a variety of subtitling solutions for every programme, then the theory of relevance could be exploited to the full. As it is, one can only wish for relative relevance or at least minimal relevance and hope that the subtitles on offer will be functional to the greater possible number of hearing impaired people. Recalling Kussmaul's functional approach (1995:149), it is clear that by aiming towards functionality, translators will need to determine which functions of the source text "can be preserved or have to be modified or even changed".

Deciding what is expendable is one of the main tasks of any translator working on interlingual subtitling for hearers. Kovačič (1991:409) presents the issue as one where translators need to decide upon what is indispensable, partly dispensable and completely dispensable. Partial reductions, in the form of condensation, and total reductions, in the form of deletions, come as feasible ways to reduce processing load. However, condensation or deletions are not always synonymous to cost-benefit. These may even result in an extra load, putting at a loss any effort to ease reception. Often, when condensing and deleting, important cohesive devices are sacrificed and redundancy is dangerously reduced. If a film or programme with SDH is to come across as audiovisual text (in spite of the exclusion of sound), it has to retain or even reinforce its basic properties, mentioned in 4.2.5. The subtitles must fill in all that might be necessary to make the viewing event a relevant experience. When deciding upon what to retain, condense, omit or even add, the translator will have to see how the differently coded messages, subtitles and image, hold together in a cohesive and coherent manner so that they may be read as one, rather than as two independent texts.

4.2.8. Cohesion and Coherence

Dans un sous-titrage, on sait qu'on ne peut pas tout dire. Un double choix est donc nécessaire. D'abord éliminer de la phrase ce qui n'est pas indispensable à l'intelligence du texte et de la situation. Ensuite, dans ce qu'on a conservé, employer la forme la plus concise sans pour cela nuire à la syntaxe ou au style.

(Caillé 1960:109)

So that subtitles may perform their function with effectiveness, it is essential that they maintain paradigmatic and syntagmatic coherence and cohesion within the whole. Such parameters have necessarily to be viewed in the light of the needs of those who only rely on visual access to the audiovisual text. This fact provides us with another basic working premise: coherence and cohesion must be guaranteed through visual codes alone.

In order to move on towards the makings of coherence and cohesion in audiovisual texts it seems useful to see how these may be found in written texts. If we address (written) text as a semantic and pragmatic unit in the first place, it requires phrases to be connected through logical surface elements that will guarantee that the text maintains its texture, *i.e.*, cohesion. The use of lexical (reiteration, repetition, synonymy and collocation) and grammatical (reference, ellipsis/substitution and conjunction) cohesive devices will guarantee that the text stands together as a whole. But as Halliday (2002 [1981]:223-224) reminds us, it is not enough for texts to be cohesive, they also need to be coherent, and the presence of cohesive ties is not by itself a guarantee of a coherent texture. To this, Halliday (*ibid.*:224) adds that, in order to achieve coherence there has to be:

not merely parallel currents of meaning running through the text, but currents of meaning intermingling in a general flow, some disappearing, new ones forming, but coming together over any stretch of text in steady confluence of semantic force.

These notions can be easily transposed to audiovisual text if we consider that all the components of image and sound are semantically charged and syntactically bound. Metz (1992a [1968]:174) adds that "although each image is a free creation, the arrangement of these images into an intelligible sequence – cutting and montage – brings us to the heart of the semiological dimension of film". This meaningful dimension derives from the

relations that sequences establish among themselves and the way each one is structured within itself. Syntagmatic coherence will be guaranteed through compositional devices and, post-production editing will cater for sequential coherence by working on montage. The whole will gain full cohesion when paradigmatic relations between sequences are established. Cohesion will derive from theme-rheme patterns that embody the impetus of the narrative structure. Sequences of given-new will help viewers follow the story line and syntagmatic and paradigmatic redundancy will make it easier to establish the bridges and links that keep the whole together.

Redundancy is then a device that helps to make text cohesive and coherent. It normally comes in the form of reiteration and most often, in audiovisual texts, in the form of complementarity. When, for instance, sound underlines image, or image explains sound, when sound bridges between different scenes or when music tells of different stories, cinematic devices are being used to guarantee that the complementary information is brought together towards a signifying whole.

The introduction of subtitles over audiovisual texts might be seen as disruptive and even incoherent with the compositional make-up, for they were not intended to be in the original's composition, an issue that has been discussed in part 4.2.3. The fact that subtitles are "afterthoughts" (Sinha 2004:174) makes it more essential that they maintain the original text intact and create their own cohesive devices to fit in naturally with the original construct. This means that subtitles must find ways to guarantee that they are faithful to the letter and to the spirit of the original. Béhar (2004:85) refers to this symbiosis as a form of cultural ventriloquism and adds that:

our task as subtitlers is to create subliminal subtitles so in sync with the mood and rhythm of the movie that the audience isn't even aware it is reading. We want *not* to be noticed. If a subtitle is inadequate, clumsy or distracting, it makes everyone look bad, but first and foremost the actors and the filmmakers. It can impact the film's potential career.

As much as this comment may be seen as extreme, it succeeds in calling our attention to the fact that subtitling may interfere in the coherence and cohesion of an original that, to all purposes, should remain intact. Subtitles will be part of the making of the audiovisual

whole and will compromise the communicative intention if they do not blend in with the original message. This means that once there, subtitles become part of the composition and will have to interact with the semiotic relations established from the start. They too will need to contribute towards the five properties of text outlined by Halliday.

If we are to apply the notion of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations to subtitles themselves, it will become clear that subtitles will have to guarantee cohesion and coherence among themselves, as strings of words that appear in separate groups, in a cadenced sequence and with internal relations. In this respect, they imply all the cohesive devices that come with written language. However, what makes them differ from static monocoded text is the fact that they come in separate chunks, cannot be re-read and have to interact simultaneously with image and sound. In the case of interlingual subtitles (for hearers), they are somewhat redundant in nature. They relay speech, in another language and mode, but they do it as if they were a shadow or a mirror. It is important that they keep in sync with the spoken words for their cohesion and coherence will be highly motivated by this very interaction. Mayoral *et al.* (1988:363) posit that:

When a message is composed of other systems in addition to the linguistic one, the translated text should maintain content synchrony with the other message components, whether these be image, music or any other. By this we do not suggest that the different parts of the message should mean the same thing but rather they should not contradict one another unless that has been the intention of the original; in the same way the level of redundancy for the text as a whole, as a result of adequate cultural adaptation, must allow the same facility of decoding as for the message in the SL.

This means that subtitles ought to be complementary and instrumental in the decoding process. For hearers, sound aids the reading of subtitles, and subtitles help the understanding of sound. In the case of SDH, this relationship no longer seems appropriate. In the first place, these subtitles are expected to convey more than what is given through speech alone. In the second place, they are not redundant to deaf viewers. These audiences cannot hear words, they cannot integrate paralinguistic information and, without sound, even non-linguistic cues can be misleading. This means that cohesion will need to be given through a different kind of synchrony. These subtitles will make greater sense to the deaf

viewer when they are in sync with image, or when they fill in the cohesive elements that had been initially guaranteed through acoustic signs but are not relayed through image. In order to maintain intended meanings, subtitlers must find ways to compensate for the redundancy that is lost when sound cannot be heard.

Further to guaranteeing cohesion between subtitles and image, subtitlers working for deaf viewers will need to pay special attention to the way speech maintains internal cohesion so that it may be secured in the written subtitles. Language has its own means of guaranteeing internal and external redundancy. Speech naturally involves linguistic, paralinguistic and non-linguistic signs that concur towards the making of meaning. Paralinguistic signs, conveying emotions and implied meanings cannot be interpreted except in relation to the language they are accompanying. In fact, they are language bound and dependent. On the other hand, non-linguistic signs are interpretable and can be produced without the co-existence of language. Although non-linguistic signs or natural signs such as facial expressions, postural and proxemic signs, gestures, and even some linguistic features are easily interpretable (*cf.* Cruse 2000:8), they are also the source of many misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication. However, such kinetic elements are no greater a problem to the Deaf than they are to hearers.

Finding adequate solutions for the problem is a challenge for those working within the area. It should not be forgotten that even if 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 interpersonal play. Further attention will be given to this aspect in section 4.3. A study conducted by Gielen and d'Ydewalle, (1992:257) concludes that "redundancy of information facilitates the processing of subtitles" to which one may add "because it reinforces coherence". If Deaf viewers are to gain better access to audiovisual text, such implicit components of speech will need to be made explicit and redundant in a different code. In addition, they will need to be redundant to the subtitles that convey the speech utterances.

Matters of cohesion and coherence will necessarily be re-addressed in the discussion of specific issues (section 4.3) for, quite often, it is when cohesion or coherence break down that serious problems arise for subtitle readers.

4.3. Specific Issues – Towards Norms

Pre-recorded subtitling for television programmes

If a meme comes to dominate (for any reason: practical, political, cultural aesthetic...) and competing memes fade, one course of development is that such a meme becomes regarded as a norm – whether imposed by an authority or simply accepted as such.

(Chesterman 1997:51)

By assuming a descriptive approach to the study of subtitling for the Deaf and HoH, it seems appropriate to bring to mind the underlying premise of Descriptive Translation Studies: that it is possible to determine the “regularity of behaviour in recurrent situations of the same type” (Toury 1978:84). This belief sustains what has been taken to be one of the objectives of this research programme: to describe the norms in present SDH practices. It is my belief that by understanding how and why things are done in particular ways it becomes possible to envisage alternatives that may be tested and proposed as a means of improvement.

Various paths could be taken towards the study of the phenomena of SDH as it is presented today. As discussed in section 4.1, the field of SDH has grown considerably in recent years, presenting scholars with a significant amount of new issues worth researching. With the offer of SDH on media other than television, different modalities have come into existence and different norms have been adopted. The criteria that dictate present practices are varied and derive from a web of interests that are social, professional and/or commercial in nature. The issue is complex and begs for in-depth research that may shed light on a number of problems falling into the categories proposed by Díaz-Cintas (2001a:199): those that are of a physical nature, which are “easily noticeable and closely linked with the constraints imposed by the medium itself”; metatextual factors, that derive from “the working conditions under which the subtitler is forced to work”; and problems that derive from “the actual linguistic transfer”.

The problems that have traditionally interested translation scholars the most have been those pertaining to the linguistic transfer. The ones under the first category are often dismissed for being considered outside the scope of the translation action itself. To translators themselves, technical constraints are often taken as underlying and unsurpassable, even though Díaz-Cintas (*ibid.*) thinks they “can be easily overcome nowadays thanks to the help of computers and specific software for the subtitling profession”. The fact is that they are the physical and technical constraints to which all subtitles must be adjusted – number of characters per line, fonts, number and position of lines, colours and symbols available, safe area –, all the parameters that are preset on most modern subtitling preparation software packages and to which subtitlers must simply comply. Other technical constraints are less obvious to the common consumer of audiovisual materials and often go unknown to many professional translators as well: those that are linked to the transmission process. In the case of television, this may have to do with the electronic process of inserting subtitles onto a master or the alignment of the teletext files with the actual programme at the moment of broadcasting. In the case of teletext subtitles in particular, such technical problems may put at a loss all efforts to achieve high quality subtitles. Inaccurate manual cueing of the first subtitle (less frequent with modern equipment), technical breakdowns or poor quality television sets may make watching closed subtitles a burden to many television viewers.

The factors that Díaz-Cintas (*ibid.*) calls “metatextual problems” might also be addressed as methodological issues. Quite often these are dictated by the dynamics of the commercial circuit in which translators and subtitlers work. Limited time to produce the work, inadequate tools (some translators work without dedicated software), poor quality or inexistent dialogue lists, or even no access to the original audiovisual text, all contribute to undesirable working conditions and have a negative impact on the end product. Many of these working methods/conditions are imposed by a deregulated market that has grown exponentially in recent years. This means that the offer is high and quality standards are sometimes overlooked in the name of productivity. Although, in practice, some subtitling companies find it hard to work to the book, many have in-house guidelines that make

explicit reference to the need to use the original audiovisual texts, and to work from scripts or dialogue lists, for instance. It also needs to be noted that many subtitling companies have internal workflow circuits to ensure quality standards and are very strict about proofreading and simulation of translated files, revision strategies that guarantee better quality products.

Most service providers are aware of the direction in which the market is moving. Carroll (2004b:5) explains the balancing act that happens in the industry by saying that “all clients want the highest quality, but many take their decisions on price alone. For translators this means finding the best way to deliver quality and optimise their work processes”. The desideratum of the present practices will, in the end, be cost-effectiveness. In this respect, the subtitling market is no different from that in all other areas.

Most of the times, translators cannot change much in as far as technical and metatextual conditions are concerned, but these can be greatly improved if translators talk to the various agents involved in their translation commissions. Ideally, as posited by Vermeer (2000 [1989]:221) “[t]he aim of any translational action, and the mode in which it is to be realized, are negotiated with the client who commissions the action”. It is often the case that the commissioners, technicians and/or broadcasters are not totally aware of what it takes to produce top quality SDH or even of their final clients’ needs. Furthermore, they may have little notion of the effect that their own actions or decisions may produce on the quality of their service or the usefulness of their product. It has been found, in the context of Portuguese television providers, for instance, that those offering SDH as a public service only have a rough idea of what it implies, both to the people who actually do the job and particularly to the people who use it. Very seldom are these circuits open enough to allow for information to flow among all those involved in the process: the providers, the translators themselves and the actual stakeholders. Such dialogue is a challenge to all and it often takes courage and determination to embody change.

It is doubtless that all the above mentioned problems deserve careful analysis; however, it is true that much of what dictates the quality and adequacy of subtitling lies within the

transadaptation process itself. In spite of all the technical and methodological conditions involved, translators will have to act as mediators and produce subtitles that will result in the best possible solutions, providing deaf viewers with greater access to audiovisual texts. The matters that are intrinsic to the translation proper will be mainly linguistic in nature, even if they may derive from linguistic and non-linguistic components of the audiovisual construct and may reflect both technical and methodological constraints.

If we are to study SDH to some depth, it is essential to delimit the subject of research to a manageable part. Though it might be useful to have a general overview of the broader SDH polysystem, it seems unfeasible that such might be obtained within one particular study. The decision to focus on the study of pre-recorded SDH on television derived from the motivation that turned this research into an instance of Action Research: the will to improve SDH in Portugal, and particularly that on television, considered the most democratic and far reaching instance of mass communication.

In order to propose change, it is essential to understand what is already available. Given that very little existed in terms of SDH in Portugal at the onset of this research, it appeared useful to look for norms where the service is being successfully offered. It is in this context that this research has looked into practices in different countries with the objective of arriving at a number of basic parameters to be tested within the Portuguese context so that a new set of guidelines would be drawn that may prove adequate to this specific reality.

4.3.1. On actual practices and guidelines

As translation scholars, our task consists of elucidating the similarities and differences between the criteria shared by the collective of users and the instructions that have been implemented by the translator in genuine cases and in a particular historical context.

(Díaz-Cintas 2004b:25-26).

A first step may be taken towards a better understanding of the implications of SDH by analysing present practices in the form of actual subtitled products and of guidelines and codes of good practice that propose national, institutional or commercial quality standards.

Given that not very much theoretical backup is available for the study of SDH, the debate that follows is based on the careful analysis of a wide range of television programmes offered by different broadcasters in Europe. This analysis focuses mainly on intralingual subtitling for the hearing impaired, offered on a wide range of programmes presented on television in the UK, Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Interlingual subtitles were also used whenever a contrastive analysis was considered to be useful. Given that in the course of this research there was no known instance of interlingual SDH on television, it seems appropriate to see how it is done on DVD. This new format allows for the contrastive analysis of different subtitling solutions for the same product: interlingual subtitles (for hearers) as well as intralingual and interlingual subtitles for the hearing impaired.

Further to analysing subtitled products, and given the intention of drawing up a set of guidelines that might be applicable in the Portuguese context, it came as relevant to examine guidelines and codes of good practice used by translators working for television, the cinema or the DVD market. By analysing professional guidelines instead of only looking at those published in academic journals or books it has become possible to get a glimpse of what is actually considered relevant by the industry. Given that some of the guidelines are in-house documents, which cannot be identified for reasons of confidentiality, the issues that they put forward will be addressed in a general and anonymous manner. Whenever

such guidelines are of public domain, reference will be made to the source. The professional guidelines that have been studied may be grouped in the following way:

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Interlingual subtitling for hearers | 7 |
| – television subtitling in Portugal | 2 |
| – television subtitling in Belgium | 1 |
| – DVD subtitling in UK based companies | 4 |
| Intralingual television subtitling for the hearing impaired | 8 |
| – Spain | 2 |
| – UK | 1 |
| – USA | 1 |
| – Canada | 1 |
| – Australia | 1 |
| TOTAL | 15 |

Table 3 – Listing of professional guidelines types under analyses

65% of the guidelines have been written within the last 5 years, whilst the others are dated in the late 80s and early 90s. Although the older guidelines might no longer be in use, they were still considered valuable to this study for a number of reasons: 1) they serve to show how some practices have changed; 2) they address issues in a clear and thorough manner; and/or 3) they raise issues that are pertinent to the study.

Rather than presenting an exhaustive account of the findings in each of the analysed audiovisual texts and guidelines, it seems more profitable and economical to address the main issues considered to be problematic in SDH and to see how they have been dealt with in the different contexts.

The list of problems needing closer analysis grew continuously as different programmes and guidelines were studied and compared. The following sections give a summarised account of those findings. Some of the issues will not have been fully explored, for each discovery gave way to new queries, which means that a number of issues remain open for further research. In order to limit the field for this project, seven initial questions were formulated:

1. Do different programmes require different subtitling solutions?
2. How are subtitles presented on screen?
3. What time and space constraints are subtitles subjected to?
4. How is the source of sound identified?
5. How is oral speech converted into written subtitles?
6. How are sound effects expressed through subtitles?
7. How is music conveyed through subtitles?

Once these questions have been adequately answered, it will then be easier to go into more detailed studies of particular issues for the most basic aspects of SDH will have been identified and described in general terms.

4.3.2. Television programme genres

The study of genre allows theorists to link the conventions and norms found in a group of texts with the expectations and understandings of audiences.

(Bignell 2004:114)

The task of classifying television programmes according to genre has been approached by many scholars, such as Feuer (1992), Lacey (2000), Creeber (2001) and Neale and Turner (2001), among others. Regardless of the fact that there is no consensus as to absolute parameters, programmes can be classified in view of their contents (e.g., wild life documentary); their intended audiences (e.g., children's programmes); their time of broadcast (e.g., prime-time programme); among many more. There is a commonly shared opinion that many television programmes are difficult to classify for their hybrid nature. Information programmes can be simultaneously chat-shows, with live-broadcasts and/or pre-recorded inserts; entertainment programmes may take the form of anything from that of documentaries, to drama productions or to musicals. This difficulty in classifying television programmes according to genres is also visible in the way different television broadcasters categorise their programmes. BBC (2004), for instance, advertises its

programmes in the following manner: “BBC network television output is divided into programmes genres. These are: Drama, Entertainment, Factual (including Arts and Culture, Documentaries and Current Affairs, Specialist Factual, Current Affairs & Investigations, and Lifeskills)”. Sky (2004), on the other hand, organises its programmes into “Entertainment, Movies, Sports, News and Documentaries, Kids, Music and Radio, and Specialist”. The differences that are found in British television are equally found in other countries, which only reinforce what scholars have written about the issue.

In order to arrive at a categorization that may be useful to translators working for dubbing, Agost (1999:79-93), outlines the basic characteristics of the different audiovisual genres so as to group them accordingly. The problem of this particular work is that most of the proposed taxonomies and classifications are left open or overlap, which makes it difficult to know where any programme can be located.

So that this discussion may structure itself, it is essential to categorise and distinguish programmes in some way. However, categorisation of audiovisual texts according to genres, in the traditional sense, doesn't seem satisfactory for this context. Every categorisation has underlying structural reasons, which makes them particularly useful within the contexts for which they were devised. This accounts for the diversity of criteria that may be used to categorise the same objects. By taking our specific addressees – the Deaf and the Hard-of-Hearing – as our structural element, and in the knowledge that particular genres will present specific characteristics, I propose a new set of criteria that I consider to be useful for this study:

- a) the expected reading ability of the intended addressees;
- b) programme's stylistic characteristics;
- c) interpersonal communication portrayed;
- d) the function played by sound.

This means that programme type as such is quite irrelevant to this case, for a film, a chat show or a sports event, for instance, may raise similar problems to the translator who will have to find solutions for each situation.

a) *The expected reading ability of the intended addressees.*

There is no disagreement in the industry over the fact that young viewers require slower subtitles for they are known to be less proficient readers. Indeed, concessions on subtitle rates are only openly made for children's programmes. De Linde and Kay (1999:11) report that according to ITC-URL (ITC 1997) in children's programmes the reading time allowed is roughly double that which is allowed for adults.

But more needs to be said on this issue. It seems obvious that the intended addressees of a documentary on nuclear fusion will be very different from those of a morning chat show, for instance. It also appears obvious that someone who sits through the first will be interested and necessarily informed on the subject. Previous knowledge on the subject matter and the command of specific language in use will contribute towards greater ease in the reading process which will, in principle, mean that a documentary may contain a greater reading load than that of a programme aimed at a more diversified audience.

As it is known, every programme is produced with a specific addressee in mind. Deaf viewers, like hearing viewers, will naturally fall into the audience type that the programme has envisaged for itself. People watching particular programmes will have similar profiles regardless of whether they are hearers or have some sort of hearing impairment. People will naturally select their programmes according to their personal interests and their own cultural and social profile. When providing SDH, these factors will need to be taken into account so that subtitles may be adapted to suit the needs of the intended audiences and different degrees and types of adaptation will be in order when programmes are directed to specific groups with particular reading competences.

b) *Stylistic characteristics*

All producers are aware of the effects they want their programmes to have on their audience and certain programmes are devised to provoke very particular effects. Let us take stand-up comedies or political debates, for example. The first will focus on the communicative abilities of individuals who will revert to all sorts of strategies to elicit

laughter from the audience. Camera work is usually simple, focusing mainly on the story-teller in an effort to capture the nuances that might contain the joke. At times it will capture reactions to a punch-line or a gesture, but usually no true dialogue takes place. People at home act as voyeurs and respond in chain-reaction to audiences who are presented on screen or implied through clapping and laughing⁵².

In the case of the political debate, the dialogue is usually lively and dynamic and exchanges between the interlocutors are sometimes brusque and unexpected. At moments, voices are superimposed, speeches are interrupted and participants are spurred on by provocative questions or comments. The camera tries to pick up the dialogic dynamics and viewers are directed towards the speakers who are shown on screen.

The subtitling of these two programme types will obviously be specific to their stylistic features. How will the word-play, paralinguistic features and story telling tempo be conveyed through written strings of words in the first case? How will simultaneous speech or interrupted utterances be relayed through subtitles in the second? And still, when various people speak simultaneously, how will different speakers be efficiently identified? These are real challenges for conscientious translators.

c) The interpersonal communication portrayed

As television spectators, we watch, in a voyeuristic manner, people in social interaction (cf. Bell 1984 and Hatim and Mason 2000 [1997]:433-435). In the case of fiction (feature films, series, serials, etc.) or even in reality shows, audiences witness interpersonal communication with all that goes with it: people negotiating, inferring and taking turns, choosing between negative or positive politeness, cooperatively working towards the construction of meanings. At times, there is open violation of the cooperative principle and communication breaks down. In addition to this, narrative and plot are structured so as to create suspense and to keep the audience's interest high. Characters grow out of personal (linguistic or

⁵² There are times when the audience is never shown and is only made "present" through sound effects.

compositional) traits that often stand for social stereotypes. Their choice of words, their register and their idiosyncrasies, all contribute towards the overall effect.

In ideal terms, all these elements will need to be relayed, as best as possible, when subtitling. Interpersonal play is a complex issue and much thought needs to be given to areas such as the intentional flouting of maxims or pragmatics. The first challenge derives from the simple conversion of speech into writing. The second, and a more important problem, is directly linked to the way deaf audiences perceive such interpersonal communication. What may be obvious to a hearing spectator may be perfectly obscure to a person with hearing impairment. Deaf people have different conventions for interpersonal communication (a reason why hearers often find interaction with Deaf people difficult) and hedging or implicature may be easily misunderstood.

d) The function played by sound

Understanding the function of sound in audiovisual texts is one of the most important elements for translators working on SDH. Many programmes have distinctive sound effects (e.g. a jingle, clapping, the sound of a gong, etc.) that characterise them and are fundamental to their dynamics. In series, serials or feature films, music gains diegetic importance and emotional atmosphere can be modulated through sound. Some programmes have very few sound effects and depend solely on speech (e.g. interviews); others, depend heavily on sound that comes from off-screen sources (e.g. narration in documentaries), or that is overtly present in the form of on-screen singing (e.g. musical shows). Most programmes use music and sound effects in an integrated manner and the translator will need to weigh the importance of sound so that adequate rendering may be achieved.

The notion that different programme genres present specific problems will aid subtitle providers in deciding upon the conventions to be used in each case. It is important for conventions to be implemented consistently in programmes of the same kind. But further

to that, it seems advisable to decide on basic conventions to be used transversally in any programme type that might contain similar situations. This should be respected at least at the level of each television broadcaster, but greater benefit would certainly derive from a certain degree of standardisation at a national level, so that viewers would not have to adjust to different conventions every time they change the TV channel. This matter gains special pertinence within the digital framework, where literally hundreds of different programmes, in different languages, and following different conventions, are made available. The ESIST – European Association for Studies in Screen Translation (www.esist.org) –, has set forth a standard for subtitling which proves that scholars and professionals are fully aware of the implications of diversity in subtitling conventions and of the benefits that would result of minimal standardisation criteria.

Consistency brings advantages in most contexts. If, for instance, we take the case of a documentary that has parts with off-screen narration and parts with on-screen speakers, it seems essential to consistently identify off-screen voices with codes (different colour, italics or symbols such as arrows <) that will be used in any programme where off-screen voices might appear. Even if many of the programmes under analysis did take this into account, there were often discrepancies when similar situations appeared in a completely different programme type. Extreme cases of inconsistency were found in the Portuguese context, where different solutions for the same situation were applied within the same programme. This can be very disruptive for hearing impaired viewers who depend greatly on these small aids to make their understanding of the audiovisual text less taxing.

If conventions are used consistently in the resolution of specific problems, and given that particular programmes raise systematically the same issues and thus require the application of particular solutions, people will grow into automatic decoding habits that, once internalised, will facilitate their reading of subtitles to a great extent and make their television viewing far more enjoyable.

4.3.3. Time Constraints: Synchrony and reading speed

[A] good subtitler (apart from being a good translator) needs the ears of an interpreter, the nonsense judgement of the news editor and the designer's sense of esthetics [sic]. In order to present the subtitles in a synchronous manner the subtitler must also have the steady hand of a surgeon and the timing of a percussionist.

(Gottlieb 1997c:125).

Subtitles are time constrained by nature since they are bound to the rhythm of the audiovisual text itself and by the time taken in their reading. In ideal circumstances these two tempos come together in subtitles that result from a compromise between the two, often opposing, forces.

The film or programme's constraints will be particularly determined by the overall rhythm, produced by the action and the filmic composition (cinematic codes: cuts, shot changes, by the density and rhythm of the speech content (register), and by the technical conditions (image, sound and subtitle quality). Those linked to the reading speed derive from the receiver's profile (reading ability, background knowledge, audiovisual literacy, subtitle quality and perceptive capacity).

Guidelines tend to deal with these two elements separately. Synchrony is usually seen as the relation between the subtitles and the audiovisual text, and reading speed is taken to be a matter that stays within the bounds of the viewer and the subtitles themselves. When discussing synchrony, the main topics will usually be synchronisation of subtitles to the onset of speech, or issues of leading and lagging are the main topics. When talking of reading speeds, the discussion mainly concentrates on words-per-minute and how long it takes to read one line and two lines. This separation might be very useful when, as happens with guidelines, there is a need to pinpoint issues and to offer possible solutions. But even when these two aspects are discussed separately there is often cross-reference to the other for they are intrinsically linked.

Adequate synchronisation will revert towards making subtitle reading easier, faster and more enjoyable. In an article about synchronization in dubbing, Chaume (2004b:42) posits that:

Synchronization, like scene sequencing (montage, editing) or the special effects added at various junctures of the plot, is essential to the configuration of the message, a requisite, a sign of a processed, elaborated and multiple message whose presence is vital for its correct (conventional) configuration and transmission. Synchronization must therefore be analysed as one of a set of elements in the broad network of signs that make up the message, the film and the narration. The issue in question is to forge links between cinematographic language and translation operations.

Regardless of the fact that the above was said in reference to dubbing, where synchrony is with voice, there is much to that is relevant to SDH that, like dubbing, *substitutes* voice.

In dubbing, special care is put into finding a voice that is similar to that of the original actor and that blends in well with his/her physical appearance. The careful choice of words, so that lip movements may find credible correspondents in another language, the cadence and the tempo will be dictated by the image. Although in cartoons or films where animals speak this synchronization does not need to be that accurate because lip movements are not exact either, synchronization will have to blend in naturally with the figure on screen. This means that even though it is voice that is being overlaid, it has to be in sync with image. Similarly, in SDH, synchrony will need to be achieved, in the first place, with image.

Ivarsson and Carroll (1998:73) remind us that “it is more difficult to understand subtitles if there is a discrepancy between what is registered by the senses, *i.e.*, if the subtitles say something different from what is heard”. In the case of deaf viewers, this last part would need to be changed for “if the subtitles say something different from *what is seen*”.

In practice, this means that subtitles should be in sync, not with the onset of speech, but with the presence of image. And again, they should disappear when there is no visual reference to what is read in them. The ITC standards (1999:12) clarify that “shot changes normally reflect the beginning or end of speech. The subtitler should, therefore, attempt to insert a subtitle on a shot change when this is in synchrony with the speaker”. Shots are seen as filmic utterances, and these should be respected in the subtitles so that coherence

may be guaranteed. This also means that audiovisual texts with many shot changes will have a faster tempo and will be more demanding, both for the viewers and for the translators themselves.

The issue of leading and lagging is another very important element in subtitle synchrony. Karamitroglou (1998) provides reasons for leading-in synchrony in the following manner:

Subtitles should not be inserted simultaneously with the initiation of the utterance but 1/4 of a second later, since tests have indicated that the brain needs 1/4 of a second to process the advent of spoken linguistic material and guide the eye towards the bottom of the screen anticipating the subtitle. A simultaneously presented subtitle is premature, surprises the eye with its flash and confuses the brain for about 1/2 a second, while its attention oscillates between the inserted subtitled text and the spoken linguistic material, not realising where it should focus.

However, greater flexibility seems allowable with leading than with lagging and there are guidelines that even suggest that subtitles can come in a few frames before the actual words start being heard. In SDH, this can be a major problem because, as Ivarsson and Carroll (1998:72) put it:

Many people need a fraction of a second – a “fixation pause” – to locate a speaker. If a subtitle appears too early, before they have time to place the voice, it may interfere with identification of the speaker and comprehension of subtitle.

As to the lagging issue, all the guidelines that were analysed clearly mentioned the fact that subtitles should not lag after the speech is over, and going over shot changes was considered inadequate to all. The *BBC Subtitling Guide* (1998:27) was the only instance where some leeway was given by adding that “it is permissible to slip out of sync when you have a sequence of subtitles for a *single* speaker, providing the subtitles are back in sync by the end of the sequence”. Even in this case, and particularly with intralingual SDH, where it is possible to follow speech through lip-reading, careful synchronisation will be required.

These considerations justify the use of adaptation techniques. The time constraints are far more rigid in SDH than in subtitling for hearers, because here time is visually bound. In this

case, it means that subtitles must be devised in such a way that they will be read within the time that the visual cues allow them to be on screen.

It is true that people adjust their reading speed to the tempo which is imposed on them, and that once established, people tend to keep up with it. But it is also true that reading speed will depend on a great number of factors that may be inherent to the viewer, (level of literacy, degree of familiarity with the subject matter or with the cinematic codes), to the context (circumstances in which viewing is taking place), to the media (image quality and subtitle legibility), or to the cinematic construct. The factors that are external to the audiovisual text itself can only be presupposed and potential addressees can only be imagined. Reading time will always be approximate and an ambiguous concept because there are too many variables implied. All guidelines suggest some sort of reading speed criteria but they are, in my view, no more than hypothetical formulations.

Although I defend adaptation, I do agree that more is always better than less, and that viewers will naturally adjust and select what they can absorb in each case. This is all very well if what is absorbed is enough to gain access to the intended meanings and if, in keeping up with the imposed rate, viewing is still enjoyable and comfortable. And good subtitle synchrony will contribute enormously towards this aim.

As everything else in translation, synchrony will be a matter of choice and decision making. The subtitler will need to decide which visual cues to take up. This will be particularly difficult in situations where intense camera work and post-editing takes viewers through successive shot changes within the same scene, or when there is overlapping speech and various characters talk simultaneously with people on-screen and off-screen. In these cases, the visual cues are very distracting and a challenge to those trying to place subtitles within the image.

Another problem arises when there are no visual cues to synchronise with, as is the case in off-screen speech and voice-overs. Bradford *et al.* (2001:257) describe the essence of voice-over in the following way:

non-synchronous commentary from an off-screen source. The voice may be that of a disembodied narrator, in either a narrative film or documentary, or

of a character, either in the form of an interior monologue or addressing the spectator directly.

These instances of voice-over, which occur in films such as *The Piano* (1993) and *American Beauty* (1999), can be particularly confusing for deaf viewers because there are no visual cues to aid contextualisation. Dealing with these situations in SDH may be extremely challenging, for further to identifying the existence of the disembodied voice, it might also be pertinent to add extra information on the nature and texture of that particular voice. If we are to take the case of Ada's preamble at the beginning of *The Piano*, for instance, further to identifying the voice-over as such, it might be pertinent to add that it is a woman's voice and even that she speaks with a Scottish accent. Another interesting case calling for special subtitling solutions would be the conveyance of the different voices presented in the voice-over in *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989). If simple subtitles were to be given, with no further indication as to these particularities, deaf viewers would miss out on very important information for, in these cases, the voice-over contains implied narrative force that needs to be conveyed as far as possible.

Quite opposite situations to that of voice-over may also occur when on-screen cues lead you to think that there is something to be heard, and yet there is nothing there, such as when there is mimic or imperceptible speech. In these cases, visual cues will need to be added so that synchrony may be reinstalled. Comments, signs (e.g. arrows), or other devices will become useful in the re-establishment of the lost order.

All this may be seen as a means to establish cohesion and coherence between subtitles and the audiovisual whole. This is very much in line with what Gottlieb (1977a:183) says about the way viewers integrate subtitles with image:

Viewers – even our subtitle-dependent subjects – take in non-verbal visual information before subtitles, possibly both in terms of mental receptive priority and short-term memory. They retain visual information 'hidden' in the subtitles.

If we take into account the fact that short-term memory is a recurrent issue among people with hearing impairment (cf. chapter III), then anything that may contribute towards bridging possible gaps will be most useful.

Subtitles are not expected to disclose more than what is given to hearers. In fact, adequate synchrony is most important when dramatic effects are in order. The *BBC Subtitling Guide* (1998:27) tacitly imposes: “Do not bring in dramatic subtitles too early”. Cumulative subtitling can often take care of situations where a fragment of a second may make a difference (a situation that is characteristic to quiz shows, for instance). Above all, subtitlers need to be perfectly aware of how exact cueing may make an enormous difference and contribute towards the enjoyment of any audiovisual text.

Once synchrony between subtitle and image has been achieved, thus guaranteeing intersemiotic cohesion, all that needs to be done to improve readability will be found in within the subtitles themselves, and these aspects lie mainly within the realm of language use.

4.3.4. Text presentation

Subtitles can be displayed using different fonts. Although they must be highly legible, the subtitles should distract as little as possible from the picture. Accustomed subtitle readers will absorb the information in the subtitles subconsciously. They will not normally receive the subtitles as disturbing to the picture.

(Taupin n/d)

When, in section 4.2.3, we discussed the issue of readability, special emphasis was placed on legibility as an important factor in the supply of readable subtitles. Text presentation plays a very important role in the overall quality of subtitles for, although it is largely determined by technological features of the subtitling system, it can be manipulated to attain desired effects. Evidence may be found in the ways that similar technical features have been used by different subtitle providers.

Text presentation includes font type, colour and layout. Ivarsson and Carroll (1998:39) consider these issues to be “matters of policy”. Different policies may be equally read in the choices that are made in guidelines and on television screens. As mentioned in 4.2.3,

television poses a number of problems in this respect, for screens often have poor resolution and letter contours are not always sharp and clear. Moreover, viewers don't always sit at the most adequate distance from the television screen so as to achieve optimal viewing conditions. Silver *et al.* (2000) write that,

in current television systems the ITU-R international standard Recommendation 500-3 recommends that for critical viewing the viewer should sit between four and six times the screen height (*i.e.* 4H-6H) from the television screen. A survey in the early 1980s showed that the average domestic viewer actually watched from a distance of more than 7H.

New television sets now offer better image quality, thanks to higher density of pixels and new screen formats. But even so, viewing distance will still continue to play an important role in higher legibility standards. To this respect, Silver *et al.* (*ibid.*) clarify that:

Work has been done relating to future large screen HDTV displays which shows that with the long sought one-metre diagonal flat screen in the home, the most pleasing results are obtained when the viewer sits at 3H from the screen.

4.3.4.1. Font

Fonts may be accounted for by a number of features: typeface, size, letter spacing, style and effects. Open and closed subtitles are determined by the fonts available in the different systems. Up until the introduction of digital technology, very little could be done in this respect for fonts were rather limited. Open subtitles tend to use *sans serif typefaces* that are shadowed or placed against a translucent background and make use of italics and bold in the creation of special effects. For instance, in Portugal, italics are used for the subtitling of song lyrics, when subtitles refer to voices coming from electronic devices (e.g. telephone or television) or when foreign languages are spoken. Even though it is technically possible to use bold lettering, this is seldom done because bold type is less legible and thus avoided. Ivarsson and Carroll (1998:39-47) discuss the implications of these solutions in detail and refer to the way subtitles may become almost indistinguishable against certain backgrounds or the way the increase of font size may involve more editing since less words will fit on screen each time.

Closed subtitling systems impose a different set of issues from those found in open subtitling. In 1995, the National Center for Accessible Media (NCAM n/d accessed 2003) conducted research on the impact of closed captions presented on analogue television. The findings are interesting for they reinforce some be made to the fact that people say they would like to be able to manipulate font size, colour and caption background. Many people comment that subtitles using block capitals are far more difficult to read, and people who are used to upper case subtitles do not like mixed case subtitles. Font size also seemed to become a problem when it meant that important features on screen were obscured by the caption boxes or less information was made available because of the bulkier fonts. Yet, the black box behind the letters was generally said to improve legibility. It was, however, noticeable that people reacted to solutions that were new to them, which proves that acceptability is highly determined by usage and habit. People get to like what they use regularly and the introduction of change will always be considered disruptive until new habits are acquired. In the research project for the development of the *Tiresias Screenfont*, Silver *et al.* (2000) report that "[a] number of people remark that they were very used to the current subtitling format, that this had all the advantages of familiarity, a new font would take some getting used to".

The introduction of digital television has the potential of offering viewers the chance to adjust these technical aspects to their personal needs; however this will mean that viewers will have to go through a learning process. Migration from analogue to digital television will take some time and, as happens with the introduction of all new technology, there will be some resistance at first but, with time, people will get used to the new circumstances and will start taking advantage of the new facilities.

Although the introduction of digital television is now an established fact, analogue television will still be around for some time. According to Puissochet (2002), figures presented at the NAB 2002 Conference, 5-11 April 2002, show that by 2006 only half of the American homes will have gone digital:

| | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Number of TV homes | 102.985 | 104.137 | 105.286 | 106.427 | 107.562 | 108.693 |
| Total number of digital homes | 28.343 | 34.836 | 39.375 | 43.996 | 48.701 | 53.503 |
| Digital's penetration rate | 27.5% | 33.5% | 37.4% | 41.3% | 45.3% | 49.2% |

Table 4 – Figures on gradual introduction of iDTV in the USA

Source: Puissochet (2002)

Figures about the European situation are harder to get but, in relation to interactive digital television (iDTV), Boumans (2004) states that:

the round among the representatives at the BRT made clear that iDTV in Europe differs sharply from country to country. Every country has its own government policy. iDTV is not yet a matter of common policy of the European Union member states. If the pace of the UK had been followed, more than 77 million households in 15 EU states should have installed a set-top box. Beginning 2004, the counter stopped at 44 million households.

These figures show that the switch-over from analogue to digital television has been slower than initially envisaged and the turn-off of analogue television will not happen as soon as it was expected. In countries using analogue television teletext systems, inherent problems will persist for some time and it is worth analysing them and questioning forms of improvement within the available conditions. These will, in most cases, also be valid when DTV arrives. Portugal is among those countries where such issues are still severely felt. Although most Portuguese television broadcasters have recently acquired new teletext subtitling equipment, and better quality services are now provided, many viewers have old television receivers that do not allow for the full potential of what is already available to be enjoyed. In the course of the study described in chapter V, more than 20 emails were received from people complaining that they could not read the teletext subtitles because some characters were missing. Very often, people are not aware that their own television sets are to blame for the problem because they do not carry some of the characters used in Portuguese writing (e.g.: ç, ã, ê):

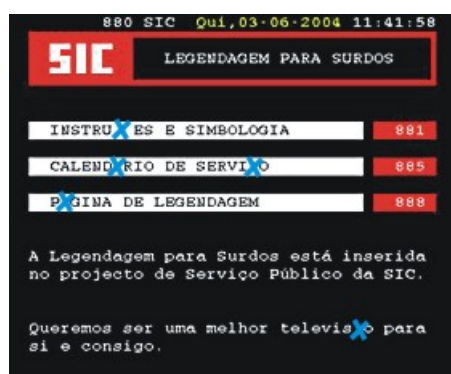


Fig. 6 – Missing characters in teletext
(SIC – Portugal)

Others complained that the letters were compressed and difficult to decipher. The **ç** and **g** letters, for instance, were often a problem. These instances were sufficient to make us aware of the way fonts alone may condition reception. Letter spacing may also be an important feature in making subtitles more legible. An experience with a group of Portuguese Deaf viewers showed how spacing can interfere in the subtitle reading process. This was witnessed during a telenovela⁵³ viewing session: while tidying up a bedroom, a character asked another to pass her a handkerchief. The subtitle on screen read [Passa-me o lenço!]. As the second character passed her the handkerchief, two Deaf viewers reacted with surprise. When questioned, they explained they were expecting to see a bed sheet, which in Portuguese is written as [lençol]. Even though the television set in use showed very clear subtitles, these viewers had confused [lenço!] with [lençol]. Further tests were run and it became clear that the exclamation mark could be a problem.

The issue of using spacing with punctuation has been contemplated in various guidelines. In Baker *et al.* (1984:8) the use of extra spaces with punctuation is explained in the following terms:

⁵³ I use the term telenovela since it has now been accepted as a genre in its own right. Bignell (2004:81) distinguishes telenovelas from conventional Western drama serials or soap operas by stating that “unlike soap operas, they come to a conclusion after about six months of a slowly unfolding story, though they feature the domestic and the emotional narratives and complex complications of relationships which are the focus of soap-operas. [...] Telenovela episodes are usually broadcast in one-hour slots, thus aligning them with serial drama in other countries in contrast to the normal half-hour duration of soap opera episodes.” Tufte (2001:57) mentions that “the telenovela (or the television novel) constitutes one of the most important cultural expressions within contemporary Latin American popular culture.” It has also acquired an important role in the Portuguese context taking on an older tradition of the radio novelas or folhetins.

One way of enhancing the effectiveness of punctuation is by the use of a single space before exclamation marks and question marks, after commas, colons, semi-colons and mid-subtitle full stops, on both sides of dashes (but not mid-word hyphens), before opening brackets and inverted commas and after closing brackets and inverted commas.

ITC proposes these same standards in its *ITC Guidance on Standards for Subtitling* (1999:6).

Across the ocean, the US based Captioned Media Program's recommendations (CMP 2001:9) propose different solutions to this problem:

Spaces should not be inserted before ending punctuation, after opening and before closing parentheses and brackets, before and after double hyphens and dashes, or before/between/after the periods of an ellipsis mark.

Many teletext systems in Europe followed Baker's recommendations for some time, but spacing before punctuation has been reduced under the pretext that those spaces are necessary for actual letters. Spacing before exclamation and question marks may still be found in SDH in Germany and in Switzerland and has recently been introduced by various Portuguese television channels.



Fig. 7 – Spacing before punctuation
(RTL – Germany)



Fig. 8 – Spacing before punctuation
(TV5 Europe – Switzerland)



Fig. 9 – Punctuation with no spacing
(TVE2 – Spain)



Fig. 10 – Punctuation with no spacing
(ITV1 – UK)

The set of guidelines proposed for the Portuguese context (*appendix I*) have taken an intermediate position to those presented above. Most of the options were already part of the national open subtitling conventions. Only the space before exclamation marks and question marks was introduced as specific to SDH and only after testing was done in the *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project⁵⁴. Translators working on interlingual subtitling (for hearers) reacted to the introduction of such spaces, but agreed to them once they became aware of the reasons why they had been used.

This convention has since been used on all programmes offering SDH at SIC. Other television broadcasters have not taken it up yet in a consistent way, but the odd programme in other channels has used spacing before exclamation marks and question marks.

⁵⁴ Teletext subtitling was watched on over 20 different television sets and, in more than half of the cases, poor legibility was a real issue.



Fig. 11 – Punctuation spacing
(SIC – Portugal)



Fig. 12 – Punctuation spacing
(RTP1 – Portugal)

In Europe, most teletext systems use mixed (upper and lower) case characters in their main subtitles and sometimes introduce upper case for emphasis or for comments about sound effects and music. RAI uno, for instance, uses mixed case in pre-recorded programmes and upper case for the subtitling of the news⁵⁵. Deaf people in Portugal reacted badly to subtitles using upper case and considered that they were more difficult to read. Only RTP uses all caps for short subtitles about sound effects or music.



Fig. 13 – Upper case used for emphasis
(BBC2 – UK)



Fig. 14 – Upper case for information about music
(RTP1 – Portugal)

⁵⁵ Several viewings led to the conclusion that the news was being subtitled live. This might be an instance of pre-prepared subtitles using newsdesk cues.

4.3.4.2. Colour

The use of colour in subtitles is often taken to be a special feature of subtitling for the hearing impaired and is used according to different conventions. Teletext systems allow for the use of “seven text colours, including white; and eight different background (boxing colours), including black and white” (Baker *et al.* 1984:8). Research on the use of colour carried out at Southampton University, in the early 80s, has shown that certain colours are more legible than others. White letters on black boxing is considered to be the most legible of all colour combinations to be followed in this order by yellow, cyan and green on black. Baker *et al.* (*ibid.*:9) suggest that “magenta, red and blue should be avoided.”

Other colour combinations are possible, but the results are not always considered the most legible, as may be seen in the figures below:



Fig. 15 – Blue lettering over yellow background (TVE2 – Spain)



Fig. 16 – Blue lettering over white background (TVE2 – Spain)

In fact, most broadcasters show preference for using coloured letters over black background for the subtitling of speech and other colour combinations for comments or information about sound effects or music.

Baker *et al.* (*ibid.*:9) refer to two different ways of using colour: “for emphasis and phrasing, and sound effects [and] for speaker identification”.

Not very many television channels use different colours within the same subtitle for emphasis. Creative usage of colour might be seen, for instance, in the subtitling of songs, where the karaoke technique helps people to keep up with the singing⁵⁶.



Fig. 17 – Karaoke style subtitle colouring
(Canal Sur – Spain)

In practice, colours have been mainly used for speaker identification and to differentiate labels containing supplementary information from those containing speech.



Fig. 18 – Different colours to identify speakers
(RTL – Germany)



Fig. 19 – Different colour for character identification label (TVi – Portugal)

Decoding colour can be a problem for many people with low vision or colour blindness. Silver *et al.*'s study (2000) provides us with findings that substantiate this belief:

⁵⁶ An interesting instance where the karaoke technique was creatively used in an advert may be found in *appendix 3.8*.

While some subjects were keen to have colour, others complained of problems with certain colours. Though the 'problem' colours differed, many people commented that the white on black was easier to read than colour.

Particularly in very colourful films, coloured subtitles may be problematic for they will not have sufficient contrast to guarantee adequate legibility. Problems also arise when there are too many people in the same programme and there is the need to repeat the same colour to identify different characters. The *BBC Subtitling Guide* (1998:6) shows awareness of this problem; however, they say that in “a programme with a lot of shifting main characters like *EastEnders*, [...] it is permissible to have two characters per colour, providing they do not appear together”. When two characters to which the same colour has been attributed come together on screen there is the need to change one of the colours, thus leading to inconsistency and potential confusion. I partake of De Linde and Kay's opinion (1999:15) that “excess colour coding is thought to be inadvisable as it could potentially lead to greater confusion”. This proved to be the case when colours were tested among the Portuguese Deaf. When questioned about the use of colour in subtitles, most respondents thought it was a good idea. However, when checked on their understanding of colour (e.g. to identify speakers), it became obvious that colour was actually a cause for confusion rather than an asset. This was particularly the case when, due to the high number of characters on screen, it became necessary to switch from the pre-established colour codes to distinguish between two character to whom the same colour had been attributed. Furthermore, it was also clear that certain colours were easily confused, suggesting that the decoding of colours is not a straight forward matter, thus deserving further research.

Given the above mentioned findings, I believe that colours should be kept to the minimum and viewers should be given some kind of complementary explanation that they can fall back on should they need to check the meanings of colours⁵⁷.

⁵⁷ TV3 (Spain), for instance, explains its colour codes on page 885 of its teletext system, an example to be followed. Some DVDs already provide an explanation of the colour codes in use. An example of this might be found in the DVD for *Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* (2002) that offers the following explanation of the colour codes in use: BLANC: voix on – personnage visible à l'écran; ---: plage de silence; JAUNE: voix off – personnage hors champ Voix émanant d'un telephone, ou interphone; MAGENTA: description de bruit et son; CYAN: pensée du personnage et voix du narrateur.

The fact that different television channels use different colour codes makes it very difficult for deaf people to adjust to the codes in use as they change channels. To make matters worse, colour codes may change within the same television channel, to adjust to programme genres (section 5.3.2), thus imposing greater decoding effort on the viewer.

National standardisation of conventions such as those pertaining to colour would make life much easier for deaf viewers. The Spanish norm, UNE 153010:2003, proposes a standardised colour code that is already being used by various Spanish television broadcasters⁵⁸.

Although this colour code shows that some concern has been given to the achievement of better legibility, if we are to take Baker *et al.*'s study (1984:8-9) into account, we may question why the Spanish norms leave white over black for "the rest of the characters" and "for characters who do not speak much" when it is considered to be far more legible than magenta over black that has been attributed to the fourth leading character. It may be argued that when there are many minor characters, white will be more used than magenta. This may be a point in case but it still needs some reflection.

⁵⁸ The Spanish norm (AENOR 2003:7) proposes the following colour code:

| Color de los caracteres | Color del fondo | Asignación |
|--|-----------------|---|
| Amarillo | Negro | Primer protagonista Persona con mayor densidad de diálogo |
| Verde | Negro | Segundo protagonista Menor densidad de diálogo que el primer protagonista |
| Cian | Negro | Tercer protagonista |
| Magenta | Negro | Cuarto protagonista |
| Blanco | Negro | Resto de las personajes no significativas Personajes con poco diálogo Subtitulado en directo e informativo Documentales con un solo narrador |
| Rojo | Blanco | Efectos sonoros ¹⁾ |
| Azul | Blanco | Efectos sonoros ¹⁾ |
| Azul | Amarillo | Canciones |
| ¹⁾ Los caracteres rojo sobre blanco y azul sobre blanco tienen iguales características visuales, por lo que no hay un orden de prioridad en el uso de estas combinaciones de colores. Se utilizarán en función del programa o la luminosidad del mismo. | | |



Fig. 20 – Subtitle in magenta with poor legibility
(RAI uno – Italy)

The *BBC Subtitling Guide* (1998:6) lays out a number of rules about the use of colour that, to some extent, contradict those of the Spanish norm since we read that “green should be the least frequently used colour” and there is a warning not to use “coloured text on a white background”. These discrepancies show that colour in subtitling is a field that needs to be further analysed.

Portugal is no exception to the rule when it comes to the management of colours on teletext subtitles. When RTP was the only broadcaster providing subtitling for the hearing impaired, all subtitles were presented in yellow, so that they could be easily distinguished from open subtitles that are traditionally written in white. The introduction of subtitling by commercial TV broadcasters also brought about new attempts to make teletext subtitles more legible. Unfortunately, most of the times, colours have been used in very inconsistent ways, making it sometimes difficult to understand what colour codes are being used in one particular programme.

With the *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project various subtitle colour tests were carried out with small groups of Deaf viewers. Perhaps because they had never seen the use of coloured subtitles to identify speakers on Portuguese television before, they reacted strongly to the use of colours for this particular effect. But this did not mean that they were opposed to the use of colours. They were actually enthusiastic about testing out different solutions. With their help, we arrived at a proposal that was tested on live broadcasts and then incorporated in section 3.3 of the *vKv Guidelines*. The aim was to keep things simple. The

decision was that colours would not be used to identify speakers but to differentiate labels with explanatory notes from subtitles containing actual speech. Other conventions were proposed to identify speakers, such as displacing subtitles, punctuation, adding arrows or adding speakers' names.

The use of colour codes was managed in three distinct ways. In the first place we grouped together all programmes that might contain the interaction between many characters, with special sound effects and music, with complex camera work and where narrative drive is highly dependent on the interplay of all these factors. Generically speaking, this will be the case of feature films, TV shorts, series, serials and telenovelas. Given that these audiovisual texts are usually very dynamic and require a lot of attention to the image, subtitles keep to three colours alone: white on black for speech:



Fig. 21 – White on black for speech (SIC
[MA] – Portugal)

yellow on white for speech conveyed through electronic devices (telephone, television) and for labels containing translator's comments (speaker's name or sound effects):



Fig. 22 – Yellow over black for translator's comments (SIC [MA] – Portugal)

and cyan over black for music (identification, related comments and song lyrics):



Fig. 23 – Cyan over black for information about music (SIC [MA] – Portugal)



Fig. 24 – Cyan over black for song lyrics (SIC [MA] – Portugal)

The initial option to use yellow over black for emoticons came to be a problem. When placed before white coloured subtitles, contrast was rather small and many deaf viewers reported that they could see no difference between the yellow and the white on their television sets. This meant that rather than being helpful, these emoticons became disruptive. The option to use cyan was then considered more adequate; however, SIC is still using yellow on black for emoticons. It is hoped that this will be changed in the near future.



Fig. 25 – Yellow on black for emoticons followed by white on black for speech (SIC [MA] – Portugal)

The introduction of colour in Portuguese SDH is still in progress. At present, both TVi and RTP are working on this issue but neither channel has arrived at stable colour codes yet, an indicator of the complexity that coloured subtitles entail.

The *vKv Subtitling Guidelines* also propose another two sets of colour conventions for interviews, chat-shows and contests, and for documentaries.

In the first case, where very little is happening except speech exchanges, and the camera concentrates on the speakers themselves most of the times, we propose that white over black always be used for the reporter(s)/presenter(s) and a different colour be attributed to each of the interlocutors to be consistently kept from beginning to end. The use of colours does not appear disruptive in this case for there is usually no complementary information about music or sound effects⁵⁹. Most programmes of this sort have a limited number of active interlocutors which means that there will be no need to repeat colours.

In the case of documentaries, the main issue resides in off-screen narration and on-screen speech. Following a similar logic to that used in films and series, white on black is recommended for all on-screen voices and yellow on black for off-screen narration voices. If an on-screen character momentarily speaks off-screen, subtitles should continue to be

⁵⁹ In the case of contests where there is a gong or a bell, this should be indicated by other codes (written comment or icon, for instance).

written in white and other techniques (position shift or arrow) can be used to identify the fact.

It is worth mentioning that the use of colours in subtitles can be extremely useful in the subtitling of programmes for specific purposes. Gradual colouring of subtitles could be used in didactic programmes to increment reading speed in young readers.⁶⁰

4.3.4.3. Layout

Three different aspects will be taken into account in terms of layout: number of lines, positioning and alignment.

Most European countries present subtitles in one, two or three lines, whilst preference seems to go for two liners. Praet *et al.* (1990:205) present us with two contrasting findings: “more time is spent reading a one-line text than a two-line text and less time in following a one-line subtitle than a two-line subtitle”. This is considered to be due to “the informational redundancy from the visual scene and the syntactic/semantic complexity of the two types of sentences” (*ibid.*). These findings reinforce two aspects that have been discussed at some length in section 4.2: that subtitles maintain significant bonds with the image and that long sentences usually result in syntactic complexity. In principle, I exclude three liners because I consider them to go against the grain of optimal readability⁶¹. The option for one or two liners will obviously be dictated by the audiovisual texts’ rhythm, the amount of speech to be subtitled, and a deliberate concern for synchronisation. If the main criterion is to be one of semantic unity (both with the image and within subtitles), then the choice between one or two liners will have been automatically taken care of.

Further problems will derive from the justification of subtitles (position on screen – centre, left or right) and their alignment (both lines centre aligned, left aligned or right aligned). In

⁶⁰ An interesting instance of the use of this technique might be seen in the commercial that was shown on all national television channels, over the 2004 Christmas period, advertising toys at one of the main national hypermarkets. It was highly appreciated by both hearing and Deaf children who enjoyed it to the point of having it recorded on tape for repeated viewings.

⁶¹ An exception is made for the insertion of short labels, such as to describe atmosphere, describe music or identify speakers.

most European countries, subtitles appear at the bottom of the screen and, by default, are centre justified and centre aligned. RTL in Germany and RAI uno in Italy always use left alignment regardless of the subtitle's position on screen.



Fig. 26 – Left aligned subtitles
(RAI uno – Italy)



Fig. 27 – Left aligned subtitles
(RTL – Germany)

SDH has, however, used positioning to its advantage to help deaf receivers identify the speaker or to show the direction from which an off-screen sound may be heard.

According to the CMP guidelines (2001:6), “placement must not interfere with existing visuals/graphics such as maps, illustrations, names of countries, job titles, or names of speakers”, and subtitles should be placed elsewhere on the screen. This recommendation seems lacking on one more detail that is particularly important for deaf viewers and that the ITC guidelines (1999:10) include in their recommendations: “it is most important to avoid obscuring ‘on-screen’ captions, any part of the speaker’s mouth or any other important activity”. Of all these situations, the one that is most important to deaf viewers is that subtitles do not cover speakers’ mouths, for many deaf people aid their reading of intralingual subtitles with lip-reading.



Fig. 28 – Subtitles covering speaker's mouth
(A 2: – Portugal)

Another decision to be made is on which of the two lines (top or bottom) to leave longer. If, for syntactical reasons, the option is totally open, then it is desirable that subtitles be arranged so as to leave the important visual information as visible as possible.

Left and right justified subtitles are usually left and right aligned. The same criterion as that described above is seen to preside to the line breaking in these circumstances. Ivarsson and Carroll (1998:77) present us with reasons for different line sizes in the following manner:

If the subtitles are centred, it makes no difference which of the two lines is the longer or shorter, since the distance of the eye to travel is always the same, *i.e.* half the length of both lines [...]. But when the lines are left-justified it is quite a different story [...]. Here it is obvious that the upper line should be the shorter of the two.

If this logic is to be maintained, then when lines are right justified the first line should be the longest so that the eye movement may be reduced. These decisions will be conditioned by the variety of factors that any particular subtitle will impose. Luyken *et al.* (1991:47) round up this issue by saying:

Whatever the subtitle position, consistency is all-important since the viewer will begin to anticipate the appearance of the next subtitle. Exceptionally, if consecutive subtitles form a similar shape, it may be advisable slightly to reposition the second so that the viewer perceives the change of subtitle.

As in most cases in SDH, the main concern must always be to guarantee reading comfort and to obtain optimal readability conditions, whilst guaranteeing cohesion and coherence between subtitles and the rest of the audiovisual whole. This matter of subtitle breaks will

be discussed at greater length in section 4.3.5 for issues pertaining to the verbal component will be far more imposing than those that are purely aesthetic in nature.

4.3.5. Verbal component

Pragmatics can be concerned with aspects of information (in the widest sense) conveyed through language which (a) are not encoded by generally accepted conventions in the linguistic forms used, but which (b) none the less arise naturally out of and depend on the meanings conventionally encoded in the linguistic forms used, taken in conjunction with the context in which the forms are used.

(Cruse, 2000:16)

For methodological reasons, I will divide my study of the verbal component into two separate parts: transposition from the oral to the written modes and issues pertaining to the subtitles themselves. This division seems fundamental for, on the one hand, we will be analysing the way in which complex multi-coded messages are transposed into strictly visual (and mostly) written verbal messages and, on the other the hand, once transposed, the way those messages relate to the audiovisual whole and how they may be structured in order to guarantee greater readability to the deaf addressee.

Hatim and Mason (2000 [1997]:435) state that “as a translator, the subtitler is seeking to preserve the coherence of communication between addressees on screen at the same time as relaying a discourse from screenwriter to mass auditors”. In the case of SDH, these “mass auditors” are a distance away from those intended by the screen writer or by the audiovisual text’s producer and/or director. This means that translators will need to compensate for any loss that may derive from not accessing the acoustic component of the utterances that are exchanged between the characters on screen. There will also be a need to structure subtitles in such a way that they blend in naturally with the visual component, without imposing extra strain on the act of reception. Once again, it is fundamental to stress the fact that Deaf addressees and hard-of-hearing addressees perceive the

communicative interpersonal action on screen in different ways, for their own communication models may be substantially different from those activated by hearers. The hard-of-hearing will always see subtitles as an instance of oral speech, but for the Deaf, who have never used the language in its oral form, subtitles will never be relaying speech, they will just be written messages. This may go against the grain of many of the theories that posit subtitles as written speech. If Deaf people do not use some of the prosodic features of oral speech in their own communication systems, if these are markers of the language of hearers, it seems appropriate to localize subtitles as much as possible to the lingua-culture of these specific addressees. This substantiates *lato sensu* Kussmaul's belief (1995:64) that "there are utterances which have a function only within the source language community. In such cases these utterances have no communicative purpose for the target language community".

This leaves us with a fundamental question that begs to be answered: do Deaf people really benefit from subtitles that read like written speech or will they benefit more from having subtitles that read like written text to which they relate through usage? So far, this question seems to have gone unanswered in theoretical works about SDH, and the analysis of subtitling practices and guidelines reveals some inconsistency in the way speech is transposed into subtitles.

4.3.5.1. From speech to writing

The complex issue of transposing oral speech to writing in subtitling has been widely discussed by many scholars (Lambert 1990; Gottlieb 1994a; Hatim and Mason 2000 [1997]; Díaz-Cintas 2003b; Neves 2004b) and most of what has been written about interlingual subtitling (for hearers) is, in principle, applicable to SDH. There are, however, issues that need to be re-addressed in the light of Deaf and hard-of-hearing addressees. Special attention needs to be given to the problems that derive from interpersonal pragmatics, implicature, non-standard language and paralinguistic codes.

Poyatos (1997:262-263) provides us with ten different realizations of language, paralinguage and kinesics according to the dominant system, which is placed first in each case:

- Verbal language
- Verbal language-paralanguage
- Verbal language-kinesics
- Verbal language-paralanguage-kinesics
- Paralanguage
- Paralanguage-verbal language
- Paralanguage-kinesics
- Kinesics
- Kinesics-paralanguage
- Kinesics-verbal language

All these combinations show how the verbal component of communication is only a small part of the whole. All these systems pertain to orality. Writing, and particularly literature, has taken to a number of strategies to convey as many of these elements as considered relevant to the communication act. Subtitling in general has taken as its primary concern to convey the verbal component of speech with the more obvious implied paralinguistic information that comes with punctuation and by transferring certain markers of orality through phonetic transcription or different fonts, among others. This is done under the assumption that viewers will be receiving, through image and sound, the information that comes encoded in paralinguistic or non-linguistic signs. When actual speech is relayed in subtitles, (*i.e.*, through verbatim subtitles), these often become deficient in cohesion, grammatically incorrect or as unstructured strings of words that would be quite incomprehensible if not accompanied by image and sound.

Even though I advocate that SDH subtitles should read like printed text and not like a written version of orality, I do not mean that all markers of speech must be abolished. Just as happens in literature, many of these may be maintained to convey character and personal difference. They do, however, need to be adjusted so that they will not hinder reading and make viewing unpleasant.

Rosa (2001:216) lists a number of features that make subtitles read “like a printed page”. Among them, she makes reference to the fact that:

the subtitles ignore expressive and phatic functions; leave out interpersonal involvement and informative signals; overlook prosody and paralinguistic signs; omit overlaps, repetitions, hesitations, expletives, interjections and forms of address, among others; omit expressive illocutionary acts; and use a TTL standard variety.

These changes are presented as undesirable even if accepted with some condescendence and excused by the inherent technical constraints. As far as SDH is concerned, such characteristics may mean greater adequacy to the needs of this particular audience.

When we watch an audiovisual programme we are attending to instances of speech that may be spontaneous or be structured to convey a spontaneity that has been created for specific ends. Rемаel (2001:18) reminds us that:

in the case of feature films, the subtitler needs to consider to what extent the film dialogue retains the apparent sequentiality of spoken language, but is also dictated by other, hierarchic, concerns, which are determined by the story as told dramatically through a structure underlying its pictures.

This means that many of the dialogues have been pruned and adjusted to suit purposes that are not inherent to speech alone, which is often reflected in realistic, yet not real, communicative exchanges.

Speech, as depicted on screen, and regardless of its fictionality, will always show situations where interlocutors negotiate meaning. This will be found, for instance, in the way they manage turn taking and face-want. These are conventionalised formulae that are part of the ritual of communication, used spontaneously by people in order to achieve their communicative aims. Quite often, these formulae are void of propositional content and they just indicate relational etiquette. This will come in the form of phatic functions, (such as call interjections, polite address or proper names), of socialising automatisms that are directly connected to the social and relational standing of each of the interlocutors or in the form of formulaic speech openings and closings. Hedging is also often strongly felt in oral communication and fillers or dilatory techniques are applied to gain time and to keep conversation going.

Given that interpersonal pragmatics is highly conventionalised and that it is conveyed through more than words, it is easily identified by people who share the same cultural

background. Problems arise when the receivers do not identify such conventions and thus, cannot interpret signs conveniently. In cases where the screen depicts similar contexts to those in which the receivers place themselves, this is not problematic. Most deaf viewers have learnt how to cope with the conventions used by their hearing peers. Problems will arise when the codes in use differ substantially from those used in the viewer's community. This situation was found in the *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project where special care was needed when transferring Brazilian Portuguese forms of address into those used within the context of European Portuguese. In this event, it was curious to notice that the fact that Portuguese Sign Language does not contain two different signs for "you", as happens in oral Portuguese [você] and [tu], Deaf viewers were insensitive to the efforts that the hearing translators had put into clarifying the two forms of address within the European Portuguese social conventions. Deaf collaborators often told us that they could see how the different people related to each other, even without words, which came to show again that much that is contained in words is, in fact, conveyed through other signs.

From this and other experiences, it became clear that as long as the communicative act complies with the co-operative principle (Grice 1975 and 1978), and there is no flouting of the maxims of quantity, quality, relation or manner, no serious problem will arise in the interpretation of the audiovisual text. This, I say for the actual speech acts that are depicted on screen, because I take it as a premise that most subtitles will comply with the above mentioned principle⁶². It is also with this in mind that I advocate adaptation rather than verbatim or edited subtitles. In those cases where the interpretation of meaning depends on inference and viewers are required to complete what is given at a superficial level with personal information, communication often breaks down. De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:123) believe that "conversational participants will infer unexpressed content rather than abandon their assumption that discourse is intended to be coherent, informative, relevant, and cooperative". This means that people will automatically seek reasons for any flouting of maxims and will read between the lines to arrive at what they understand to be

⁶² I believe that subtitlers should avoid opting out, violating or flouting maxims because this will always mean adding to the processing load, a situation that is particularly undesirable in SDH.

the implied meanings. This, however, takes communicative expertise that comes with shared ground and common knowledge.

And it is here that translators need to act so as to aid deaf viewers in their retrieval of meaning. Because many Deaf receivers relate to written speech as their second language and do so within the framework of their own linguistic system, they may lack in the necessary knowledge and techniques to quickly process written language in some of its most complex forms. The question again will remain in finding a balance between simplicity and completeness.

In this study it became clear that processing implied meaning was indeed a problem for many. It was also interesting to see that when taking speech into sign language, interpreters always adapted the message, filling in missing or implied information and dissipating ambiguity through explicitation, which is a common trait of all translation. This is particularly the case when figurative language or highly marked rhetoric is used. Careful adaptation occurs, for instance, in the conveyance of metaphoric language. Levinson (1983:150) explains that:

an important part of the force of any metaphor thus seems to involve what might be called the 'connotational penumbra' of the expressions involved, the *incidental* rather than the defining characteristics of words, and knowledge of the factual properties of referents and hence knowledge of the world in general.

Metaphors, that according to Morgan and Welton (1986:92) use "a process of matching connotations: those of the object with those of the signified idea", are particularly problematic for many Deaf people because their inferential meaning is only achieved if the receivers are in possession of the notions that characterise the related objects. De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:8) state that "the operation of inferencing [...] strikingly illustrates how receivers support coherence by making their own contributions to the source text". When communicating, "text producers often speculate on the receivers' attitude of acceptability and present texts that require important contributions in order to make sense" (*ibid.*). In most cases, audiovisual text producers speculate about hearing viewers and completely ignore the existence of "different" receivers. It often happens that

many Deaf people cannot decode the filmic whole because they do not have the required “knowledge” for educational, social or physiological reasons.

Evidence that metaphors are a problem when presented in subtitles may be found in Walleij (1987:26) who reports on a study in Sweden:

Not many deaf people understand metaphorical language in Swedish. So when a subtitle in a programme says that someone has “hit the nail on the head”, they interpret it literally. We therefore prepare information about a programme subtitled before it goes out.

Similar findings derive from the study conducted in Portugal within this research which makes me agree with the recommendation set forward by Baker *et al.* (1984:31) that subtitlers should resort to “a free translation of what is meant even if not the exact words”. Equal care will need to be taken when subtitling similes and idioms for, as Cruse (2000:74) puts it, their constituents are, in a real sense, meaningless and they live from their syntactic frozenness. Still within the Portuguese context it was also found that although some Deaf people said they enjoy poetry, it was often the case that they admitted that they did not understand much of it. It was clear that the metaphoric language that poetry uses was part of the problem.

It was also interesting to see that the Deaf enjoy telling jokes and laugh heartily at the jokes they tell each other. However, it was often the case that they did not react in the same way to the jokes they read. They said that they could not see the joke or that it didn’t make sense. Further probing showed that they had not arrived at the implied meanings, and once explained, they did understand the pun, but they did not see the fun of it.

In the case of jokes, implied meanings are manifold and they may be more difficult to translate than metaphors. Zabalbeascoa (1996:251-254) classifies jokes from the translator’s perspective as being international jokes, national-culture-and-institutions jokes, national-sense-of-humour jokes, language-dependent jokes, visual jokes and complex jokes. Those that will present the greatest difficulty to deaf viewers will probably be the language-dependent jokes for, according to this scholar (*ibid.*:253) they “depend on features of natural language for their effect, such as polysemy [...], homophony [...],

zeugma". The problems that these jokes raise derive from the same issues that may be found in metaphors. Baker *et al.* (1984:40) say that "the surest way of killing a joke is to explain it". However, it may be the case that by simply transcribing it, in the case of intralingual SDH, or by keeping as close to the original wording as possible, in interlingual SDH, it might be equally "killed" for it may not be fully understood by the deaf receiver. Dealing with humour in audiovisual translation is, indeed, a challenge⁶³ that is far greater in the case of SDH for the reasons that were addressed in section 1.3.4 and it seems most sensible that, as posited by Schröter (2004:90):

instead of attempting a difficult transfer, the result of which would be liable to criticism [or misunderstandings], the subtitler might then consider an unpretentious translation of the hard-core meaning of the troublesome sequence to be the best solution.

Regardless of the solutions that may be found, maintaining humourous effects in subtitling will inevitably prove Díaz-Cintas' words (2003b:253) right:

El humor es, sin duda, uno de los ejemplos de recreación lingüística que más pone a prueba las habilidades del traductor, empujándole a extremos que le obligan a activar soluciones imaginativas que, en ocasiones, se han de alejar forzosamente del contenido del original si se quiere alcanzar un efecto similar.

Further to the issues mentioned above, other problems may appear when subtitling linguistic variation (*cf.* Mayoral 1999), when language is being used in ways that go beyond its mere denotative dimension or in ways that depart from common usage. The general solution found for these situations is usually that of standardisation, a situation that Lambert (1990:235) sees as quite undesirable:

Quoi qu'il en soit, le sous-titre standard opte délibérément pour une représentation standardisée du discours (fictionnel) en recourant à un style zero, au langage non-dialectal (l'exception confirme la règle) et grammatical.

However, where SDH is concerned, it seems appropriate to take this "style zero" as a means to achieve greater readability. Unusual speech forms may need to be pruned and

⁶³ The phenomena has been addressed to some extent by Zabalbeascoa (1994 and 1996), Pisek (1997), Chiaro (1992), Gottlieb (1997d), Whitman-Linsen (1992) Fuentes (2000), Schröter (2004) and Martinez Serra (2004). Within the Portuguese context a PhD research work on the translation of humour in Portuguese subtitles is being presently conducted by Maria José Veiga at the University of Aveiro.

touched up in order to be easily followed when presented in the form of subtitles. Deaf viewers will find it easier to read short concise self-contained sentences using common vocabulary than sentences that use complex structures and lexis with a low incidence rate in standard language usage. De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:9) report that:

the processing of highly informative occurrences is more demanding than otherwise, but correspondingly more interesting as well. Caution must be exercised lest the receivers' processing become overloaded to the point of endangering communication. [...] Particularly low informativity is likely to be disturbing, causing boredom or even rejection of the text.

Different programme genres and audiences will require different approaches at this level. However, in the case of television programmes, it is very difficult to strike a balance because of the heterogeneous nature of television viewers. In section 4.2.4 it was suggested that little or no adaptation be done at the level of lexis. This option may be further supported by the finding that guidelines on intralingual subtitling for the hearing impaired never propose any sort of simplification at the level of lexis, even though many do so, in terms of syntax. Baker *et al.* (1984:37), however, do mention the possibility of making changes at this level by saying:

Uncommon words are read more slowly than common words; also common words tend to be shorter than uncommon words. For these reasons, subtitles can often be shortened by substituting a common synonym for an uncommon word.

Curiously enough guidelines for interlingual subtitling for hearers consider lexical simplification welcome. Ivarsson and Carroll (1998:89) do so by saying that "subtitlers should remember that it is easier for viewers to absorb and it takes less time to read simple, familiar words than unusual ones", adding that "if a subtitler is faced with a choice of two synonyms, it is better to choose the more common word if this can be done without doing any injustice to the spirit and style of the original". Lexical choice will be mostly determined by the nature of the original text which should be taken into account as far as possible. In the *vKv Guidelines*, a proposal is set forward that "difficult" vocabulary be left in provided that there is enough reading time and context to allow for the extra processing that it may require. This is done in the belief that the exposure to unusual lexis will enlarge the

receivers' pool of vocabulary which will revert towards the enrichment of linguistic competence.

I share the notion that syntactic simplification is fundamental in SDH, for it will seldom impoverish the message and will make reading far easier and profitable. Speech tends to use simpler syntactic forms than writing which is, in itself, an asset when it comes to providing SDH. Subtitles should be presented as cohesive and coherent sentences, which stand together as self-contained linguistic units.

This notion of syntactic simplification may be extended to a related matter, that of subtitle segmentation. Syntactically correct subtitles may be difficult to read if they have been segmented in ways that do not enhance readability.



Fig. 29 – Subtitle segmentation
(RTL – Germany)



Fig. 30 – Subtitle segmentation
(BBC Prime – UK)

Karamitroglou (1998) posits that a "subtitled text should appear segmented at the highest syntactic nodes possible", in the belief that "the higher the node, the greater the grouping of the semantic load and the more complete the piece of information presented to the brain". Sometimes segmentation is forced into difficult situations for technical reasons, but if we take segmentation as a prosodic element, it is essential that "we should try to force this pause on the brain at a point where the semantic load has already managed to convey a satisfactory complete piece of information" (*ibid.*).

This logic should be kept when splitting long sentences into more than one subtitle. Ideally each subtitle should correspond to an utterance and be complete in itself.



Fig. 31 – Subtitle splitting sequence
(BBC Prime – UK)

However, when there is a need to carry a sentence across subtitles, this should be done in such a way that the content of each part will read naturally and as fully as possible. Again, guidelines propose different ways of going about sequential subtitles and actual subtitling practices show that more care seems to be taken in the segmentation of long subtitles than in the segmentation within subtitles. Subtitles are, in most cases, self-contained; and long multi-subtitle sentences occur essentially in documentaries or news reports. Most of the analysed programmes show that there is no special indication that a subtitle is to be continued in the subtitle to come⁶⁴. Very few channels are still using triple sequencing dots at the end of the first part and double linking dots at the beginning, a practice that is followed by RAI uno in Italy.



Fig. 32 – Ending triple dots
(RAI uno – Italy)



Fig. 33 – Double linking dots
(RAI uno – Italy)

⁶⁴ It is naturally assumed that if there is no full stop the sentence will continue in the following subtitle.

The Spanish TVE2 also indicates sequencing subtitles by using triple sequencing dots both at the end of the first part and beginning of the second:



Fig. 34 – Ending triple dots
(TVE2 – Spain)



Fig. 35 – Triple linking dots
(TVE2 – Spain)

The chunking of speech into readable subtitles, through simplification of lexis and syntax and through careful segmentation may, at times, be considered inadequate. This is particularly so whenever meaning may derive from particular lexis or unusual or incorrect syntactic structure. These are cases in which unusual syntax will reveal information such as uncertainty, hesitation, or some important feature in the character's make-up. The *BBC Subtitling Guide* (1998:11) advises: "Do not tidy up incoherent speech in drama when the incoherence is the desired effect". As in many other instances of SDH, this will be a matter of good sense and of the evaluation of relevance. Should inconsistent or difficult speech not be informative in itself, benefit will derive from touching it up a little, substituting it for indicative or descriptive labelling captions⁶⁵, also called "labels" in the profession. It might be more adequate to not include it at all if redundant visual information is sufficient to convey what may be contained in the verbal message.

Further to the issue of simplification, special reference needs to be made to the subtitling of linguistic diversity that may be socially functional and that may be found, for instance, in dialects and in specific registers. Halliday (1978:185) draws a difference between these two concepts in the following manner:

⁶⁵ The *BBC Subtitling Guide* (*ibid.*) sees this as a last resort. I do not share the same opinion for it is often the case that what is important is not the words themselves but the effect that they produce on the viewer.

A dialect is 'what you speak' (habitually); this is determined by 'who you are', your regional and/or social place of origin and/or adoption. A register is 'what you are speaking' (at the given time), determined by 'what you are doing', the nature of the ongoing social activity. Whereas dialect variation reflects the social order in the special sense of the hierarchy of social structure, register variation also reflects the social order but in the special sense of the diversity of social processes. We are not doing the same things all the time; so we speak now in one register, now in another.

This alone would be enough for one to consider that both dialects and registers require special attention in all types of subtitling for they contain important connotative value. However, if we are to take into account that decoding non-standard language will require greater processing effort, it will be appropriate to question whether the inclusion of deviant language will be cost-effective. Baker *et al.* (1984:40) consider that:

deaf viewers cannot be expected to be familiar with these forms, though meaning can usually be deduced from context. Ideally, extra time should be allowed if idioms or dialect words are included (at least an extra second per subtitle).

This follows the strategy that was proposed above for unusual or "difficult" lexis. If the inclusion of deviant language is dictated by stylistic reasons and if the characters' composition is highly dependent on their linguistic output, then special care will need to be taken so that such features are conveyed without being too disruptive to the reading process. De Linde (1997:22) suggests:

For example, to represent the flavour of say a Cockney speaker, you might include any unusual vocabulary or sentence constructions such as "caffs", "missus" and "ain'ts", but it would be inappropriate to replace every dropped "h" and "g" with an apostrophe.

The option to keep the "flavour" of orality and transcribe personal idiosyncrasies is particularly seen in British SDH:



Fig. 36 – Flavour of orality
(BBC Prime – UK)



Fig. 37 – Flavour of orality
(BBC Prime – UK)

In the case of subtitling people speaking a foreign language, with linguistic interference or a foreign accent, most of the analysed guidelines propose ways to identify such incidents. The *BBC Subtitling Guide* (1998:4) suggests that you “give a flavour by spelling a few words phonetically or include unusual vocabulary” or else, “use a label [AMERICAN ACCENT]”. Various other guidelines show that caution is needed when dealing with this issue by proposing that only one instance of “deviant language” should be included in any one subtitle or that marked language be limited to the bare minimum to get the message across.



Fig. 38 – A touch of foreign language
(BBC2 – UK)



Fig. 39 – Labelling caption for foreign language
(BBC2 – UK)

Another area which deserves attention is the subtitling of taboo language. All the analysed guidelines on intralingual subtitling categorically qualify any type of modification of foul language as a form of censorship. Baker *et al.* (1984:40) add that swear words should not

be censored “unless reading time is required”, a criteria that does allow for some ambiguity. Some toning down might also be read into statements such as “general swear words should not be taken too literally” or “repeated use of profanity or slang may be distracting”.



Fig. 40 – Taboo words
(TV3 – Spain)

Guidelines for interlingual subtitling appear to be less worried about censorship and often refer to the fact that taboo language is far more aggressive in its written form than when used orally. They often propose that it be kept to a minimum that will guarantee that the “tone of the film” may be kept. Roberto and Veiga (2003:257) refer to the difficulty that derives from translating taboo in the following way:

translating taboo language is one of the most complex tasks for the translator, as it is particularly marked by cultural and sociological references and value mores. The translator must not only understand the language level of the slang, swear words and expletives and their significance and the register of the text in which these are found, but also find equivalent utterances in the target language relevant to the target audience in a corresponding community.

The above mentioned concerns are particularly relevant to interlingual subtitling. Intralingual subtitling will pose problems of a different nature. The issue will not be in finding correlations but in the weight that expletives gain when presented in written form. As far as taboo language is concerned, it is my belief that Deaf viewers do not require special treatment from that given to hearing viewers, a notion reinforced by Stoddart

(1983:22) who says that “just because a viewer may be deaf, it doesn’t mean he’s any less capable of coping with bad language”.

This issue has social implications that have been dealt with in terms of international and national policies. Great Britain, for instance, has enforced a watershed policy which ITC (2002b) clarifies in the following manner:

9pm is normally fixed as the point up to which licensees will regard themselves as responsible for ensuring that nothing is shown that is unsuitable for children. After 9pm parents may be expected to share responsibility for what is viewed.

In spite of such concerns, it is obvious that criteria vary and different readings of such policies will be reflected in in-house policies. Channel 4, for instance, allows for the use of “bloody”, “crap”, “damn” and “pissed off” in pre-watershed screenings, a situation that may be regarded as unacceptable by other broadcasters.

Watershed criteria are stricter in Slovakia where in amendment to previous Acts, Art. 20 of Act n° 308/2000 now reads

Programmes or other parts of the programme service which are likely to impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors, or disturb their mental health or emotional state must not be broadcast between the hours of 6.00 and 22.00 o'clock. (RVR 2003)

These concerns also find echo in European legislation as may be found in theme 4 of the TWF Directive on the “Protection of Minors and Public Order – Right of reply”.

The enforcement of such laws and regulations will, to some extent, aid translators in their choices and approaches towards taboo language. However, while more specific codes of conduct are not created, much will still remain in the hands of professionals who will, in the end, be the ones to assess the possible implications of their choices.

Further to the issues discussed above, a number of specific problems derive from the written nature of subtitles. These will not be addressed in detail at this point for they will gain relevance in the discussion of other matters addressed in various sections of this chapter. Regardless of all, reference should be made to the need to establish consistent norms for the inclusion of features such as abbreviations and acronyms, apostrophes,

capital letters, collective nouns, punctuation, hyphenation, numbers and dates, in subtitles. Most of the guidelines that were analysed in this research propose explicit recommendations towards such normalization in what the BBC style guides (1996:3) consider being a way “(1) to achieve greater consistency across subtitlers’ work; (2) to improve the readability of subtitles; and (3) to emphasise a few standard rules which are often misunderstood or overlooked”. The analysis of actual programmes reveals that many of the recommendations that may be found in the different guidelines have not been applied in practice. The reason for such discrepancies may add valuable information to the study of subtitling in general and of SDH in particular, for they will provide further insights into the constraints that truly influence subtitle quality.

4.3.5.2. Paralinguistic information

Unlike hearers, deaf viewers have to rely on sight alone to grip the multiple messages that are conveyed beyond words. As Kussmaul (1995:61) reminds us, “tone of voice, facial expression and gestures are important clues and we must rely on our interpretation of words within their contexts”, hence reinforcing the importance of such elements in oral communication. Such clues are non-linguistic or paralinguistic in nature, and are constructed through vocal, kinetic or proxemic signs. Non-linguistic, paralinguistic and linguistic signs often inter-relate during speech and it is sometimes difficult to draw a line between the first two for they share many common traits. Cruse (2000:8-9) presents paralinguistic signs in the following manner:

The defining characteristic of paralinguistic signs will be taken here to be an extreme dependence on the accompanying language. Either they cannot be produced except during speech (because they are carried on the voice), or they cannot be interpreted except in conjunction with accompanying language.

Cruse (*ibid.*:9) opposes paralinguistic signs to non-linguistic signs, such as smiles and frowns, that are said to be “perfectly interpretable and capable of being produced in the absence of any accompanying language”.

Cruse (*ibid.*) goes further in classifying the functions of paralinguistic signs under three headings: *punctuation*, mainly used to segment the stream of speech so as to facilitate processing; *modulation*, which adds emotive or attitudinal colouring to the verbal message; and *illustration*, where hand movement⁶⁶ depicts movement or shape. Mozziconacci (2002:1) adds that:

in addition to fulfilling a linguistic function such as to structure discourse and dialogue, and signal focus, prosodic cues provide information such as a speaker's gender, age and physical condition, and the speaker's view, emotion and attitude towards the topic, the dialogue partner, or the situation.

With regards to people with hearing impairment, it is obvious that all the paralinguistic signs that depend heavily on acoustic elements will be lost beyond repair unless there are visually redundant features or contextual information that conveys similar messages. Sound-based prosodic features such as variations in tone of voice, pitch (intonation), loudness (stress), rhythm and speed, will modulate words and in certain cases even change their meaning to degrees that might imply irony and contradiction. By not accessing all these hidden meanings, deaf people may feel at odds interpreting apparently incoherent communicative acts.

All this means that, in cases where clues are not provided through visual signs, subtitling for deaf audiences will necessarily need to find strategies to convey the paralinguistic information.

In spite of having linguistic competence to interpret paralinguistic signs, Deaf viewers will be limited to those aspects that are conveyed visually. If we are to return to the list of functions proposed by Cruse, we may conclude that the one that may be more easily lost to deaf subtitle readers will be that related to modulation. Those signs that act as punctuation have been taken care of by conventional punctuation. Those that function as illustration will be easily followed in the image.

⁶⁶ Even though it is not mentioned by Cruse, illustration may also be conveyed through the movement of other parts of the body, such as head, arms and legs, for instance.

Written words still have difficulty in conveying prosodic features that may be the result of communicative intentionality or be the result of emotional states because the associative dimension of language is always the most subjective to perceive and to interpret. By watching programmes supplying SDH it becomes obvious that this is a problematic area for very little is presently being offered. However, the analysis of the various guidelines shows that their makers are aware of the importance of paralinguistic information and various proposals are set forward in this respect. Emphasis is one of the prosodic features most mentioned, with Baker *et al.* (1984:17) suggesting that “uppercase and/or distinctive colours” be used for special emphasis, and adding that “block capitals are reserved for indicating any significant increase in volume” (*ibid.*:29). In open subtitling, it is also found that the use of italics is recommended to show emphasis. Stress may also be conveyed through punctuation, such as double exclamation marks when intensity gradually grows to a climax. All these solutions are used, even if sparsely, in many European countries.



Fig. 41 – All caps for emphasis
(BBC2 – UK)



Fig. 42 – Caption on tone of voice
(TVi – Portugal)

Softness, such as whispering, seems to be more difficult to convey. Baker *et al.* (*ibid.*:29) suggest the use of parenthesis, inverted commas or different colours for the effect. Another set of guidelines proposes the use of three dots and an exclamation mark to show “quiet” intensity. Very few of these proposals have ever actually been seen on screen. It is, however, common to find labels saying things like [whisper].

Labels seem to be a common solution for the conveyance of emotional modulation. Most of the times, punctuation is used to convey emotional states. In one of the analysed guidelines, a recommendation reads that “double [exclamation mark] is extremely excited; [exclamation mark] with question mark if excited and disbelieving”. In another, we read: “multiple exclamation points: strong emotion”. Conventions vary greatly but the expressive punctuation seen on various instances of SDH across Europe is easily interpreted, and does not offer serious problems.



Fig. 43 – Caption expressing emotion
(TVi – Portugal)



Fig. 44 – Punctuation expressing emotion
(BBC Prime – UK)

In spite of this, there are cases in which these solutions seem to be insufficient calling for the inclusion of extra information if hidden messages are to be clarified.

According to Mozziconacci (2002:1), “in studies of emotional speech, the term emotion is used with different meanings, and sometimes includes notions such as attitude, feeling, or intention” which makes it very difficult to categorise emotions in speech. In addition, it sometimes occurs that words and paralinguistic signs are contradictory, rather than complementary, which calls for inference. As Wichmann (2002:14) puts it, “inferencing is triggered by mismatch, and the greater the mismatch between the expected and the actual (whether prosody, lexis or other linguistic element) the more likely it is that a meaning is generated”.

As happens with all other situations where inference is in order, a greater processing load is required. Some emotional states have similar prosodic features. Yacoub *et al.* (2003:731) mention that “sadness is mostly confused for boredom, boredom is mostly confused for sadness, happy is mostly confused for hot anger, hot anger is mostly confused for happy, and neutral is mostly confused with sadness”⁶⁷.

Situations where disambiguation is needed are the most challenging for translators may opt between two possible solutions: they either describe the physical demonstration of the emotion by adding a labelling caption, such as [quivering voice] or they interpret the conveyed emotion and present a label that might read as [nervous]. The option to describe or to interpret paralinguistic signs is worth questioning. On the one hand, if the acoustic sign is simply described, there will be space for personal interpretation on behalf of the receiver. A quivering voice may reveal nervousness, passion, fear or hate. The receivers will have to decode it according to their own perception of the whole. This is more taxing, yet more challenging. On the other hand, by being given an interpretation of the sign, the decoding effort has been lightened for the receiver even though personal choice has been taken from the receivers’ end.

Among the dangers of interpreting prosodic features, one may be of particular importance. All interpretation is the result of personal experience, which means that translators will necessarily be interpreting paralinguistic signs according to criteria which are marked by their own personal readings. Another issue resides in choosing which paralinguistic signs to interpret. And then still, deciding how such signs might be conveyed in a functional manner.

The study of emotional speech has been central to the development of speech recognition systems that have multiple applications in talking toys, video and computer games, and call centres (Yacoub *et al.* 2003:729). In order to study the way emotions can be “understood” or “conveyed” by machines, numerous attempts have been made at categorising emotions

⁶⁷ An instance where facial expression is misleading may be seen in *appendix 3.2*. Disambiguation was needed in the subtitle. This was done by including an emoticon whenever emotion was felt in the character’s voice.

into manageable groups. This alone has been problematic for different lists have derived from different approaches. By making a synthesis of lists proposed by Murray and Arnott (1993) and Stibbard (2001), Gustafson-Capková (2001) proposes the following list of primary emotions: anger, joy, happiness, humour, sadness, fear/anxiety, disgust, hatred/contempt/scorn. And as secondary emotions: grief/sorrow, affection/tenderness, sarcasm/irony, surprise/astonishment. This list of seven primary emotions, which is also advocated by Ekman (1999), is in itself non-consensual, and it is often reduced to a list known as the “big six”. Seppänen *et al.* (2003:2470) state that:

Currently, the term “big six” is gaining influence, referring to the (universal) existence of six major emotions. However, there is no final agreement on what emotions fall under this heading although fear, anger, happiness, sadness, surprise and disgust are probably the strongest candidates.

A few questions may be raised when considering the possibility of using these criteria in SDH. Are these basic emotions the ones which most often occur in audiovisual texts? Do some ambiguous situations derive from the occurrence of secondary emotions? Or might they result from a confluence of the two? Or of the confluence of emotion and more complex contexts brought about by mood music and/or narrative tension? What criteria should be followed in terms of the list of relevant emotional states for the better comprehension of the audiovisual text through the reading of subtitles? How can emotions be conveyed in an economical and efficient manner?

The matter of paralinguistic information was analysed in depth in the course of the *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project and has been subject to much thought in view of a new proposal for the presentation of paralinguistic information in SDH. It is now obvious that the criteria applied during the project itself were not bound in any way to previously categorised emotional states. It became clear from an early stage that many Deaf collaborators were not accessing paralinguistic information revealing happiness and sadness, but other basic emotions such as surprise, fear, anger and disgust were more easily identified. This may be accounted for by the fact that the first two emotions are broad in scope and can be misinterpreted because they may be understood as expressing other emotions. Another reason for this lies in the fact that stronger emotions are more

cross-modally redundant and even if acoustic signs may be lost, other visual signs will be compensatory. Of all the secondary emotions *irony* stands out as particularly disruptive to deaf viewers for being highly inferential and for living out of contradiction between actual speech and the intended meaning that is mainly suggested through the tone of voice or other features such as marked stress.

Once established that these were problematic areas, it became necessary to decide upon ways to convey such emotions through subtitles. We were aware of the most common solutions in use, such as labeling captions and punctuation, but considered that other solutions should be sought to enrich subtitles in a practical manner. We were also conscious that the issue could be addressed in two different ways, either through describing or interpreting signs, and the choice would prove difficult. Interpreting paralinguistic information was extremely complex and the risk of misinterpretation is significant for, as explained by Abelin (2003:837),

when listeners ascribe emotional states to the speaker there is an influence from prosody, the meaning of the utterance and the gestural communication, but also the situation, expectations, reactions from the participants in the conversation etc influence what the listener will perceive. All aspects influence the meaning of the utterance from the perspective of the listener.

With the *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project, first attempts were made at the introduction of emoticons to convey some of the most meaningful paralinguistic or emotional features that were not easily perceived through visible signs. It was obvious that emoticons could be used to advantage for they are economical in nature and, above all, they are profusely used by most deaf people in SMS messages and in Netspeak. The use of emoticons in SDH is used by the Spanish Antena 3 which proposes 4 emoticons (or smileys):

- :-) Alegre
- :-(Triste
- :-o Gritando
- :-* Susurrando

AENOR (2003:15) proposes a slightly different set of emoticons for the Spanish context:

- :-) Alegre
- :-O Gritando
- :-(Triste
- :-* Susurrando
- ;-) Bromeando

When Portuguese Deaf collaborators were asked to identify similar symbols, written individually on paper, there was no problem with the “happy” and “sad” emoticons, but :-o was often said to mean “surprise” and :-* was most often identified as meaning a “kiss”. It was also clear that, even within the same community, emoticons were given different meanings. However, and despite the differences, most Deaf people did use them regularly to communicate with each other. These findings made us question the utility of introducing emoticons to provide paralinguistic information in SDH in Portugal.

Crystal (2001) elaborates on the use of emoticons in Netspeak, which are said to be “one of the most distinctive features of e-mail and chatgroup language” (*ibid.*:39). This scholar (*ibid.*:36) makes special reference to the limitations of these signs in the following way:

It is plain that they are a potentially helpful but extremely crude way of capturing some of the basic features of facial expression, but their semantic role is limited. They can forestall a gross misperception of a speaker's intent, but an individual smiley still allows a huge number of readings (happiness, joke, sympathy, good mood, delight, amusement, etc.) which can only be disambiguated by referring to the verbal context.

Although Crystal considers the ambiguity of emoticons to be a disadvantage, in the case of SDH, I see it as an asset for it allows for some leeway for individual interpretive input and, when related with the rest of the visual and verbal signs, they disambiguate and gain specific meanings. This obviously means I see greater advantage in the use of emoticons than in that of smileys. Even though it might be more difficult to read :-(⁶⁸ than to see the

meaning of 😊, or 🤪⁶⁸, the first allows for greater interpretative freedom than the latter.

⁶⁸ Available at: <http://www.smileyworld.com/>, [accessed 2 February 2005].

The introduction of emoticons in Portuguese SDH in the *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project was to become one of the main features of our new proposal for SDH in Portugal and came to show that their presence was not disruptive and was welcomed by many. We were perfectly aware of the implications of such an innovation and took as our own many of the concerns set forward by Luyken *et al.* (1991:144):

Great caution and restraint would, however, have to be used in any attempt at standardization and codification. Paralinguistic symbols would have to be well understood and easily remembered and they would not have to proliferate too much.

A set of 9 basic emoticons were set forward to convey what we considered to be the most helpful and easily identifiable set possible. When tested, it became obvious that changes were in order. Two emoticons were slightly changed :-)) and :-((became :) and :(because they proved to be easily confused with ;-); :-D was dropped, for “very happy” could normally be understood from the context; :-O for “angry” was substituted by :-/ because it is less confusing. The final list resulted in the following eight emoticons:

| | |
|-----|-------------------------------|
| :) | for “happy”; |
| :(| for “sad”; |
| :-/ | for “angry”; |
| :-s | for “surprise”; |
| :-& | for “confusion”; |
| ;-) | for “irony”; |
| :-O | for “loud speech/screaming”; |
| :-o | for “soft speech/whispering”. |

Unlike the usual situation in Netspeak, where emoticons are placed at the end of the sentence, the choice was made to place them at the beginning of the subtitle so that the reading would be modulated from the start. This also goes against traditional narrative techniques in which qualifiers are usually placed after the utterance. As Poyatos (1997:20)

puts it, “first he [the reader] knows ‘what is said’, and then, once it has been said, he learns ‘how it is said’ (eg. ‘ – said with sarcasm’, ‘ – said with elation’)”.

To make the distinction between emoticons and the rest of the subtitle, they were presented in yellow. This choice would prove to be inadequate for some television sets did not show the difference distinctively. It was later suggested that the colour be changed to cyan for better legibility.



Fig. 45 – Emoticons
(SIC [MA] – Portugal)

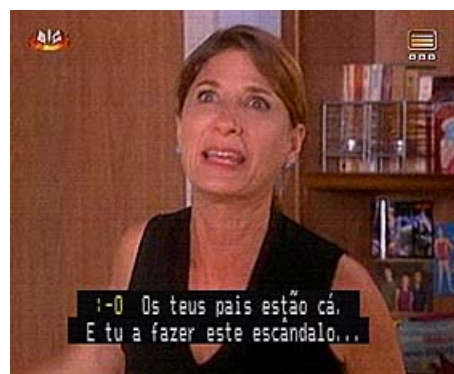


Fig. 46 – Emoticons
(SIC [MA] – Portugal)



Fig. 47 – Emoticons
(SIC [MA] – Portugal)



Fig. 48 – Emoticons
(SIC [MA] – Portugal)

In order to facilitate the decoding, a teletext page was set up with a simplified explanation of the various emoticons in use. This was considered to be very useful and many Deaf collaborators mentioned that it was essential during the first weeks. They later reported

that they no longer needed to go back to the teletext page because they fully understood the emoticons. These were said to be “easy”, “helpful”, “exciting” and “modern”.



Fig. 49 – Explanation of emoticons teletext
(SIC [MA] – Portugal)

Even if it may be essential to keep the list of emoticons stable and consistent, this is not a closed set that may not be improved. By suggestion of a Deaf collaborator a new emoticon is to be added to this list :-)(to show fake anger. This will only be done once the emoticons in use have been fully integrated. The addition or exclusion of any emoticon will always be accompanied by an update of the teletext page so that it will continue to be easy to check if necessary.

The use of emoticons did not exclude other ways of visualising paralinguistic information, such as expressive punctuation. This, we hoped, to quote Poyatos (1997:21), helped “the more sensitive readers not just to ‘hear’ but to ‘see’ the persons in the story”.

In spite of their utility, I share Morgan’s belief (2001) that punctuation must be used with care. This scholar reinforces this idea with the comment that “over-punctuation, including massive use of exclamation marks; too many of these – in English at any rate – devalue their impact, and using more than one at once makes the screen look like a skittle alley” (*ibid.*:164). An example of what Morgan means may be found in the figure below:



Fig. 50 – Expressive punctuation
(SIC [MA] – Portugal)

Hence, the introduction of emoticons and expressive punctuation allowed reading to be modulated just as speech is modulated by paralinguistic signs. This area is rich and challenging for academics and for professionals, as well as for subtitling software developers, who could come together to find creative solutions for the conveyance of the subtleties that orality entails.

4.3.6. Non-verbal component

The important thing to remember about sound is that it is not understood in a linear way, but in an irrational and emotional way by each person individually.

Georgakopoulou (2003:74)

If there is one characteristic that best defines SDH, it is its need to include information about the non-verbal acoustic components of audiovisual texts. All scholars and professionals in the field justify the inclusion of information about sound effects and music on the premise that, otherwise, people with deafness would miss out on important aural information. All guidelines and codes of good practice contain recommendations to this effect. However, careful analyses of actual subtitles on screen show that the issue is complex and only partially tackled. Theoretical works on SDH echo such complexity by only touching upon the matter without going into specificities. On the whole, what might be

inferred is that translators and scholars of translation are more aware of the transfer that occurs at a linguistic than at a semiotic level and that the transcoding of acoustic signs into visual (verbal or iconic) signs calls for specific interpretative skills that need to be developed.

Drawing upon film studies, Chaume (2004a:21) refers to four parameters to classify sound in film:

El sonido puede ser diegético (pertenciente a la historia) o no diegético (el que proviene de narradores en off, por ejemplo). También puede encontrarse en campo (asociado a la visión de la fuente sonora) o fuera de campo, cuando su origen no está presente en el encuadre y, por tanto, no es visible simultáneamente con la percepción del sonido.

This can be a starting point for the discussion of sound in SDH for one of the main problems that the translator encounters is the fact that sound has a life of its own, taking the viewer beyond the image by suggesting worlds outside those on screen that will only be accessible to hearers.

According to Marshall (1988), in audiovisual texts, and in movies in particular, sound comes in three tracks that “must be mixed and balanced so as to produce the necessary emphases which in turn create desired effects”. These three tracks contain the human voice, sound effects and music, three areas that are central to SDH. In the first track, the human voice, one considers the content of speech, the verbal and paralinguistic components, and the identification, description and location of the voice (addressed in section 4.3.6). In terms of the second track, sound effects, Marshall (*ibid.*) establishes a difference between synchronous sounds “which are synchronized or matched with what is viewed” and asynchronous sound effects, which are not matched to any visible source, but serve “to provide an appropriate emotional nuance and they may also add to the realism of the film”. In SDH guidelines this second parameter is usually included under the topic of “sound effects”; however, these seldom go into detail about the particularities of the wide variety of sound effects that may be found in films. The third parameter, which is present in all guidelines, is usually addressed under two main headings “background music” and “songs”.

The fact that guidelines explicitly call the attention of subtitlers to the soundtrack may be seen as a very positive point although very few of the analysed documents specify how translators may go about identifying those sounds that need to be explicitated in the form of subtitles. This may be due to the fact that sound effects and music are addressed as wholes and little has been written about the roles and functions that sound plays in films.

Holman (1997:xvi) considers that sound in film has a narrative and a grammatical role. In the first case, sound can have a *direct* narrative role, contributing towards the development of the story, or a *subliminal* narrative role, working on the audience unconsciously. In the second case, sound is said to play a grammatical role in the process of film making, providing cohesion and continuity between the different parts.

Kerner (1989) considers sound effects to have three functions: simulating reality, creating illusion and suggesting mood. In reference to the first function, this scholar says that with the introduction of sound effects everything in film becomes more realistic. Even though, quite often, the sound effects are produced artificially, they take things from the realm of make believe into concrete existence.

As far as the function of creating illusion is concerned, Kerner (*ibid.*) states that:

with the addition of a few sound effects, it is possible to inform the audience that he has driven up to the house, parked his car, walked to the door, and used his key to unlock the door. None of this was shot. It was an illusion created with effects.

As for the creation of mood, Kerner (*ibid.*) exemplifies:

Add an off-scene owl and it becomes lonesome. Add a wolf howling in the distance and it perhaps harkens danger.

Cut a gunshot and you are telling the audience that another human is nearby. Is he friend or foe?

You can cut the first phone ring just ahead of the reaction and there is nothing unusual. Cut two or three rings before she reacts and you are telling the audience that she was so involved in the argument she did not even react to the phone until the third ring. That is revealing about her mood and depth of involvement.

The sound of a distant train whistle makes it a lonesome scene. Replace the train whistle with the sound of kids playing outside, and the audience perceives an entirely different emotion.

As he parks, we hear the sound of a small dog yapping. No particular danger is perceived. Inside is probably a child or an old lady. Change the small dog yapping to the sound of a vicious Doberman, and the mood is again changed.

Bell and Garrett (1998:3) consider that “the music and sound effects of modern media can act in similar ways to prosodic features in spoken texts – grouping items, marking boundaries, indicating historical periods or distant locations, and so on”, an opinion that is shared by Prendergast (1992) who adds that dialogue tells the story, whereas sound effects and music “set mood, add punch to the visual images; propel the audience to another time zone, past or future”. In short, sound envelopes image and draws the hearing viewers to the image, directing their attention to details that go unseen to those who cannot hear. Branigan (1984:99) encapsulates the magic of sound in the following way:

Sound draws our attention to a particular motion-event and thus achieves a greater ‘intimacy’ than light because it seems to put the spectator directly in touch with a nearby action through a medium of air which traverses space, touching both spectator and represented event.

With all this in mind, an inevitable question needs to be raised: if not through sound, how can the hearing impaired be equally “touched” and taken to “feel” what is only suggested through acoustic innuendos? Ideally, the answer would simply read “render it visually”; however, this will contain an implied problem: sound you perceive and image you read. By rendering sound visually, you will always be loading the reading effort and this should be avoided at all costs.

In the light of all these premises we may proceed with the analysis of recommendations in guidelines and of actual practices. It is my belief that by understanding the role and function of the components that make up each of the soundtrack parameters, translators will be better equipped to convey acoustic messages to greater effect. What I am also implying is that recommendations and technical solutions alone will not suffice. This is an area where subtitlers will take on a new role. Further to translating words, they will need to interpret what goes unsaid and can only be perceived. Like poetry, sound and music need to be felt in order to be translated and, once felt, they need to be understood as distinct signs that must be re-codified into visual signs suggesting equivalent effects. In this respect,

equivalence gains a new dimension because visual and aural codes can never be equivalent for they imply different means of perception and, at best, they will convey approximate content. Hearers will automatically integrate speech, sound and image, whereas deaf viewers will need to process the first two in a sequential manner and consciously integrate the different visual codes so as to arrive at an approximation of the audiovisual whole.

Given that translators working on SDH need to spell out what they perceive in subliminal ways, the translation process that takes sound effects and music into subtitles might be seen as an instance of exegetic translation which Hervey and Higgins (1992:50) consider to be a “style of translation in which the TT expresses and explains additional details that are not explicitly conveyed in the ST”, or in other words one in which “the TT is, at the same time, an expansion and explanation of the contents of the ST”.

4.3.6.1. Identification, description and location of human voice

The first concern of all subtitling is to present speech, which most often comes in the form of dialogue. Subtitling in general has ways to go about identifying speaker changes by including dialogue markers (a dash) whenever a subtitle presents exchanges between different speakers. This convention is equally followed in SDH. In some countries, such as Portugal, a dash is placed at the beginning of each subtitle line when the words of two different speakers are displayed simultaneously. In other countries, only the words of the second speaker are preceded by a dash. In Spain, for instance, there is some inconsistency in the use of punctuation to identify changes of speaker and different norms seem to be used by different channels. In Portugal, subtitling follows the punctuation conventions that are used in written texts. This makes it easier for viewers to follow dialogue on screen.



Fig. 51 – Introduction of dash for second speaker
(TVE1 – Spain)



Fig. 52 – Introduction of dash for both speakers
(TVE2 – Spain)

The use of punctuation alone to indicate speaker changes in dialogue is quite insufficient for deaf viewers because, even though dashes indicate that there has been a change in speaker, they do not help to identify who the speaker is. The image often clarifies this but there are situations where the image alone does not aid much. Add-on subtitles might help further, particularly when the dialogue is tight and there is a close relation between the two parts, such as in a question and answer sequence. As mentioned in the *BBC Subtitling Guide* (1998:15), “a further advantage of add-ons is that they appear more natural when the two corresponding speakers are not shown in the same camera shot”. This technique will aid cohesion and help deaf viewers follow the dynamics of the exchange. It is useful when there are only two characters involved in the exchange but might not be sufficient when there are several characters simultaneously on screen, when people speak with their back to the camera or when they speak off screen. In SDH, these problems have been dealt with in a number of ways. The most common practice is to identify speakers by coloured subtitles (*cf.* section 4.3.3.2) or by placing the subtitles directly below the person who is speaking (*cf.* section 4.3.3.3)⁶⁹. By using different colours to identify speakers, BBC often shows a dialogue exchange between more than two speakers on a two or three-liner. Although this solution is used in situations where the dialogue is tight and fast, the

⁶⁹ When there is a need to identify a speaker in a crowd, the *BBC Subtitling Guidelines* (1998:22) suggest that “in block subtitles, you can use a WHITE “up” arrow – ↑ – and place it under the relevant person. Then place the subtitle on the next line, under the arrow.” This technique was tested in Portugal but was not followed because the addition of a caption identifying the speaker was considered less confusing and more effective.

subtitles can become very dense and confusing, making reading far more difficult. This becomes even more so when the speech of various speakers is presented in different colours but in one subtitle alone:



Fig. 53 – Three speakers on a three-liner using three different colours (BBC Prime – UK)

In addition, and particularly when the speakers are temporarily off screen, some channels opt for the inclusion of a label with the speaker's name, which is sometimes accompanied by an arrow showing that the voice is coming from off-screen. There are times when the subtitle is also shifted to the side from which the sound comes, as proposed by the *BBC Subtitling Guide* (1998:23): "if the out-of-shot is on the left or right, type a left or right arrow (< or >) next to his or her speech and place the speech to the appropriate side". When it is not important to identify the speaker, although it may be important to mention that the voice comes from off-screen, the inclusion of an arrow and/or the displacement of the subtitle will show where the sound comes from (fig. 56). The CMP guidelines (2001:22-23) propose that "when a speaker cannot be identified by placement and his/her name is unknown, identify the speaker using the same information a hearing viewer has: female #1, male narrator, etc." This is particularly important if the identification of the voice (e.g. child) is, in itself, relevant to the message in case.



Fig. 54 – Name label to identify on-screen speaker
(SIC [MA] – Portugal)



Fig. 55 – Identification of off-screen speaker
(TV3 – Spain)



Fig. 56 – Unidentified speaker from off-screen
(BBC2 – UK)

A similar situation may be found when speakers are not obvious because voices are conveyed via a loudspeaker, a telephone or radio, for instance. Here too, it is important to offer two distinct pieces of information in an economical way: identification of the voice and clarification of source, a problem that is solved by adding a label, by changing colour and/or position, by adding quotation marks or, in systems that permit it, by changing the font to italics.



Fig. 57 – Identification of speaker and source
(TV3 – Spain)



Fig. 58 – Identification of speaker and source
(RAI uno – Italy)

Baker *et al.* (1984:29) propose that quotation marks be used to identify pieces of speech that may be conveyed through a telephone, for instance, rather than resorting to “the tedious preface VOICE AT OTHER END OF PHONE”. Quotation marks alone might not be sufficient to clarify the situation. In Portugal, where colours are not being used to identify speakers in general, RTP uses white subtitles for the off-screen speaker to contrast with the on-screen speakers which are subtitled in yellow. By adding quotation marks to the parts that are conveyed through an electronic apparatus, the circumstance becomes clearer. However, during the various sittings with deaf viewers, while watching subtitled programmes, it became obvious that they find this difficult to follow when there are no other visual or linguistic cues. Even though this is not yet feasible within the present technological context, these situations could be effectively identified through the introduction of an icon, created for the effect (fig. 59). This would mean unloading the reading effort and using the visual competencies that are highly developed in deaf people.



Fig. 59 – Icon to identify speech through phone
(vKv proposal)

When various people speak simultaneously, the solution that is offered by most guidelines and followed by many broadcasters is the inclusion of a label:



Fig. 60 – Simultaneous speech
(SIC – Portugal)

This solution is adequate when all those speaking are saying the same thing. Confusion may occur when it is obvious on screen that various people are talking simultaneously but saying different things. The question of who or what to subtitle is no different in SDH as it is in subtitling for hearers. The option will always be to subtitle the voice that is best heard or that is most relevant to the plot. There are occasions, however, when it becomes difficult to identify one voice in particular and the effect is that everybody is talking simultaneously but nobody is saying anything more important than the rest. This situation is often taken as a simple sound effect rather than belonging to the realm of speech since it is void of objective content. Deaf viewers may feel that they are losing out on important information if it is not clarified that there is not much to be made of what is being said on screen. To hearers, such situations will mean no more than background noise, a situation that might not be identified as such by deaf receivers.



Fig. 61 – Simultaneous yet imperceptible speech
(SIC – Portugal)

There are times when what is said is perfectly perceptible but the content is irrelevant to the plot. Here, subtitlers need to identify the function of such utterances and decide upon whether to subtitle the exact words or to paraphrase the idea in a condensed manner. By analysing numerous subtitled programmes, it was found that many translators have opted for the second possibility, particularly when there is overlapping speech. In these cases, relevance is given to the main conversation whilst the rest is considered to be background noise and labelled accordingly.



Fig. 62 – Background speech
(BBC2 – UK)

An equally confusing instance may occur when one sees the characters' lips moving but, in fact, nothing can be heard or understood, either because the character is only mouthing, mumbling or the voice has been drowned by music for cinematic effect. If deaf viewers are

not told what is happening, they may feel that they are being cheated out of information that, in reality, has not been given to hearers either. However, hearers do get acoustic cues that clarify those situations. Most guidelines make clear reference to the need to add labelling captions to identify inaudible or imperceptible speech and various broadcasters do follow such proposals consistently.



Fig. 63 – Identification of on-screen inaudible speech (BBC Prime – UK)



Fig. 64 – Voice drowned by music (SIC [MA] – Portugal)

All the above mentioned techniques are particularly relevant to feature films and series where sound is used in creative ways, thus contributing towards the dynamics of story telling⁷⁰. The reactions of Deaf viewers to the various subtitling solutions that were tested in the *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project, showed that by using several techniques simultaneously and consistently, in a complementary and redundant manner, it becomes easier for deaf viewers to identify speakers, follow changes and feel comfortable with the extra information that is supplied for the effect.

⁷⁰ Documentaries that have long off-screen narration follow different conventions such as the use of colour, font or positioning to identify speakers. These are found to be less complex in the case of identification of sound and source, but they may present moments where extra information may be deemed necessary. In those cases, subtitles use conventions from other types of programmes.

4.3.6.2. Sound effects

In audiovisual texts, sound may be direct (or live), or be studio sound, which is added to the image in a selected and intentional manner. In the first case, sound is basically denotative and a reflex of reality, whereas in the second, it may be manipulated so as to eliminate unwanted sounds, improve the sound quality and to create subjectivity and connotation.

The way people perceive and understand sound in film will be motivated by their competence in interpreting cinematic codes and their sensitivity to acoustic stimuli. Some sound effects have become stereotypical to certain genres and similar sound effects gain connotations according to context. Laughter in a terror film will always have a different meaning to that in a comedy, for instance. Most people do not perceive sound in an analytical manner and just incorporate all the acoustic cues in the perception of the whole. Translators working on SDH will need to understand the way different sound effects contribute towards those perceptions and distinguish the traits that confer particular effects such as source, location, on-set, frequency, speed, duration, loudness and gradation, among others.

By analysing actual TV programmes in various European countries, it was found that sound effects are dealt with in inconsistent ways. Even though guidelines clearly state the conventions to be used in subtitles on sound (e.g. positioning of labels on screen, font and colour codes) there remains a void as to recommendations on how to deal with the description and interpretation of sound. The *BBC Subtitling Guide* (1998:35) considers that “all *important* sound effects must be subtitled”. Important sounds are taken to be those “which are crucial for the viewer’s understanding of the events on screen or which may be needed to convey flavour or atmosphere, and those which are not obvious from the story-line” (*ibid.*). As mentioned above, these are subjective criteria for the establishment of importance and will derive from personal interpretation. This means that very little guidance is given to translators in terms of the different types of sounds that may be significant in less subjective terms. In spite of all, a criterion which comes as overriding is that non-synchronous sound needs to be subtitled. This recommendation is particularly

relevant because sounds that do not have visual correlates are completely lost to deaf viewers. However, even when the source of sound is visible, it is important to include such sounds in the subtitles for, like speech, sound effects are modulated by intensity or speed and they may convey space, time, movement or atmosphere that might not be equally available through visual cues.

At times, it is not enough to describe sound effects in simple subtitles such as [woman screams]. Even if this may mean a certain degree of subjectivity, it will be preferable to have a more detailed subtitle that might read [woman screams hysterically]. It may sometimes be relevant to add information on “how” “why” or “where” so that deaf receivers may perceive the quality or nuances of certain sounds, meaning that more might be given to deaf viewers than may be perceived by hearers. This is sometimes considered to be undesirable. However, if that information is decisive for the comprehension of the whole or if it reduces the processing load, why not include it?



Fig. 65 – Label on sound effect
(SIC [MA] – Portugal)



Fig. 66 – Label on sound effect
(BBC Prime – UK)

Often, different and simultaneous sound effects converge towards the creation of certain atmospheres that become more important than the sounds themselves. This means that it may be more useful to describe what sensations or emotions those sound effects produce than to simply write that such sounds are present. The solution to opt for – description or interpretation – should always be based on the fundamental criteria of relevance and adequacy. If the simple description of sound is considered to be sufficient to convey the

intended effect, then the best option will be to simply indicate the presence of sound (e.g. ambulance siren); however, if further to the siren, other sound effects interrelate to build an atmosphere, then it may be more economical and relevant to describe the resulting effect (e.g. [tension mounts]). The Portuguese Deaf taking part in the screening sessions where these techniques were tested showed that they appreciated the inclusion of interpretative labels and said that it was easier for them to imagine the scene than when simple information about sound was incorporated. It was also found that a mixture of descriptive and interpretative labels conveyed acoustic messages more effectively:



Fig. 67 – Sound effects sequence
(SIC [MA] – Portugal)

Once translators have decided which sounds or sound effects are relevant, it is necessary to choose the best means to convey such messages. Describing sound is not easy and long labels can be difficult to read or require reading time that might not be available.



Fig. 68 – Long explanation of sound effect
(RTL – Germany)

The *BBC Subtitling Guide* (1998:35) suggests that labels should be as brief as possible and have the following structure “subject + active, finite verb”, a recommendation that also appears in other guidelines and that seems to be followed by many broadcasters:



Fig. 69 – Sound-effect
(BBC Prime – UK)



Fig. 70 – Sound effect
(ITV1 – UK)



Fig. 71 – Sound effect
(RTP1 – Portugal)



Fig. 72 – Sound effect
(TV3 – Spain)

This simplicity is, indeed, welcome because reading becomes easier. However, it has been found that what makes sound relevant is the fact that it is sudden, or continuing or even that it may be heard from afar. In other words, more is needed if labels are to be truly informative. BBC explores a number of interesting techniques to convey nuances and features. Continuity and suddenness are given through verbal tenses; sound is collocated in time and space; and intensity is given through the inclusion of adjectives and adverbs or through the choice of stronger verbs. Flashing subtitles are sometimes used to convey repetition instead of that being written in the label (*appendix 3.9*).



Fig. 73 – Label on sound effect
(SIC [MA] – Portugal)



Fig. 74 – Label about repeated sound effect
(BBC Prime – UK)

The CMP guidelines (2001:19-21) present us with a detailed account of means to convey continuity, repetition or intensity through the use of punctuation which may be particularly expressive when combined with onomatopoeia⁷¹. The introduction of nuances of this type and of onomatopoeia is, however, problematic in SDH.

When Cruse (2000:7) considers that “onomatopoeic words display a degree of iconicity, in that their sounds are suggestive (to varying degrees) of their meaning” he is definitely referring to the effect that these words produce in hearers. This may be equally valid for people with acquired deafness who may still retain a memory of certain sounds in their memory and relate onomatopoeia to actual sound. Within the Portuguese context, many of the Deaf collaborators who took part in the *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project did not understand onomatopoeia and explicitly said they preferred to have descriptive labels than to read written sound. The analysis of guidelines showed that this matter is dealt with in different manners. Baker *et al.* (1984:22-23) consider that “if familiar onomatopoeic spellings for sound effects are available, they should be used in preference to descriptive statements” to which a note is added that “it may sometimes be necessary to distinguish gunshots from bombs or bursting balloons”, where descriptions may be preferred.

⁷¹ According to the CMP (n/d:20), a study by Gallaudet University showed that “a combination of the description and onomatopoeia was the preference of more consumers (56%) than was description alone (31%) or onomatopoeia alone (13%)”.



Fig. 75 – Onomatopoeia
(RTP1 – Portugal)



Fig. 76 – Onomatopoeia
(BBC Prime – UK)

The Spanish UNE 153010 norm (AENOR 2003:13) sees the use of onomatopoeia as problematic and proposes the use of description to convey sound effects. However, it adds the following on children's programmes:

En los casos especiales de subtitulación de programas infantiles se recomienda la utilización de la doble expresión: la descripción entre paréntesis de la onomatopeya. Por ejemplo: (ladrido) guau; (maullido) miao, (teléfono) ring; etc. (*ibid.*).

This concession to children's programmes is echoed in other sets of guidelines, which also mention the fact that certain programme types will call for different solutions. Among these, reference is made to subtitling cartoons or science fiction films, where sounds are used in particular ways, thus requiring equally different subtitling solutions.

A sound effect that often goes unattended in subtitling is silence. The power of silence in sound movies is enormous and has been accounted for in a number of ways. In UNITEC (1996) we may read that: "silence can be the most powerful aspect of sound in a film. It can enhance suspense, fear, or horror. A voice, a sound effect, or music after a silence can surprise or shock the audience, either heightening or relieving their anxiety". And Chandler (1994) also reinforces the importance of silence in film in the following way: "The juxtaposition of an image and silence can frustrate expectations, provoke odd, self-conscious responses, intensify our attention, make us apprehensive, or make us feel dissociated from reality".

Most guidelines make explicit reference to the need to label silence, however, this is seldom found in actual subtitles. In spite of the fact that, in the period of this research, no instances of subtitles showing “silence” were actually seen on screen, there were often cases where reference was made to the end of particular sounds:



Fig. 77 – Beginning of sound
(BBC Prime – UK)



Fig. 78 – End of sound
(BBC Prime – UK)

Whichever the solutions chosen to convey sound effects, they must be consistently followed throughout programmes and, ideally, should be standardised at least within broadcasters so that viewers will get acquainted with the conventions and be able to process information with greater ease. If the minimax principle is followed, then the choice will always be one where economy and efficiency will prevail. The decision as to which sound effects to subtitle will always be dependent on the translators' skill in interpreting intersemiotic messages⁷². The ways to convey such sounds may be easily conventionalised, a situation that would prove beneficial both to translators and to deaf viewers. Once translators become aware of the way sounds convey emotional, narrative and metatextual information it will be easier for them to identify the function of each sound effect and to make choices on the best ways to transmit such effects.

⁷² A brief analysis of curricula of courses on subtitling showed that very little attention is given to the development of skills such as the reading of film. In fact, SDH has only recently been introduced in such curricula. I absolutely agree with Chaume (2002a:3) that “the training of translators in this sector and the discovery of translation strategies and rhetorical mechanisms unique to the construction of audiovisual texts is only possible from an analysis of audiovisual texts that looks at their peculiarity: *meaning constructed from the conjunction of images and words*”. To this, and with SDH in mind, I add that further to image and words, translators need to understand the myriad of acoustic codes that may be used to convey non-verbal messages.

Up until now, subtitlers have depended on little more than words, punctuation and the odd symbol to convey sound effects. It is my belief that in the near future, and knowing that digital technology will allow for new types of subtitles, special icons may be used to represent sound effects. The *vKv Subtitling System* proposes the introduction of some animated icons to convey certain sounds in an effective and economical way. This may come as an answer to Céron's proposal (2001:177) that "maybe we should consider creating new uses for existing punctuation signs and – why not? – maybe new signs, as long as it is done for the sake of readability". Initial steps are being taken in the development of such a system, an example of which may be seen in *appendices 3.11 and 3.12*. These icons can be placed on screen⁷³ and may be modulated to convey intensity, loudness or movement. For example, a phone that rings insistently may be conveyed visually through the movement of the icon; a siren that drowns in the distance may be expressed through an icon that shrinks out of sight. A sound that grows in intensity may be accompanied by an icon that swells in size. Mood and intensity may be equally conveyed through colour. These icons are built around five parameters: the icon itself (for identification of sound); movement (to show tempo, speed and/or intensity); colour (for mood and/or intensity); size (for movement and/or intensity); and positioning (to identify source).



Fig. 79 – Icon for sound effect
(vKv – Proposal)

⁷³ They can be integrated in subtitles containing words or they may be used in isolation on any part of the screen. The displacement of subtitles to different points on screen may be useful to indicate where sound is coming from.

The wide variety of smileys that are now available might also be a useful solution for the conveyance of sound, e.g. 😊 or 📞⁷⁴. They are, however, more problematic in that the inclusion of a face, may condition the interpretation of the sound. If, at times, this may be considered an asset, at others, it may limit the interpretative scope and impose particular readings on the receiver.

The introduction of icons in subtitles may be seen as a way forward towards easing the processing of verbal messages. Icons are easily identified by most people because they are usually built around conventionalised imagery and gain significance through usage. This notion is inherent to Morgan and Welton's definition of the icon (1986:97) as being "[a] sign which, through frequent repetition, gains a central position in the communication systems of a culture and thereby acquires rich and relatively stable connotations". Due to their implicit nature, special care needs to be given to the creation of icons to be used in SDH. Even though people with hearing impairment are highly sensitive to visual stimuli and have a strong visual memory, it is essential to keep these icons to a small list of basic features. Furthermore, legibility and neutrality will be among the most important features to be sought if such icons are to have high value. Ideally they must not demand excessive attention of viewers and they must be broad enough, in the sense of hyperonymy, to cover different varieties of similar sounds. The conjunction of icons and words might be equally effective and will require less technical development which means they may pose less problems (*appendix 2.11*).

One of the issues that may be anticipated in the use of icons resides in the broad scope of sounds that may need to be identified in audiovisual texts. If we take into consideration that a dog can bark, whimper, snarl and yelp, for instance, any hyperonomic icon will always fall short of the implied meanings of these different sounds. As has happened with the use of emoticons for the conveyance of emotions, the introduction of icons in subtitles will need to be tested with deaf viewers so as to decide on the solutions that are most relevant and useful to these receivers. The group of selected icons will need to be short and

⁷⁴ Available at <http://www.smileyworld.com/> [accessed 2 February 2005].

concise if it is to be effective, and explanatory back-up information will always be necessary to supply people with informative reference material to clarify doubts. As with all codes, once used consistently and internalised, these icons will be accepted, recognised and integrated in the automatic reading of subtitles. People will take some time to acquire the interpretative skills required but, once done, these may become a useful and economical means to convey sound effects in audiovisual texts.

4.3.6.3. Music

As with sound effects, music plays a very important role in films. According to Blandford *et al.* (2001:156) the primary function of music in films is to provide emotional support to the story. Kivy (1997:319) declares that music fills in “the remaining expressive vacuum in the talkies”. Gorbman (1987:2-3), on the other hand, considers that “music taps deeply in cultural codes, giving it rich cultural associations and potential meaning, a ‘veritable language’ that can contribute significantly to a film’s overall meaning”. These attributes place music among the richest of filmic codes and among those that require special interpretative skills on behalf of translators working on SDH. Prendergast (1992:213-226) offers us enough reasons for the inclusion of information about music in SDH:

Music can create a more convincing atmosphere of time and place.

- Music can be used to underline or create psychological refinements – the unspoken thoughts of a character or the unseen implications of a situation.
- Music can be used to articulate details of narrative action and dialogue. Sometimes in this capacity music serves as a kind of neutral background filler.
- Music can provide the underpinning for the dramatic “topography” of a scene.
- Music can help build a sense of continuity in a film.
- Music can provide the underpinning for the theatrical build-up of a scene and then round it off with a sense of finality.

As happens with the rest of sound effects, choices need to be made as to how to convey music in the form of subtitles. Here too, guidelines and actual practice show that even

when the topic is explicitly addressed on paper, the actual presentation of information on screen is less systematic.

Conventions vary greatly from country to country and even from programme to programme. Often, information about music is reduced to a minimum and most of the labels that were found in the programmes under analysis were simple references to rhythm or the presence of music. It was sometimes found that lyrics were included when relevant to the plot.



Fig. 80 – Label about rhythm
(TVE2 – Spain)



Fig. 81 – Label indicating singing
(TV3 – Spain)



Fig. 82 – Identification of theme music
(ITV1 – UK)



Fig. 83 – Lyrics
(BBC2 – UK)

One of the recommendations recurrent in guidelines is the inclusion of a symbol to indicate the existence of relevant music. Many teletext subtitling systems do not allow for the inclusion of musical notes [♪] or [♫] as suggested in many guidelines so, in most cases, a sharp sign [#] is seen on screen introducing description about music or song lyrics.

Given that this feature had never been used in subtitling in Portugal, the introduction of information about music became a major issue in the *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project. It was very interesting to learn how the Deaf relate to music and to understand their perception of rhythm and pitch. By sharing occasions where music was central with Deaf collaborators, such as going to a concert or a party with music and dancing, it became obvious that, in spite of their hearing condition, most deaf people appreciate music and relate to it in specific ways. Young people like to keep up with the latest hits and most people have passive and cultural knowledge of musical references of the past. All these findings fed into our work and, given that this particular telenovela was highly strung by various types of music with different roles, it was possible to experiment with a number of solutions which, once tested, became regular in the subtitling of telenovelas on SIC, gained substance in the *vKv Subtitling System* and have gradually been introduced by other broadcasters in Portugal.

As happens with other subtitling systems, at the time, our teletext system did not allow us to use the crotchet sign to indicate the presence of music. This made us resort to the sharp sign that was placed whenever (relevant⁷⁵) music could be heard. Furthermore, the system did not allow for subtitles to be on screen for more than 10 seconds. In cases where music continued for longer, various subtitles containing the symbol had to be introduced to cover the period in which music was relevant. This resulted in a minor twitch in the subtitle every 10 seconds, a problem that people got accustomed to and that will be overcome with the introduction of new subtitling systems.

Theme music, which Blandford et al. (2001:240) classify as “a musical passage or melody played periodically throughout a film, or associated with a particular character, place, time, event”, was always marked as such. This was considered important because different melodies were associated with different characters and would be used either to anticipate their appearance, to act as bridges between scenes, or to relate apparently dissociated scenes with the lives of such characters. Very often thematic music was used in a counter

⁷⁵ By relevant I mean any type of music that may have been included to perform any of the functions in Prendergast's list and that might contribute in any way towards the overall message.

punctual manner and regardless of the fact that the images could be conveying particular messages, the use of thematic music would contradict or question the overall atmosphere through association.

By introducing comments about the music people came to know more about the different themes and to associate them with certain feelings (figs. 84 and 85):



Fig. 84 – Thematic music
(SIC [MA] – Portugal)



Fig. 85 – Thematic music with comment
(SIC [MA] – Portugal)

Whenever the lyrics of such themes were considered relevant, they were also included but only if there was no dialogue occurring simultaneously (*appendix 3.5*).

This telenovela was particularly marked by the presence of classical music that was intrinsically connected to the villain and that was also used to underline important moments, such as weddings and theatrical sketches (*appendix 3.3*). The option that was chosen was to provide exact information about the musical pieces (figs. 86 and 87):



Fig. 86 – Detailed information about music
(SIC (MA) – Portugal)



Fig. 87 – Detailed information about music
(SIC [MA]- Portugal)

The presence of such information was appreciated by deaf and hearers alike who commented on its didactic value.

Once tested, these techniques were used in other telenovelas that contained other kinds of music and proved to be equally appreciated by the viewers.



Fig. 88 – Exact identification of musical pieces
(SIC – Portugal)

By combining speech with labels about sound effects and music, in a balanced and complementary manner, it was possible to convey a great deal of the connotive and emotional content of the highly charged scenes which characterise Brazilian telenovelas. While other solutions, such as the inclusion of subtitles with simple musical scores cannot be used within conventional subtitling methods, music can be conveyed through the various solutions proposed above. However, there are creative means to convey music that might be effective when included in subtitles. A simple example of such a solution was found in a short advert that was presented on Portuguese televisions, in 2004, using a karaoke technique to light up a simple score (fig. 89):



Fig. 89 – Music score with karaoke technique
(Portugal)

Despite its simplicity, the overall effect of our proposal for the conveyance of verbal and non-verbal messages on *Mulheres Apaixonadas* was highly appreciated by the Portuguese Deaf community who took part in the study (*appendices 3.1 to 3.4*).

All the telenovelas broadcasted by SIC since then have been using the proposed conventions. Many hearers have reported that they turn on the teletext because they enjoy complementing their viewing with the extra information. The other Portuguese channels have gradually taken on many of the conventions set forward by this research.

The guidelines, presented in *appendix I*, condense all the findings that were tested within the Portuguese context and offer themselves as suggestions to help translators working on Portuguese SDH, to achieve more effective results when conveying audiovisual messages to deaf viewers.

4.3.7. Beyond Translation: Methodological and technical matters

It is therefore virtually impossible to give any hard and fast rules on exactly how the choice should be made: it depends on so many factors inherent in the work and the subtitler.

(Ivarsson and Carroll 1998 :85)

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there is much more to the success of SDH than the work that is done by the translators and/or subtitlers. Like all translation commissions, much of the quality of the end product is directly linked to the technical and organizational conditions in which the work is carried out and that can be linked to the sphere of patronage (cf. Díaz-Cintas 2004b:28).

Given that in the Portuguese context there was no tradition in SDH, in order to carry out the *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project there was a need to establish routines to guarantee that the subtitling process was practical and effective. By comparing our circumstances with those of professionals in other countries it became clear that, despite the fact that we were only experimenting in Portugal, many of the problems we encountered were equally felt by other professionals working in places where SDH has a long tradition. Another conclusion was that the issues that originate from outside the translation proper are as significant as those found within the translation act itself and both are highly taxing to hearing impaired viewers.

Even though, as Reid (1990:103) reminds us, the translators' loyalty "should be with the viewer", it is often found that the pressure that is exerted by all the other agents involved in any commission makes it very difficult to keep the receivers' interest in the fore. Ideally, all those involved in the commission should be perfectly aware of the specific needs of their final clients and all efforts should be made to guarantee that the end product is, indeed, useful for the people who really need it. The translator might be asked to act as negotiator not only between a target text producer and its receiver but, quite often, between the different agents that take part in the process.

This negotiation is not easy and, most often, subtitlers have very little power over the whole process which starts long before the work is assigned to them and much after the subtitling itself is done. What is offered to hearing impaired viewers is the outcome of multiple conditionings; and problems may occur at various levels: before the translation itself (in programme choice and in the information to viewers about programmes containing subtitles, for instance); during the translation (the conditions under which subtitlers carry out their work and the working methods followed); during the transmission (technical breakdowns).

In order to understand these issues, it is insufficient to analyse actual programmes that are screened on television or even the recommendations that may be found in guidelines. It is essential to talk to those who are involved in providing this service and those receiving it.

4.3.7.1. In and around translating

As far as the findings of this research are concerned, and contrary to what is proposed by Vermeer (2000 [1989]:221), translators working on SDH cannot negotiate much with the commissioners of their translation action. Subtitlers, like most translators, often work for two different clients whose needs and demands are sometimes conflicting. On the one hand, they have to comply with the needs of their commissioners (client 1) and, on the other, with those of the Deaf and HoH viewers (client 2). Subtitlers, both working in-house or as free lancers, have very little say in matters such as the choice of programmes to be subtitled, the subtitling conventions to be followed or the time given to do the job, for instance. Very often, too, they know very little about the true needs of their final clients and even when they do know their addressees reasonably well they do not often get the chance to actually draw the attention of their commissioners to these viewers' special needs. Ideally, translators working on SDH should act as mediators between receivers and commissioners, learning from the first in order to draw the attention of the latter to particular issues. Such efforts are often in vain because subtitling for television is subject to the multiple pressures that characterise television broadcasting in general. This means that

the values that govern decisions are not based on criteria such as quality and adequacy; they are often dictated by circumstances of the moment or pertaining to the market. An example of such instability may be found in something as basic as keeping to schedules. Although there may be a programme grid, television lives from its immediacy and last minute changes are often introduced to adjust to unexpected happenings. At times, last minute changes are made simply in the name of shares.⁷⁶ Translators are inevitably caught in this circuit. Last minute adjustments are frequent, forcing translators to work under considerable pressure. In countries like the UK where almost every programme is subtitled, this problem may be less acute for there are big teams of translators working exclusively on SDH and project managers have the means to adjust to unscheduled situations⁷⁷. In countries where SDH is still in its infancy, and small teams are working on it, constant adjustments have to be made and it is often difficult to find solutions for unexpected problems that may derive from such instability⁷⁸.

When unexpected change, which must be accepted as inherent to television, is backed up by adequate project management and the overall working conditions are stable, these problems are more easily overcome and translators may find it stimulating to work under pressure. Difficulty arises when the amount of output required is not sustained by sufficient time to go through all the different steps to guarantee the best quality possible⁷⁹. In our *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project we found that translators needed 15-17 hours to subtitle one hour of telenovela. This seems substantially more than the 10-14 hours mentioned by Jones (1988:66). This difference could be explained by the conditions in which the work was done, the lack of experience of subtitlers and the methodological strategies used. Now that routines have been established and subtitlers are more proficient, this rate has

⁷⁶ In Portugal, for instance, where television broadcasters compete for audience shares, decisions are made upon premises that are not always to the best interest of Deaf and HoH viewers: Last minute programme changes are made; pre-established programmes offering subtitles are substituted by others that, either for lack of time or for other reasons, have not been subtitled; or programmes are pushed into other time slots in order to accommodate to such impositions.

⁷⁷ Unexpected changes are very unusual in the BBC.

⁷⁸ The status of SDH in Portugal is not the same as in the UK and if there is a need to change something SDH will be sacrificed. That is more difficult in the UK because of the high visibility of SDH.

⁷⁹ This may happen because the programme is due to go to air or because the work load is too high for the number of people involved.

dropped to an average of 15 hours, which is still more than was initially expected⁸⁰. This, however, remains consistent with Baker *et al.*'s belief (1984:51) that "advance preparation of subtitles for a prerecorded programme usually takes 15-20 times programme time".

The routines followed by subtitlers working on SDH vary according to in-house policies. Once again, things differ greatly in view of the amount of subtitling on offer and the overall organizational structures in each case. The fundamental steps in the making of SDH are, in many ways, similar to those followed for interlingual subtitling (for hearers). Nonetheless, many of the routine tasks are carried out with different aims in view.

Baker *et al.* (1984:32) list the main steps in SDH as being:

- (i) Script timing and editing.
- (ii) Text input and formatting.
- (iii) Synchronisation and timing of subtitles
- (iv) Review and correction.

The order and importance of these procedures are said to "vary according to the type of programme being subtitled, the individual techniques of the subtitler(s), and the preparation equipment that is available" (*ibid.*). This list of procedures presupposes the existence of scripts and is particularly directed towards intralingual SDH.

In order to cover both intralingual and interlingual SDH and to be consistent with the notion of transadaptation proposed in chapter IV, I suggest a new set of procedures:

1. Checking of script or dialogue transcription
2. Translation and adaptation (transadaptation)
3. Cueing
4. Revision

When working on intralingual subtitling in Portugal, translators are rarely given a script, as usually happens in interlingual subtitling. Most of the times, translators have to work from

⁸⁰ Subtitlers working for other broadcasters in Portugal say they spend less time (12-13hrs) on their work, although they do not cover all the steps that we established as essential for our work.

the actual programme with little or no support. VHS copies are used⁸¹, making it difficult to perceive sound fully or even to understand the actual words. This is particularly the case when there are many sound effects, when various people speak simultaneously or when people use non-standard registers, dialects or have unclear voices. In the *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project, as happens with most telenovelas and soaps in Portugal, no script was available and all the work had to be done “by ear”. As work progressed, it became easier to understand and capture difficult speech, which proved that, with time, the translator’s ear tuned in to the specificities of the different voices and picked up nuances that initially went unnoticed. This led us to what we called “ear training”. Time was gained by having the same group of people “transcribing” speech and less effort was required as the skill improved⁸². Another skill to be acquired was that of simultaneous adaptation. Whilst transcribing, or translating in the case of interlingual SDH, a first step towards adaptation can be taken. By knowing their addressees well, the subtitlers were able to foresee possible problems and, rather than merely transcribing text, they simplified structures and adjusted messages so as to make them easily understood. This phase was often carried out without dedicated subtitling software and would have been done more effectively had there been specific equipment available⁸³. This fact also dictated the order in which the different tasks were carried out.

At places where the whole subtitling process is carried out on subtitling equipment⁸⁴, translators often start by fixing in and out time codes and then go back to fill in the corresponding subtitles, adjusting the content to the time and space available. The order in which these tasks are carried out will obviously demand different approaches, although it is difficult to say which solution gives the best results, for there are advantages and disadvantages in either routine.

⁸¹ The introduction of digitised fts files is now facilitating things for translators. Working files offer better quality, image and soundtracks are clearer, and it is easier to understand speech on audiovisual programmes.

⁸² De Barros (1998:68) reports that a 15-minute clip can take up to 60 minutes to transcribe.

⁸³ This was an instance where the working conditions determined the methodology to be followed. Given that there were not enough subtitling posts available, the first phases of the process were carried out using a regular PC and a video recorder.

⁸⁴ This is the case of the BBC, for instance, and of most subtitling companies working exclusively on subtitling.

One of the issues which I consider of vital importance in SDH, and that is equally shared by all other forms of translation, is the availability of resources translators may use whenever there is a need to clarify meanings, check on spelling or grammatical structures, among others. Zabalbeascoa (1996:250) summarises this aspect in the following way:

Finally, translators would have to be aided by adequate materials, which might include general and specialized reference books, computerized databases, single-purpose word-processors and other electronic translation tools. An essential part of the translator's reference material should be a specialized in-house stylebook, which could include all the information that the employer or firm can anticipate that the translator will need to know and use, including glossaries, television policies and translational norms, spelling out the priorities and restrictions for each type of case, along with a considerable number of practical examples of problems and strategies.

A visit to various subtitling companies and broadcasters showed that easy access to supporting materials is a very important asset. It was also found that translators who normally use multiple resources, produce high quality subtitles and refer to their work as being interesting and challenging. Subtitlers mention that they feel more confident when they know what is expected of them. Having guidelines and style books to fall back on was also considered important.

Another matter that deserves special attention is that of revision. Unfortunately, when time is scarce, this is one of the procedures to be disregarded. Many professionals report that they do not have the time to go over their work as desired. Baker *et al.* (1984:49) offer a helpful checklist when revising:

It is important to conduct at least two complete rehearsals of the programme with subtitles – once with sound and once without sound. Two different sets of checks can be carried out dependent on whether or not the sound is available:

Replay with sound:

- is the content of the subtitles accurate?
- does subtitle timing correspond to speech onset and completion?
- do subtitle colours correctly match the different speakers?
- do the subtitles efficiently convey the flavour/nuances/dynamics of the programme?

Replay without sound:

- is sufficient information conveyed in the subtitles to enable viewers to understand the programme?
- are there enough/too many sound effect subtitles?
- does subtitle positioning help to identify the speaker?
- is sufficient reading time allowed, are the subtitles easily readable, and are ‘false alarms’ avoided?

Worth noting is the special reference made to the section “replay without sound”. I consider this to be one of the most significant steps in the process of SDH because it enables one to check on aspects such as synchrony, cohesion and coherence and to fill in all those cues that help to follow a programme without sound.

Not much research has been done on revision in audiovisual translation⁸⁵ and most professionals count on little more than intuition to guide them. Revision is usually carried out by more experienced subtitlers. Quite often it is not done as a separate phase but while another task, such as cueing, is being carried out.

This matter of revision leads to an issue that has been discussed in terms of subtitling in general: whether all the work should be carried out by one person alone or whether quality may benefit from team work. I believe that team-translation brings great advantages to audiovisual translation in general and SDH in particular. I totally agree with Sánchez (2004:17) in that “subtitling is essentially a team effort”. This professional writes in favour of team-translation in interlingual subtitling (for hearers) in the following terms:

When all members of a team are able to perform all parts of the process, this allows for multiple checks through each stage. In an ideal scenario a translator translates and adapts a film which is then spotted by someone whose first language is the source language to identify translation errors, finally undergoing the two stage check performed by someone without source text knowledge, to pinpoint unclear or incoherent translation (*ibid.*).

In the case of SDH, if a team is constituted in such a way that different members develop particular expertise in different phases of the process, such as transcribing or carrying out mute revision, work may be accelerated and a better performance may be attained both in quantity and in quality. This does not go against Sánchez’s (*ibid.*) notion that all members

⁸⁵ A research project on “Revision in subtitling” is being carried out by Ana Cravo in Portugal. Initial findings show that this is a complex area that raises a number of problems which derive from many of the issues addressed in this section.

of a team should be able to perform all parts of the process; what is suggested is that, by developing special techniques and by assigning the tasks according to peoples' best ability, higher standards will be attained.

All said, SDH is a specific type of AVT which requires the mastery of a number of skills, making it a very demanding activity. In the job description for a position as subtitler at the Access Services Department (Ref.74687)⁸⁶ at the BBC in Cardiff, the following list of key accountabilities may be read:

1. To interpret the soundtrack of a programme and edit it into clear, easy-to-read subtitles which retain the full sense and flavour of the programme.
2. To become familiar with the whole range of subtitling techniques, including pre-prepared subtitling and respeaking, so as to be able to achieve high quality subtitles across the full range of subtitled television programmes.
3. To work accurately and calmly to very tight deadlines and during live broadcasts.
4. To proof read, review and correct own work as well as other subtitler's work, and ensure consistently high standard is attained.
5. To work with subtitlers, stenographers and assistants as part of a subtitling team.
6. To co-ordinate the work of other members of the subtitling team to ensure that both live and pre-recorded subtitles are successfully broadcast to a high standard.
7. To take responsibility for the quality and delivery of own work at all times.
8. To assist with any part of the subtitling process as appropriate.

This list sums up much of what has been addressed before. Unfortunately, and in spite of the high degree of responsibility involved, subtitlers are not among the best paid translators. In Portugal, translators working in subtitling in general earn very low salaries. Subtitlers working freelance on SDH earn above average but even so, far less than translators working in other areas. Salaries are particularly low for in-house subtitlers

⁸⁶ n/d. Found at www.bbc.co.uk/jobs/F74687.shtml [accessed 20 November 2004].

working full-time at our state television provider⁸⁷. Despite their unfavourable salaries and working conditions, most subtitlers do their best to guarantee high quality subtitle outputs. However, the improvement of such a situation will most certainly be an incentive and a means to promote the status of professionals working in SDH⁸⁸, in subtitling in general and, by extension, to all those working on audiovisual translation.

Ivarsson (1992:11) is highly critical of the situation found in the professional world of subtitling when he states:

One can see examples where the subtitling seems to be in the hands of people who have little knowledge of either source or target language and do not even seem to have access to the most elementary dictionaries – with disastrous consequences especially for a demanding audience – and who appear to be ignorant even of the most elementary rules for subtitle or line breaks and for what parts of the text should be translated.

Although this may still be found in some places⁸⁹, this scenario is gradually improving. The profile of people working on subtitling has changed enormously. Contrary to what happened in the past when people learnt on the job, more and more subtitlers now receive formal education in translation and many have undergone specific training in subtitling⁹⁰. This will certainly mean that more and more subtitlers will have specific training and will, therefore, be able to work better and be more observant of certain particularities, because

⁸⁷ In 2003, a subtitler working full time on SDH at RTP earned in average 9200 euros per year plus an allowance of about 1600 euros for working unpredictable hours. Subtitlers are amongst the worst paid workers at RTP only to be topped by the messenger boys and cleaning staff. Subtitlers working freelance for private companies earn little more than this, with an average of 1.5 to 2 euros per minute. If they work for international companies, the rates are about double. These figures are about a third of what is being paid to people doing similar jobs at BBC. An advert for a position at BBC (ref 74687 at www.bbc.co.uk/jobs/F74687.shtml [accessed 20 November 2004] stated: "the current full time salary for this position is £17,328 [24,620 euros] per annum plus an allowance of £2,147 [3,050 euros] for working unpredictable hours". For British standards, this level of salary is also rather low, but not unusual. It is comparable to the salary of new teachers at state schools, secretaries, and the like.

⁸⁸ In many programmes offering SDH in Portugal, and unlike what happens in interlingual subtitling (for hearers), there is no acknowledgement of the subtitlers who carry out the task. This is said to happen for technical reasons. I believe this reflects the lack of recognition which is given to translators working on SDH, a situation that translators themselves should try to change by demanding that their names be shown, if not at the end of the programme, as usually happens in other programmes, at the beginning. On the one hand, this would bring visibility to these professionals and, on the other, it would be a way to guarantee better quality because people would feel more responsible for the work presented under their name. There are cases where the translated file is changed by others without the permission of the translator(s) who did the job. There may be times when such changes are so significant that many subtitlers prefer not to put their name to subtitles they don't consider theirs anymore. Ideally no changes should be made to any subtitle file unless that is done with the permission of the translator(s) who did the job originally.

⁸⁹ A similar situation was found at RTP when this research started.

⁹⁰ Subtitling has recently been introduced as part of many undergraduate and post-graduate programmes in various universities and higher education institutions, a matter which has been discussed at length by Díaz-Cintas (2003b:91-95).

they're better prepared. Hopefully, they will demand better working conditions and will fight for the status which has for long been due.

4.3.7.2. In and around reception

Many of the shortcomings in SDH fall directly upon the end clients, the Deaf and HoH viewers themselves. In our study, it became obvious that creating top quality subtitling alone is not sufficient to make it successful. Questionnaires to the public in general showed that many people did not know of the existence of SDH, did not know how to use the service or did not know which programmes provided SDH. In some cases where SDH was actually used, people could not follow some of the conventions and problems arose from technical breakdowns that happened during transmission.

Information about programmes and conventions

One of the rights that seems to be denied to many Deaf and HoH viewers is that of free choice. This is particularly the case where only a small number of programmes is offered with sign language or SDH. In countries where SDH is limited, viewers need to be informed of the programmes offering such a service. In Portugal, all programmes containing SDH present a logo on the top right hand side corner of the screen, which remains visible throughout the whole programme, with the teletext number (888⁹¹) where subtitles may be found. This, however, seems to be insufficient because many viewers do not know what such a logo stands for. Recently, SIC has introduced a 3-second card before programmes providing SDH, calling viewers' attention to the fact that the programme carries SDH and clarifying the meaning of the logo.

⁹¹ Only RTP is different. It uses teletext page 888 on a 2: and 887 for RTP1.



Fig. 90 – Information about programme carrying SDH (SIC – Portugal)

BBC also presents a short message on the top right hand corner of the screen a few frames before the actual programme starts, informing viewers that the programme contains subtitles on teletext page 888. These practices are, in my opinion, highly recommended, particularly in cases where this service is being introduced and is still new to most viewers. By showing this repeatedly, viewers become aware of the existence of closed captioning or teletext subtitling and gradually start using it.

Even though this information is very helpful, it is only available once the programme is about to be aired. While only part of the programmes broadcast are subtitled for the Deaf and HoH, viewers will have a greater choice if magazines, newspapers, Web pages and teletext pages regularly identify subtitled programmes in their listings. This happens sporadically in some countries, examples of which may be seen in the figures 91-93 below, although it is not common practice. It may be true that when subtitles are provided regularly on specific programmes, such as series or serials, people know at what time and on which programmes they will be given SDH, but even that, I consider still to be insufficient.



Fig. 91 – Identification of programmes offering SDH
(Bild + Funk 51 – Germany)



Fig. 92 – Identification of programmes offering SDH (RTP – Portugal)



Fig. 93 – Teletext page on subtitled programmes (RAI – Italy)

Presenting detailed information about the conventions in use on a teletext page is also considered to be essential. The Spanish norm (AENOR 2003:16) echoes these concerns by listing the kind of information that should be made available via teletext:

- a) Adjudicación genérica o específica de los colores de los textos a cada personaje.
- b) Símbolos utilizados en el subtítulo, su identificación y significado.
- c) Emoticonos utilizados, en su caso, y su significado.
- d) Para favorecer una mejor comprensión de los subtítulos se recomienda que haya una sinopsis del espacio subtulado. Así mismo, se recomienda que en la difusión de las parillas de

programación se indique claramente qué programas serán subtitulados.

Ideally, such information should be made available by all broadcasters and at all times, so that anybody may consult it whenever necessary.

RTP has recently introduced a number of teletext pages with information on some of the main conventions in use:



Fig. 94 – Teletext page about SDH
(RTP – Portugal)



Fig. 95 – Teletext page about SDH
(RTP – Portugal)



Fig. 96 – Teletext page about SDH
(RTP – Portugal)



Fig. 97 – Teletext page about SDH
(RTP – Portugal)

Ideally, such information should be made available by all broadcasters and at all times, so that anybody may consult it whenever found necessary.

Technical problems during transmission:

Technical breakdowns are frequent in a system that is still somewhat unstable. Even if new teletext systems are far more reliable, quite a few mishaps tend to occur during transmission. We must be aware that, as mentioned in the ITC guidelines (ITC 1999:17), “losing subtitles is as frustrating for the hearing-impaired viewer as losing sound for the hearing viewer”. Failing to provide subtitles on programmes that regularly carry them⁹², breakdowns during transmission or wrong subtitles are among the problems that most aggravate viewers.



Fig. 98 – Hanging subtitle from previous programme (TVE2 – Spain)



Fig. 99 – Part of subtitle missing (SIC [MA] – Portugal)

The ITC guidelines provide recommendations as to ways to minimise such mishaps: “If subtitle insertion does fail, prompt transmission of an appropriately worded apology caption is extremely important and, if restoration of transmission is delayed an early explanation is to be given” (*ibid.*:17), and: “Do not cue texts out rapidly to catch up if you get left behind – skip some and continue from the correct place” (*ibid.*:27).

⁹² The Portuguese Deaf voiced their disappointment when one or two episodes of their favourite telenovela did not carry the usual subtitles. They wrote to the broadcasters complaining (appendix 2) and commented about similar breakdowns whenever they were asked to comment about the SDH they were being offered. This was seen as an offence for they felt that they were not being taken seriously and they were entitled to follow their programme regularly.

Although this may be remedial in nature, and ideally none of these recommendations should be necessary, by following them, subtitle providers will be showing respect to their viewers and problems will be received better and accepted as inevitable.

Consideration will also be shown by avoiding situations where the inclusion of subtitles may clash with other information on screen, such as covering original captions or conflicting with crawling subtitles as may be seen in the example below:



Fig. 100 – Subtitle over caption and crawl subtitle
(RTP1 – Portugal)

This has been a very common problem on Portuguese television. Quite often broadcasters advertise programmes to come or highlight news in a crawling subtitle at the bottom of the screen, making it difficult for viewers to follow both the subtitle and the crawl⁹³.

All the issues addressed in this section should be given special attention by all those involved in the provision of SDH. This means shared responsibility and, by joining efforts, much can be improved in present practices. By getting all the parties involved talking to each other, and by finding ways to get all the agents working towards similar goals, much can be improved, both for the professionals and for the people who rely on SDH to gain access to information and culture. This research shows that much is changing in this area and it is believed that standards are improving at many levels. Higher quality subtitles will

⁹³ When we told the providers that such situations were very confusing for hearing impaired viewers in particular, the problem was dismissed with the excuse that this cannot be altered because it was done by the programme directors and people are now used to it because it is common practice. Further to this, teletext subtitles are an after thought and must adjust themselves to the overall scheme.

be attained when people gain general awareness of the special needs of hearing impaired viewers and of the overall conditions that high quality subtitling services will imply.

V. The Portuguese Case

Assegurar igualdade de acesso à informação e à programação em geral a todos os cidadãos, garantindo por isso que as emissões possam também ser acompanhadas por pessoas surdas ou com deficiência auditiva, recorrendo para o efeito à legendagem ou à interpretação através da língua gestual.

(Lei da Televisão 8/2002, art. 44, alinea f)

Traditionally a subtitling country, Portugal took some time to arrive at the awareness that people with hearing impairment were not gaining true access to audiovisual texts of any kind. The need for SDH only became evident when the Deaf community gained visibility and started demanding the right to equal access to information and culture, which had long been due for lack of special services such as sign language interpreting and/or subtitling, for instance. Here, as in most other places, television would be the medium to take the first steps towards providing subtitling for the numerous hearing impaired Portuguese. The (hi)story of SDH in Portugal is recent and in the process of being written. It is a sub-product of the important changes Portuguese television has recently undergone for reasons that are not directly linked to accessibility issues. To some extent, this research is part of that same history for it has contributed towards greater awareness and has given the matter visibility through the various Action Research cycles that were enacted, particularly those that took place in 2003 (cf. section 2.4). In fact, 2003 will be a landmark in the history of SDH in Portugal and all may be seen in terms of *before* and *after* this date. At present, SDH may only be found on television thus, very little may be said in reference to

other media such as VHS, DVD and/or the cinema⁹⁴. In view of this, special focus will be placed on the road that led up to the introduction of SDH on Portuguese television.

The history of national television and of SDH in Portugal will always be sign posted to 26 August 2003, the date when new directions for Portuguese television were agreed upon thanks to the signing of a protocol among the three main television broadcasters RTP, SIC and TVi. The agreement to be reached under the title of “Novas Opções Para o Audiovisual”⁹⁵ envisaged measures to restructure public television (RTP) while promoting the exchange of experiences and contents between public and commercial broadcasters. This protocol echoes the European efforts for standardisation and comes in the line of some initiatives such as the TWF Directive, which aims at the regulation of television advertising and the production and exchange of audiovisual programmes in view of the coming of digital television. Among the various measures agreed upon, one established that SIC and TVi were to offer a minimum of 2 hours 30 minutes per week of sign language interpreting on news, entertainment, educational or cultural programmes, between 8 p.m. and 12 p.m. Furthermore, these commercial operators agreed to offer 5 hours per week of SDH, using teletext, on fictional programmes or documentaries. These forms of “public service” were negotiated over commercial interests that came with the limitation of publicity in the state owned television channels. Broadcasters were given 90 days to set these new services in motion, which meant that, by December 2003, the hearing impaired in Portugal were to be offered the best conditions ever in the history of Portuguese television.

It must to be clarified that this was not the first attempt at providing SDH or sign language on Portuguese television. In reality, RTP had long before then been providing teletext subtitles on a number of Portuguese programmes presented on RTP1 and RTP2. The first showing of programmes with teletext subtitles dates back to 15 April 1999. This happened

⁹⁴ Unlike what is happening in other European countries (cf. www.yourlocalcinema.com for cinemas offering SDH in the UK), at present there is no commercial showing of films at the cinema with SDH. The analysis of 250 DVDs made available at video rental shops also showed that at present there is no offer of Portuguese SDH on DVDs (*appendix 2*).

⁹⁵ Main topics available at: http://www.mp.gov.pt/mp/pt/GabImprensa/Docs/20030821_Protocolo.htm

thanks to an agreement between the Portuguese government, RTP and APS (*Associação Portuguesa de Surdos*) in which an initial benchmarking of 15 hours of teletext subtitling per week was set for the first year. According to newspaper cuttings of the time (*appendix 2.9.1*), in the first year viewers were presented with 800 hours of teletext subtitles on information programmes, humour, series, documentaries and telenovelas. Even though these figures kept steady in the years that followed, there are reasons to believe that the subtitles made available were both insufficient and lacking in adequacy. Rather than trying to offer a real service to people with hearing impairment, for some time, Portuguese television adopted a patronising attitude both in the choice of programmes to be subtitled and the time of the day when such programmes would be shown.

It should be mentioned that RTP introduced SDH even before there was any legal obligation to do so. As it is, only on 11 February 2002, was a new line (line f) introduced into Portuguese Television Law, (Lei nº 8/2002), in amendment to Art. 44 of Law nº 31-A/98, 14 July, transcribed at the beginning of this section.

In spite of the legal imposition expressed in the *Lei da Televisão* and of the major steps taken in 2003, SDH is still in its infancy in Portugal and it may take some time before full accessibility is attained on behalf of the Deaf and the Hard-of-Hearing in this country. Now that significant progress may be felt in quantitative terms, steps need still to be taken towards the improvement of quality standards. This will be achieved with time and when broadcasters and service providers become aware of the real needs of the audience(s) they are serving. Such a process is bound to be slow given the complexity of the broadcasting and subtitling markets. However, the three-year longitudinal study presented below provides evidence that progress is well under way and significant advances have occurred and are bound to continue in the years to come.

5.1. Portugal, the Portuguese Language and the Portuguese People

Minha pátria é a língua portuguesa.

Pessoa (het. Bernardo Soares) (1982:17)

Portugal is known for being a small country in the Iberian Peninsula, with a population of about ten and a half million people⁹⁶, but its language, Portuguese, is spoken by over 200 million people throughout the world today⁹⁷. As happens with many other languages, the “language of Camões” reflects the nation’s history and the interaction of its people with the world around them. It has adapted to changes that include the invasions of different peoples, the Moors, the Spanish and the French among them, and in more recent years, the invasion of the media, where the English language and culture in all its varieties predominate.

At present, one may refer to various forms of the Portuguese language. Mirroring what happens with British English and American English, we speak of European Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese. Even if the underlying grammatical structure is basically the same, Brazilian and European Portuguese differ both in their oral and written modes. Distinct features mark the pronunciation and cadence of speech, making it easy to identify whether one is in face of Brazilian or European Portuguese. In its written mode, Brazilian Portuguese has adopted different spelling rules and given greater relevance to grammatical structures which also exist in European Portuguese but that are not often used (e.g. the continuous mode: “estou fazendo”).

⁹⁶ According to the 2001 Censos, Portugal has a population of 10.318.084 with the following distribution: Mainland (Continente) – 89 295 km² – 9 820 707; the Azores Islands – 2 355 km² – 243 895; the Madeira Islands – 796 km² – 253 482.

⁹⁷ According to Medeiros (1998), Portuguese is the eighth most spoken language in the world, and the third among the Western European languages, after English and Spanish/Castilian. It is the official language of seven countries: Portugal, Cabo Verde, Guiné Bissau, S. Tomé e Príncipe, Angola, Moçambique, Brasil and Timor Lorosae and can still be heard in places such as Galicia in Spain, and the former Portuguese colonies in the East, Goa and Macau. It is also spoken in other corners of the globe such as the United States, Canada, Europe, South Africa, Venezuela, Argentina and Japan where one might find communities of Portuguese speaking emigrants who have moved there from Portuguese speaking countries.

Portuguese is still spoken in the ex-colonies and, there too, the language has moved away from European Portuguese, given the influence of the native cultures.

Even within Continental Portugal there are language differences that mark the north and the south, the interior and the coast. These are frequently connoted with social status and, quite often, deviation from the norm – still related to power – is seen as a weakness rather than as cultural wealth. Further differences are noticeable between the mainland and the Atlantic islands of Madeira and Açores. There too, language speaks for cultural difference and insularity.

For many years the Portuguese language was mildly influenced by foreign languages due to the closed environment of the dictatorship. Contact with the outer world was only the privilege of emigrants who went abroad in search of better living conditions. On returning, along with foreign money and material belongings, such people brought new customs and new vocabulary. At the time such an exchange did not influence the Portuguese language to any significant extent. Only the end of the dictatorship in 1974 allowed Portugal to turn its attention to the rest of the world and to absorb new influences that came with democracy and particularly with freedom of speech.

In the last decades, and particularly due to the development of technology, the media and telecommunications, the Portuguese language has been absorbing and adapting huge quantities of foreign words into its daily lexicon. Some such words have been localized but many others have just slipped into use unchanged. In a first stage, all such acquisitions were seen as negative and attributed to the influence of television but, nowadays, changes are accepted with greater flexibility.

When, in this thesis, I refer to the Portuguese language and to Portugal, I am referring to the language that is accepted as standard in Continental Portugal and in the Madeira and Azores Islands.

As a result of the nation's history and geographic location, the Portuguese people are the product of multiple influences that for years came by sea and by land and that now also come by cyberspace. Ever since Portugal's integration in the then designated EEC, in 1986,

Portugal has become “more European” and has lost some of its local flavour. It has given in to globalization and has followed the trends of a unified Europe. This is particularly noticeable in the cosmopolitan way of life that is particularly felt in big centres such as Lisbon and Oporto, where most cultural and economic action takes place. Other smaller cities such as Braga, Aveiro, Coimbra, Leiria and Faro also have gravitational power over the population and the economy but to a smaller degree. It may be said that wealth and power, and therefore development and opportunities, are mainly concentrated in the coastal, central and northern Portugal, leaving the interior and southern areas in a less favourable position.

These facts, that apply to the Portuguese population in general, gain more relevance in the case of impaired citizens⁹⁸. Away from the main cities, the opportunities that are offered to the disabled are particularly scarce and are mostly felt in terms of the lack of educational, professional and recreational opportunities. Many such people have very low educational levels, are unemployed or carry out menial work and have limited access to information and culture. Disabled citizens make up a great part of the 9% of the Portuguese population that is accounted for as illiterate. The hearing impaired, among these, are particularly penalised for the reasons that may be found below. Apart from the popular culture that comes with everyday experience, many of these people have limited opportunities to widen their horizons. An exception to this is the universe that opens to them through television. To many, this is the only means available for entertainment and for information. However, even this is not fully accessible to those who are hearing or visually impaired for very much is lost when audiovisual texts are not specially adapted for such audiences.

⁹⁸ According to the *Censos 2001*, there are 635,056 disabled in Portugal. Disabilities are distributed in the following way: hearing impairment – 84,172; visual impairment – 163,569; locomotive impairment – 156,246; mental disorders – 70,994; cerebral palsy – 15,009; other disorders – 146,069.

5.1.1. The Portuguese Deaf

Quando comecei a contactar com surdos, com os problemas deles, com as histórias que contavam das suas experiências profissionais e da sua vida familiar, verifiquei logo que eram vítimas de uma discriminação profunda.

(Baltazar cit. Carvalho 1999:22)

It is often questioned whether one should address the Deaf as a minority and a different community within a (national) population. In Portugal, the Deaf want to be addressed as a distinct community and have made great efforts to see their right to educational and professional equality being taken from paper into practice. The 4th revision of the Portuguese Constitution, September 1997, is often seen as the turning point in the history of the Portuguese Deaf culture, for the fact that Portuguese Sign Language was recognised as a minority language⁹⁹. Following this, a Law (*Decreto-Lei 7520/98*) was ruled, in 1998, establishing the provision of special services in state schools by creating the *Unidades de Apoio à Educação de Crianças e Jovens Surdos* which, in practice, meant that deaf children would no longer be forced to oralise, as had happened until then, and would be allowed to use and learn signed language while attending regular schools.

These facts are very important details in the lives of the more than 84,000 deaf in Portugal. The younger generations are now given opportunities that were not offered to older generations, particularly to those who lived their youth during the dictatorship. Most deaf people, now in their 50s and 60s, have very poor literacy rates, have not mastered any language fully and have, therefore, been cut off from society at large. The younger generations are now more literate, have a chance of getting better jobs and of living a richer cultural and social life. This factor is particularly relevant in a society that is built around information. In Portugal, the Deaf are often positioned among the info-excluded for

⁹⁹ Art. 74, alínea h) da Constituição Portuguesa now reads: "Proteger e valorizar a Língua Gestual Portuguesa, enquanto expressão cultural e instrumento de acesso à educação e da igualdade de oportunidades". The Portuguese legislation anticipated the European Parliament's Resolution on Sign Languages, which was adopted in its plenary session in Strasbourg, France, on November 1998.

their lack of proficiency in linguistic skills. The Deaf have limited access to information and culture simply because conditions are not created for people who rely mainly on visual and kinesic codes to understand and to make themselves understood. Young Deaf people now lead a similar life to that of their hearing peers. They go to discos, to the cinema, practice sports and live in the wider community with a sense of belonging to a social group that shares a common language and a common culture.

Regardless of the many changes that have taken place in the recent years and of the hope with which these people look into the future, the present generation, as those before them, still find difficulty in relating to the Portuguese language and reveal poor reading and writing skills. In spite of being a privileged means of accessing information and culture, most Deaf people do not read books, newspapers and magazines as a regular habit. Their reluctance to read is often connected to the difficulty that they find in processing syntax and to their reduced lexical wealth. Decoding text becomes particularly difficult when non-standard registers are used or inferencing is in order. Many Deaf collaborators taking part in case study 2, described below, mentioned this difficulty openly, which was equally felt when having to fill in a questionnaire.

In view of this profile it appears adequate to question how the Portuguese Deaf relate to audiovisual texts and how important gaining access to television, for instance, might be for the improvement of communicative skills and of knowledge in general.

5.2. Television viewing in Portugal

Quase todas as famílias (97%) dispõem de, pelo menos, um aparelho de televisão; uma em cada 5 dispõe mesmo de pelo menos três aparelhos; uma em cada 6 tem televisão por cabo e praticamente uma em cada duas famílias dispõe também de vídeo.

(INE n/d)

Much in line with European trends, the Portuguese enjoy watching TV in their leisure time. Compared to other European countries we might say that the Portuguese stand midway between those who watch the most and the least television in the EU:

| Average Time Viewing 1 st semester 2002 | |
|---|------------|
| Country | Mins/day |
| Greece | 243 |
| Great Britain | 218 |
| Spain | 208 |
| Italy | 207 |
| Belgium (FR) | 201 |
| France | 197 |
| Germany | 192 |
| Portugal | 192 |
| Ireland | 178 |
| Finland | 167 |
| The Netherlands | 166 |
| Norway | 158 |
| Denmark | 152 |
| Sweden | 148 |
| Austria | 142 |

Table 5 – Television viewing 1st semester 2002 (Source: Eurodata-TV/OEA- Obercom¹⁰⁰)

¹⁰⁰ Data taken from a report on the Portuguese TV viewing habits published by Obercom – Observatório da Comunicação – in the October 2002 Newsletter (Obercom 2002).

The 1999 Time Use Survey, *Inquérito à Ocupação do Tempo 1999*, published in April 2001 by INE-Instituto Nacional de Estatística, shows that TV viewing is by far the most popular form of spending leisure time in Portugal:

| 1999 Time Use Survey | |
|----------------------|------------|
| Leisure Activity | % |
| Television | 97% |
| Reading newspapers | 58% |
| Video | 57% |
| Reading magazines | 54% |
| Reading books | 31% |
| Live shows | 31% |
| Cinema | 30% |
| Radio | 10% |

Table 6 – Leisure Activities in Portugal Source: INE 1999

Although by the second semester of 2002 over 1.2 million homes were connected to cable TV, only 2.5% of the Portuguese population had home access to channels other than those offered by the four main TV channels: RTP1, RTP2, SIC and TVi. These figures have changed in the course of this study. According to ANACOM, and as reported by Obercom (2004), by the end of 2003, cable services reached 1.33 million clients and more than 3.5 million homes were connected by cable.

According to a recent study carried out by Mediamonitor and published by Marktest (2004), television viewing increased by 4.6% during the first 10 months of 2004 as compared to the same period in 2003. This means that during this period, in 2004, Portuguese people watched 3 hours, 32 minutes and 17 seconds (212 minutes and 17 seconds) per day.

According to the ICS (2001), the Portuguese have steadily increased their television viewing time in the last decade:

| Average Time Spent by the Portuguese Watching Television (minutes per day) | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Year | Adults (aged 14 and over) | Children (4 -14 years of age) | TOTAL |
| 1992 | 164 | 169 | 165 |
| 1993 | 170 | 168 | 170 |
| 1994 | 174 | 153 | 170 |
| 1995 | 177 | 124 | 169 |
| 1996 | 179 | 118 | 169 |
| 1997 | 174 | 120 | 165 |
| 1998 | 166 | 109 | 157 |
| 1999 | 205 | 186 | 202 |
| 2000 | 202 | 193 | 203 |
| 2001 | 195 | 179 | 193 |
| 2002 | 187 | 177 | 185 |
| 2003 | 211 | 179 | 207 |

Table 7 – Average time children spend watching TV Source: ICS (2001)

Television viewing habits echo the overall socio-economic conditions of the Portuguese people and are consistent with the geographic differences described above. People living in less developed regions tend to watch more television than those living in the main centres and the greatest TV consumers come from the lower social classes. This same study reveals that the elderly are those who watch the most TV (4 hours and 47 minutes per day).

These figures tell of the important role that television plays in the lives of many Portuguese, a circumstance that bears heavily in many of the decisions taken when providing SDH for Portuguese television.

5.3. Portuguese Analogue Television Channels: A Short History

A partir de 7 de Março de 1957, a primeira estação de televisão portuguesa, a RTP, começa a emitir regularmente para cerca de 65 por cento da população.

ICS (2001)

The introduction of television in Portugal dates back to March 1957. For 10 years all we had was one channel, transmitting in black and white, and only for a few hours a day. This was RTP (Rádio Televisão Portuguesa), the state owned television station that served a dictatorship under Salazar (1940-1974). In 1968 a new channel was created – Canal2/RTP2 – and gradually a national television policy began to gain shape. Television played an important role in the April Revolution, in 1974. Following the social changes that took place with the new democracy, Portuguese television began what would be a steady growth up until the present.

On 5 September 1979, the Portuguese saw their first colour transmission and for years to come RTP (1 and 2) had all television audiences in Portugal.

Everything changed when, in 1992, the first commercial television channel was introduced in Portugal. SIC (*Sociedade Independente de Comunicação, SA.*) would bring about the beginning of a revolution in the Portuguese audiovisual context: new programme types were introduced, Brazilian telenovelas became true addictions for the Portuguese¹⁰¹, contests and chat-shows gained new colour. One year later, in 1993, another commercial television broadcaster found its way into Portuguese homes: TVi (*Televisão Independente, SA*). At first, this new channel was owned by Radio Renascença (a catholic radio broadcaster) but was soon to be taken over by other less biased holders. For years, fierce competition pushed Portuguese television in directions nobody would have dreamt of when

¹⁰¹ Brazilian Telenovelas were first shown in Portugal by RTP in the 1970s and gained people's interest right from the start. SIC increased the offer and interest in this genre by signing a contract with the Brazilian *Rede Globo*. Henceforth, the offer Brazilian telenovelas has grown steadily. Telenovelas are now shown throughout the day, and may be considered one of SICs main features.

it was first introduced in Portugal. First, SIC took control, slowly gaining the preference of more and more viewers. For years it had struggled to overcome RTP's long-standing hegemony. When TVi appeared in Portugal, SIC had already taken over 14.4% of the annual shares. Only three years after its appearance, SIC had surpassed all expectations and in 1995 it was the proud holder of 41.3% of all annual shares. This tendency would only slow down when TVi entered the race for shares and introduced a new type of programme, the reality show. In the year 2000 "Big Brother" would revolutionize Portuguese television once again, and for the first time three channels would compete for shares, almost on an equal basis.

As mentioned above, the year of 2003 saw an important turning point in the Portuguese television system. Economic and political pressures led to the remodelling of RTP's administrative board and audiovisual policies. Much was said and written about the public service RTP is to render; and the existence of two channels (RTP1 and RTP2) was put at stake given the poor shares RTP2 registered. Deep remodelling led to new policies, RTP became *Rádio e Televisão de Portugal*, RTP2 gave way to a new programme policy, and changed its name to "a 2." The broadcasting company moved premises and invested in modernization, which also meant the purchase of new subtitling equipment for the offer of pre-recorded and live subtitling. What becomes clear through the deep changes that occurred in the Portuguese television system is that, regardless of the fact that we now live in a democratic country, RTP is a visible example of what Lefevere (1992:17) called "undifferentiated patronage" in that the "three components, the ideological, the economic, and the status components, are all dispensed by one and the same patron" – the Portuguese state. Even if commercial broadcasters may be important to the Portuguese television system, it is still the state owned RTP that holds up a flag of "public service" and "national utility". The recent changes that have occurred in the context have raised great expectations for the future, particularly in view of the advent of digital television, which in Portugal is little more than a project at this stage.

5.4. Portuguese Television Channels Today

O Governo valoriza a importância da comunicação social e dos media em geral como agentes de modernização da sociedade, prestadores de um importante serviço de informação e divulgação cultural.

Ministro da Presidência (2002:3)

At present, the European Portuguese have 4 analogue channels – RTP1, a 2:, SIC and TVi – that have reached out to other publics via satellite and cable TV. RTP produces *RTP Internacional*¹⁰², for the emigrant communities throughout the world, and *RTP Africa*¹⁰³, for the Portuguese speaking African countries, as well as *RTP Açores*¹⁰⁴ and *RTP Madeira*¹⁰⁵, which are transmitted via satellite to the Portuguese islands in the Atlantic. In 2004, RTP launched *RTP N*, mainly dedicated to news and *RTP Memória* where previously shown programmes are repeated.

The commercial broadcaster SIC is also serving emigrant communities via *SIC Internacional* and has directed itself to particular niches by offering paid thematic channels such as *SIC Notícias* (news channel), *SIC Radical* (thought provoking and “radical” programmes), *SIC Mulher* (television programmes aimed at the female public) and *SIC Comédia* (comedy), among others. Apart from its main channel, TVi also runs a second channel – *TVi Eventos* – which adapts its programmes to particular events as was the case when it turned to a round-the-clock coverage of “Big Brother”.

Further to this diversity of “sub-channels” all Portuguese analogue television broadcasters have their own Web pages¹⁰⁶ that are highly appreciated by the Portuguese who use them for information on programmes and news, for entertainment and for sending messages to

¹⁰² It started operating in 1992, via satellite. Initially it offered 6 hours per day to a linguistic territory populated by 200 million inhabitants and presently broadcasts 24 hours per day.

¹⁰³ It started operating on 7 January 1998 and broadcasts to Portuguese speaking African countries such as Angola, Cabo Verde, Guiné-Bissau, Moçambique, Angola and S. Tomé e Príncipe.

¹⁰⁴ It started transmitting on 6 August 1972.

¹⁰⁵ It started transmitting on 10 August 1975.

¹⁰⁶ RTP: www.rtp.pt; SIC: www.sic.pt; TVi: www.tvi.iol.pt.

friends, their favourite actors and presenters or to anybody involved in programmes such as “Big Brother” or “The Idols”, contests, or interactive programmes.

Interactive television is not yet a full-blown reality in Portugal. TVi is perhaps ahead of its counterparts, proudly presenting itself as the first interactive television in Portugal but “interaction” only takes place in a small number of programmes where people are invited to vote and to send messages to their favourite contestants taking part in various reality shows. Terrestrial Digital Television (TDT) was due to come into force by 1 March 2003, and it was meant to subsume the channels in existence and to open space for another three television channels¹⁰⁷. By the end of 2004, digital television was still little more than an abstract plan and not much has happened in this domain.

All in all, one might say that the Portuguese are provided with “enough” TV to keep them happy and busy, well informed and entertained. In reality, we find that the Portuguese are highly critical of their television. They often complain about the quality of the programmes they are offered; they demand “better” programmes, “higher quality translation”; but statistics show that “quality” is a vague concept, since preference quite often falls on programmes that are said to be of “low quality” or of “little cultural interest”. Different channels gain the fidelity of specific audiences by guaranteeing particular repertoires proving that, indeed “viewers are creatures of habits” (Ivarsson 1992:66). And each Portuguese television station worked towards ensuring particular audiences.

The programme/audience “mirroring” effect might account for the broadcasting policies each channel follows. This is particularly noticeable in reference to a 2: and TVi. The “culture orientated” programmes of a 2: are completely different from those of other channels which results in particularly low shares. On the other hand, TVi offers programmes that capture the interest of masses, even if the content may be qualified by most as sensationalist.

¹⁰⁷ Although a project was proposed for the provision of a channel to be exclusively dedicated to people with impairment, it did not materialise in the end.

5.5. Access to Television for the Portuguese Deaf and HoH

The intent is not to define causes but to understand how the problem is encompassed in the context or setting.

Stringer (1999:75)

In order to gain insight into the makings of SDH in Portugal, five case studies were carried out at different moments of this research. The various case studies aimed each at achieving specific objectives and worked together to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the whole by addressing the issue of SDH from different angles. The case studies were developed during the first two years of this research and account for various phases of its progress:

- *Case Study 1*: 24 Hours of Portuguese Analogue Television (10 October 2002)
- *Case Study 2*: Deaf community – Accessibility to the Audiovisual Text (2002/2003)
- *Case Study 3*: Subtitlers working on SDH and on standard subtitling (2002/2003)
- *Case Study 4*: The *Mulheres Apaixonadas* Project (2003)
- *Case Study 5*: Three months of SDH on Portuguese Analogue Channels (October – December 2003)

5.5.1. Case-study 1: 24 hours of Portuguese analogue television (10 October 2002)

In order to find preliminary norms for SDH in Portugal, I took to the analysis of a “norm governed instance of behaviour” (Toury 1995:65), *i.e.*, 24 hours of Portuguese analogue television, to confirm my belief that the Portuguese Deaf and HoH were getting very little access to television at the time.

This study was carried out in various phases and aimed at mapping the services that were then being offered to the Portuguese Deaf and HoH in terms of accessibility to televised audiovisual texts. My mapping concentrated on three main aspects:

- TV programme listings
- Actual broadcast
- Language(s) and subtitling

The study covered one day's broadcasting on RTP1, RTP2, SIC and TVi in a total of 80 hours of audiovisual material that spanned the morning of 10 October, and went on to the early hours of 11 October¹⁰⁸:

| | Beginning 10 October | End 11 October | Total nº of hours |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| RTP1 | 6:18:35 | 3:53:22 | 20:03:19 |
| RTP2 | 7:22:44 | 2:24:12 | 18:36:47 |
| SIC | 6:56:12 | 4:13:02 | 21:06:38 |
| TVI | 7:01:46 | 5:20:47 | 20:24:45 |
| Total number of hours analysed: | | | 80:11:29 |

Table 8 – Vieweing hours / 24h project

These 24 hours provided a great deal of information on issues such as television channel profiles, genres, translation policies, and dubbing and subtitling practices, among others. All my findings were measured against to-the-second audiometer data, which is made available by Marktest to all television channels, and that was given to me by RTP. Other information made available on-line by entities such as Obercom (*Observatório da*

¹⁰⁸ These figures refer solely to programmes as such. My analysis excluded spots, publicity and television sales that took up the rest of the 24 hours under scrutiny. These programme types would need a different kind of approach because their overt objective is quite different from that of the programmes analysed in the study. Advertisement, in all its dimensions, aims at selling and convincing, and consequently has rules which differ from those programmes whose main aim is to inform and entertain. Another study should soon be undertaken to study such genres.

Comunicação)¹⁰⁹, Anacom (*Autoridade Nacional de Comunicações*)¹¹⁰, INE (*Instituto Nacional de Estatística*)¹¹¹ and the Marktest Group¹¹² also proved to be of great help to this study.

Reference will only be made to a few of the main findings which speak of the overall national policies towards this minority group¹¹³, the Deaf and HoH, as far as accessibility to audiovisual texts is concerned.

TV programme listings

Several programme listings published at different moments in the week prior to 10 October were analysed and each channel's Website was visited twice (once on 7 October, then on 10 October) to see what information was made available before transmission and to double-check possible changes in programmes which did, in fact, occur.

Deaf or HoH spectators who might have looked up any of these listings would have found very little information as to what programmes they might have had better access to. None of the publications made any reference to programmes offering closed subtitles or sign language, or even to those offering open subtitles with interlingual translation.

There were one or two exceptions to the rule. The name of one of the programmes that was broadcast by RTP2, *Informação Gestual*, contained explicit reference to having sign language. Another element worth referring to is that, at the time, RTP already had teletext and Web pages where, among other information, one would find a listing of the programmes offering intralingual subtitles (using teletext)¹¹⁴.

¹⁰⁹ www.obercom.pt

¹¹⁰ www.icp.pt

¹¹¹ www.ine.pt

¹¹² www.marktest.com

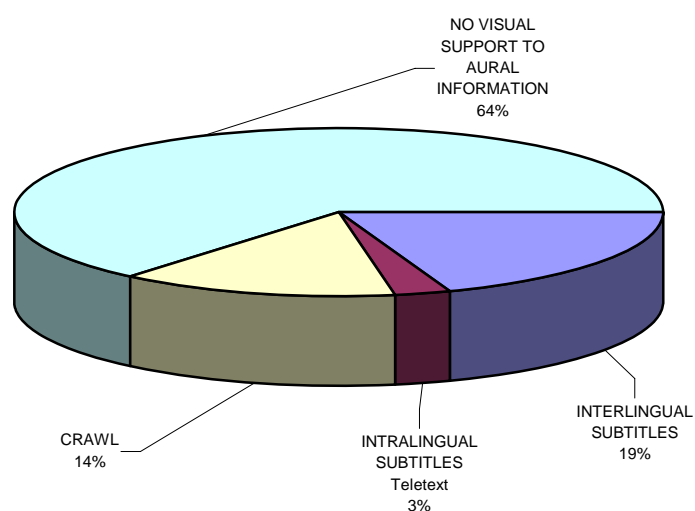
¹¹³ According to *Censos 2001*, 84,156 people (0.8% of the population) are said to be deaf. This might seem an insignificant number but all is quite different if we take into consideration that we have an aging population who often has hearing loss. 1,702,120 (16.4%) Portuguese were over 65 in 2001.

¹¹⁴ www.rtp.pt/teletexto/gif2/887-01.htm.

Actual broadcast/accessibility conditions

Assuming people would know which programmes usually provide different forms of subtitling or sign language, anyone visiting the programme lists for 10 October would expect to find about 18 hours of interlingual subtitling, 11 hours of “crawls”, 3 hours of intralingual (teletext) subtitles and 90 minutes of Portuguese Sign Language interpreting spread throughout the 4 different channels. The remaining 50 hours would be spoken in Portuguese, including national and international productions that were dubbed or voiced over in Portuguese. In other words, if we consider these different solutions – inter and intralingual subtitling, crawls and sign language – as possible aids to a better access to information by the Deaf and HoH, these viewers could count on very little, because close to 62% of all the programmes to be transmitted on this day would have no visual rendering of the spoken word. Unfortunately for those who depend on inter and intralingual subtitling and PSL to gain access to information, 10 October didn’t measure up to expectations and proved to be another “normal” day when last minute changes put everything at stake. At that time, only RTP1 and RTP2 offered PSL and intralingual subtitles and these two channels often suffered last minute changes like those that occurred on 10 October, in which various intralingual and interlingual subtitled programmes as well as the signed programmes were cancelled, due to a live transmission from the Parliament (on RTP2).

In practice, on 10 October, about 54 hours (81%) of all broadcasts were spoken in Portuguese and the remaining 15 hours 30 minutes (19%) were spoken in a foreign language and therefore accompanied by interlingual subtitles. In all, the Deaf and HoH were not given much, particularly if we take into account that, on this day, only 3% of all that was broadcast had them in mind.



| INTERLINGUAL SUBTITLES | INTRALINGUAL SUBTITLES | CRAWL | NO VISUAL SUPPORT TO AURAL INFORMATION |
|------------------------|------------------------|----------|--|
| 15:29:17 | 2:16:55 | 11:06:51 | 51:18:26 |

Table 9 – Subtitling on Portuguese analogue television – 10 October 2002

Interlingual and intralingual subtitling

Portugal has a long-standing tradition in interlingual subtitling. Subtitles have always had the preference of Portuguese audiences who first saw them at the cinema and then watched them on foreign spoken programmes on television and on their favourite films on video or DVD. Scholars have often praised subtitles for their didactic function (Ivarsson 1992; Gottlieb 1997a; Gambier 1998; Karamitroglou 2000). They are said to help youngsters to gain or improve reading skills; help teenagers and adults to increase their vocabulary; and help people learn and improve foreign languages. At the time, interlingual subtitles were the best available means for the Portuguese Deaf and HoH to access audiovisual texts. This does not mean that such subtitles have any particular concern in providing for the special needs of such viewers. These subtitles are not “designed” for people who read them as a second language and who have no access to the soundtrack. As De Linde and Kay (1999:1) remind us, interlingual subtitles’ reading time is often inadequate and the sentence structure and vocabulary is often too difficult; there is no

supplementary information to convey significant features of the soundtrack and speaker identification is absolutely ignored. Even so, for the Portuguese Deaf and HoH having interlingual subtitling is better than having nothing.

By analysing 10 October, we see that only 19% of the broadcast programmes offered interlingual subtitles. This low figure is justified by a national policy that imposes that at least 50% of all the broadcast be originally spoken in Portuguese¹¹⁵. This percentage is significantly reduced if we take into account that most foreign spoken programmes – mainly films and series – are aired in the evening and often at very late hours. On this particular day, only about one hour of foreign spoken (therefore subtitled) programmes was shown during the day. Mornings are used on Portuguese television for the presentation of live talk-shows, the afternoons are taken up by national or Brazilian spoken telenovelas, series and contests and it is in the evening and late at night that feature films and foreign spoken series and documentaries are broadcast.

These facts lead us to further reflection about “what” and “how much” the Deaf and HoH have access to. Keeping in mind that this group of people has similar profiles and the same interests as their hearing counterparts – they are part of the same society, they abide by similar social rules and routines – they would most certainly like to gain access to the types of programmes that are most popular and that are presented at peak viewing hours. However, what they were given went to air in the middle of the afternoon or late at night, leaving deaf audiences out of the most popular programmes.

From all that was found in this case study it may be concluded that, at the time:

- Very little interlingual subtitling was actually offered and, when available, it was presented at very late hours.
- Open interlingual subtitling did not cater for the needs of the Deaf and HoH because they did not take into account special concerns such as reading time,

¹¹⁵ *Lei da Televisão* (Lei nº31-A/98 – Art. 36).

speaker identification, semantic and syntactic adequacy and explanatory subtitles of significant sound effects.

- The crawl in news bulletins was not synchronized with the news items and was therefore of little help.
- The only channels providing intralingual subtitling and PSL did not have the preference of most viewers.
- The programmes that were most popular were all spoken in Portuguese and had no intralingual subtitles or sign interpreting because they were presented by channels that did not offer such services.
- The programmes that offered intralingual subtitling were far from popular.
- Even those programmes offered by RTP that did have reasonable shares had no intralingual subtitling or PSL interpreting because they were live shows and RTP did not have the technical and human means to provide live subtitling or PSL interpreting.

The outcome of this case study was reported informally to the Deaf community and to RTP. Both these agents agreed to collaborate towards improving the situation by taking part in the two case studies that follow. A detailed report may be found in *appendix 2.2*.

5.5.2. Case Study 2: Deaf community – Accessibility to the audiovisual text. (November 2002 – March 2003)

This case study had the double aim of collecting information about how the Deaf feel about their access to audiovisual texts in Portugal and, simultaneously, to raise their awareness to the situation of SDH in Portugal.

In order to involve the Deaf community as much as possible in the process, various Deaf associations were contacted to take part in the study. The whole procedure was conducted with the help of Deaf people who worked on different stages of the study: drawing up a questionnaire, testing, distributing and collecting it. The actual analysis was carried out without their help, but all the results were discussed with those who took part in the setting up and running of the project¹¹⁶

More than 1200 questionnaires were distributed (via Deaf associations) to the Deaf community throughout the Portuguese territory (islands included). 153 responses were retrieved and subjected to statistical analysis¹¹⁷. All the quantitative results were confronted with qualitative data that was collected in the various interviews and meetings that took place throughout the process. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data proved to be very profitable for it allowed for cross referencing that clarified and reinforced some of the findings.

The questionnaire (*appendix 2.3.2*) was designed in what was considered to be an easy-to-complete format, with straightforward closed questions which required making choices and the filling in of boxes with ticks or crosses and giving yes/no answers. A few open questions were also included so that people could express their opinions freely. After two test runs and the adaptation of the questions that posed problems, the questionnaire was mailed out to people individually. The response to this first approach was very low. Only 36 replies were received, which proved to be too few for what was considered necessary. The cause for such a poor turnover was soon attributed to the fact that people had difficulty filling in the questionnaire on their own. A second approach was then taken: Deaf people were invited to fill in the questionnaire when visiting the various Deaf associations in the country. Groups were arranged, and sign language interpreters and teachers collaborated, helping the respondents when difficulty hindered progress. It was clear that the main issue lay in the reading and writing of written Portuguese.

¹¹⁶ Associação Portuguesa de Surdos (Central and Leiria) (www.apsurdos.pt/) and Associação de Surdos do Porto (www.asurdosporto.rcts.pt).

¹¹⁷ Descriptive and non-parametric tests were carried out using SPSS – version 1.1.

By answering questions about television viewing habits, likes and dislikes; by expressing opinions about the services on offer at the time; and by giving suggestions for future developments of SDH in Portugal, the collaborators taking part in the study gained greater awareness of the situation at the time and saw that there was space for improvement. This gave them a sense of power which they would express through a newly found lobbying force demanding more and better quality subtitling on television.

In short, this case study contributed towards this research with important data on television viewing habits but, most of all, allowed for the collating of information about the Portuguese Deaf community in general. By working together, a lot was learnt and much of what was read in the written answers to the questionnaires gained special relevance when addressed within the context in which the study took place. Important issues were brought to the fore, such as the Deaf identity, the way the Deaf interact with each other and with hearers, their use of language, the way they read and write the Portuguese language and how they relate to audiovisual texts.

The outcome of the analysis of the questionnaire itself confirmed many of the hypotheses that had been drawn at the beginning of this research and contributed towards a better understanding of the needs and demands of these audiovisual text consumers. The main findings about the Portuguese Deaf community and their expectations towards audiovisual texts and SDH at the time of the case study may be synthesised as follows:

- Many Deaf people had great difficulty reading and understanding written Portuguese.
- Writing in Portuguese was equally problematic.
- Most people were aware of their difficulty in reading and state it openly.
- Deaf people watched more television than hearers.
- They followed similar viewing patterns to those of hearing viewers.
- Their favourite television genres were movies, news, telenovelas and sports.

- Their preferences in terms of television channels were similar to those of hearing viewers.
- They were not happy with the quantity, quality and time of broadcast of the sign language interpreting offered.
- Most people demanded access to the news.
- They preferred sign language to subtitles in the news.
- They found crawl subtitles in the news confusing.
- They found intralingual subtitling difficult to follow.
- They wanted to have SDH on Portuguese spoken films, telenovelas and news.
- They were happy with interlingual subtitles (for hearers).
- They were not aware that they could get different information on subtitles, such as speaker identification, description of sound effects or use of colour.
- They were interested in testing “different” subtitling solutions.
- They had never watched DVDs or films at the cinema with Portuguese SDH.
- To safeguard their equal rights and equal access to information and culture, they demanded more subtitled programmes, more sign language on television and specific programmes about the Deaf community.

Most of these demands have since been given a response and much has changed in all respects concerning SDH on Portuguese television. A detailed account may be found in *appendix 2.3*.

5.5.3. Case Study 3: Subtitlers working on SDH and on subtitling in general (2002-2003)

Getting to know the makings of SDH in Portugal called for a better understanding of the conditions in which it was being carried out and the way professionals addressed the issue. It must be reminded that, at the onset of this research, only RTP was providing subtitling for the hearing impaired and, therefore, only there could professionals working on SDH be found. These professionals would naturally become a focal element in this case study but, in view of future developments in the area, it seemed appropriate to also collect information about subtitlers working on standard interlingual subtitling so as to find their perception of SDH.

Two different sub-projects were developed and approached in distinct manners. The first, on SDH subtitlers, was carried out *in situ* and covered three phases: a) a questionnaire; b) informal interviews; and c) several sessions on site. The outcome of these different activities was presented at various meetings with the heads of the multimedia department at RTP and may be summarised as follows:

- SDH was provided by a group of four subtitlers, who rotated on 8 hour shifts, 7 days a week, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 12 pm.
- Deaf collaborators came in on a daily basis to digitise scripts¹¹⁸.
- Subtitlers worked in an open space environment which was shared with professionals working on the RTP teletext pages and Website.
- 3 WinCaps workstations were available (2 for subtitling and one for manual alignment of subtitles at the beginning and end of subtitled programmes).

¹¹⁸ The placement of Deaf workers at RTP resulted from the agreement that was signed between RTP and the Deaf Association in 1999.

- They worked from transcripts that, in most cases, had been digitised by Deaf collaborators working at RTP.
- There were very few reference materials available, such as dictionaries or encyclopaedias.
- There was no free access to the internet.
- The workflow was rather slow due to poor articulation with other sectors (programme management).
- The subtitlers working at the time had acquired their expertise on the job.
- They were aware that the Deaf and HoH had different needs in terms of subtitling but did not know how such subtitles might be done.
- The subtitles shown on Portuguese programmes were near-verbatim and presented various problems in features such as reading speed, division of subtitles, and in the grammatical and lexical content.

This reality has since changed substantially. Further to the improvements that came with the move to new premises in 2004¹¹⁹, there has been gradual progress in all the aspects involved in the provision of SDH by RTP. New subtitling equipment has been bought and a new group of subtitlers has been employed, thus allowing for a fresh approach which has brought about visible dynamics to the workflow. RTP has started taking on trainees, who have had SDH as part of their university education, for six month internships. These new conditions have had an impact in the gradual improvement of quality standards which presently represents a significant leap from the level found at the onset of this research.

¹¹⁹ RTP moved to ample modern premises, in April 2004, which resulted in a significant improvement as far as working conditions and equipment are concerned.

The second sub-project was developed with a fellow researcher from the University of Aveiro and was part of a much broader study. This, too, incorporated different phases: a) a questionnaire; b) informal interviews; and c) a meeting/conference on subtitling¹²⁰.

The overall project is still on-going but results have been compiled in reference to SDH. The main conclusion to be drawn is that, in 2003, Portuguese subtitlers were still not aware of the implications of providing SDH on audiovisual texts. With the introduction of the new law, and particularly with the need to provide SDH on the commercial channels, a few of these subtitlers, who had up until then only worked on interlingual subtitling, started working on intralingual SDH as well. Some of them were connected to the *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project and developed from there while others took on SDH without having had previous training for the job. SDH was introduced in the curriculum of the BA in Translation at *Escola Superior de Tecnologia e Gestão de Leiria* (www.estg.ipleiria.pt) in 2002-2003, and is currently offered as an integral part of the subtitling courses run by *Topázio*¹²¹ since 2003.

A new generation of subtitlers may now be found in Portugal, thanks to the growing interest in the field and to the introduction of subtitling as part of the initial training of subtitling at undergraduate and post-graduate levels. It is still a fact that newcomers to the job get their best training by working with experienced professionals who have been subtitling for many years and who are known for their competence and dedication. What made the experience of introducing SDH in Portugal particularly challenging was the fact that a new technique was to be introduced into an existing framework. Professionals of standard interlingual subtitling had to adapt to the new circumstances and newcomers had to make an effort to fit in with the established order. This, I believe, proved to be an enriching experience for all, for it proved to be an opportunity to question practices and conventions and to readdress issues such as professional status, fees, and working conditions, among others.

¹²⁰ Held in Lisbon on 6 September 2003.

¹²¹ *Topázio* started offering intensive courses on audiovisual translation in September 2003 (cf. footnote 16).

5.5.4. Case Study 4: The *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project

As mentioned in chapter II, this project may be seen as central to all this research and served as a catalyst, bringing together a significant number of agents in an exchange that is not often easy to achieve. This case study involved agents from the educational system, from the industry, the broadcasters and the receivers in an effort to enact change and progress. This meant that the conditions were met to arrive at the situation proposed by Mason (2000:19):

Translator behaviour can then be described both in terms of the negotiation of meaning between target text producer and receivers on the one hand and in terms of the cooperative principle governing relations between all participants in the event on the other (source text producers, commissioner, translator, target text receivers). These are dynamic, interactive processes which, in researching translation, we cannot afford to overlook.

The insights that were achieved are reflected in this thesis, particularly in the *vKv Guidelines* presented in *appendix I*, and will therefore not be readdressed in this chapter. There are, however, a few issues that this project brought to the fore and that have not been addressed in any other section.

One of them relates to the taking of Brazilian Portuguese into European Portuguese. The linguistic transfer that was in order in this *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project was quite unique posing problems that pertain both to interlingual and intralingual SDH. I see this language transfer as being very close to what Toury (1986:1113) called “interdialectal translation”. The problems that arose in the translation proper derived mainly from the difficulty of transposing language between two “versions” of the same language.

Even though Brazilian and European Portuguese are one and the same language, they differ both in their oral and written form, in their lexis and syntax, and above all, in their referential elements. Working on a Brazilian telenovela, as rich in cultural references and local colouring as *Mulheres Apaixonadas*, made the cultural component an important focal

point. This was reflected in the interpretation of certain lexical items¹²², in the transposition of interpersonal relations¹²³ and the lack of equivalence for certain idiomatic expressions¹²⁴.

Overcoming cultural barriers proved to be more difficult than transposing linguistic barriers, an issue that became all the more acute when Deaf addressees were brought into the equation. The choice to adapt Brazilian Portuguese into European Portuguese was one that resulted from the negotiation with the Deaf community but this alone was not sufficient to make the Brazilian telenovela truly accessible for the Portuguese Deaf audiences. The most challenging task was allowing for subtitles that read like European Portuguese written text to still convey the cultural components of the Brazilian reality depicted. A compromise was often necessary and when one and the other were in conflict, making choices became very difficult.

This case study turned out to be very enriching for the agents involved: television providers, Deaf community, professional subtitlers and subtitlers-to-be.

One of the greatest challenges that the introduction of SDH brought to television providers was the need to adjust themselves to the new circumstances. Further to having to adapt to new technology, so as to place a different subtitling solution on air, simple matters such as creating the identification logo, the teletext informative pages and even advertising the service, proved to be interesting. Offering the service alone seemed quite insufficient. Making it known that the service was available was a matter for concern. The introduction of SDH on SIC coincided with this broadcaster's tenth anniversary and was presented to the public within that context. It hit the main news (*appendix 3.7*) and was presented to the audience in publicity spots (*appendix 3.6*) clarifying how viewers might turn on the teletext function. This new development was also widely publicised in national and international newspapers raising awareness of an issue that had never been known in Portugal. In spite

¹²² Words that belong to the two systems, European Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese, often have different meanings.

¹²³ The difference between the use of "tu" and "você", for instance.

¹²⁴ Problems rose when meanings derived from subtle elements (e.g. "borogodó" means "sex appeal and style" in Brazilian Portuguese and "ó de borogodó" means exactly the opposite. Neither of the two expressions exists in European Portuguese and the subtlety of the expression may easily be lost by those who do not master the cultural innuendoes involved.

of these efforts, very few Deaf viewers became immediately aware that they were being offered this new service. It took some time and various actions, such as conferences¹²⁵ and the distribution of informative fliers by the *Associação Portuguesa de Surdos* to raise people's interest in SDH (appendix 2.7.3). One year after the introduction of this service there are still many hearing impaired people in Portugal who do not know that they can watch television programmes with teletext subtitles and many still do not know how to activate the system.

The actual involvement of the Deaf community in the project was extremely motivating. Deaf collaborators monitored our work on a daily basis and offered us their opinions, which were taken into account and worked into the actual subtitles when relevant. The fact that the Deaf became active partners in the process not only contributed towards a greater adequacy of our service but also gave them the opportunity to gain visibility and to air their wishes and concerns. Special reference needs to be made to the valuable reports that were written by the president of APTEC (*Associação Pessoas e Tecnologias na Inserção Social*), commenting on the subtitling being offered by SIC and by other broadcasters and shedding light on various issues of interest. The Deaf community showed great interest in the whole project and it is hoped that the final results and the developments thereof will have contributed to greater accessibility to audiovisual materials.

The interaction with professional subtitlers also revealed itself as highly profitable. The fact that they had no previous experience in SDH did not reduce the importance of their input. Their questions and doubts helped the team to question their options and to reflect on the reasons underlying each choice. The functional expertise of these professionals also made the whole process much easier for beginners. They made sure that technical problems were overcome and guaranteed that the whole process flowed naturally from beginning to end. They monitored the workflow carefully and acted as important links between the academic side of the experiment and the actual television broadcaster. They also made it possible for

¹²⁵ Among the various conferences that were held, special reference is due to the ones that were organized by the Deaf community (appendices 2.7.1.2 and 2.7.1.5).

the actual subtitling to be done at a distance¹²⁶, even if that meant some extra effort and a greater responsibility on the part of all those involved. It is my belief that these subtitlers also gained from this experiment for they too were given the opportunity to think about their own practices, even if on subtitling (for hearers), and they were introduced to techniques that were new to them.

Within an educational perspective, this project proved to be particularly enriching for yet another group of people: the translators-to-be who worked on this SDH project as part of their curricular training. By involving students of translation and by getting industry and academia to talk to each other in order to achieve a common goal, it was possible for these new professionals to approach SDH in a practical and yet reflexive manner. These young translators, who have since entered the market, came back a year later saying that they still use many of the techniques that were tested in the process of *Mulheres Apaixonadas* and follow similar strategies to arrive at solutions for new problems. This seems to be a clear indication of the importance of taking translator education into the professional field.

I consider that SDH in Portugal has got off to a good start for the simple fact that it has grown out of joint efforts. Only the future will tell, but it seems that there is no turning back because awareness has been raised at many levels and the conditions have been created for continual improvement.

¹²⁶ The actual subtitling was carried out in Leiria, a city that lies some 150 Km north from Lisbon, a situation that would have never been thought of before. This meant very careful planning to guarantee that materials travelling to and from the broadcaster would go untouched and that everything would be done according to schedule. Subtitlers worked on VHS tapes that were posted to Leiria or collected in Lisbon, and subtitle files were sent via e-mail. This meant that there was a need to synchronise all the phases of the process to guarantee that all episodes were delivered in time for preparation and showing.

5.5.5. Case Study 5: Three months of SDH on Portuguese analogue channels (October – December 2003)

This last case study took as its main objective to analyse the effect that 2003 produced on the general supply of SDH on Portuguese television. By analysing most of the programmes that were shown with SDH on all four analogue channels during the last three months of the year, it became possible to see how change was operating at all levels. This study was parallel to the development of the *Mulheres Apaixonadas* project and it was obvious that the introduction of new subtitling solutions on SIC was having a knock-on effect on the work presented in other channels. Although there was no direct interaction between the different broadcasters, there were clear indications that these were gradually adopting some of the conventions that had been established for SIC. When TVi started presenting SDH on a Portuguese telenovela¹²⁷, the overall subtitling technique was very close to that which had been introduced one month earlier by SIC. However, new problems stemmed from the fact that the technique was followed mainly in its format. This showed that much of the quality of SDH cannot be achieved by technical solutions alone and has much to do with the linguistic transfer itself. RTP also showed signs of improvement throughout those three months. Even if to a lower level, minor changes, such as the introduction of labels to describe sound, started to be used and greater care was noticeable in the SDH on offer both on RTP1 and a 2:.

The results of this in-depth study may be read in a report that was presented to the Deaf Associations and later handed in to the Portuguese government¹²⁸. This may be seen as an important moment in this research for the fact that it reached one of the main agents involved in the introduction of SDH in Portugal, the Portuguese state itself.

This study aimed at clarifying the norms in use for SDH in Portugal immediately after its introduction on all analogue channels. Programmes containing SDH were watched and

¹²⁷ TVi started offering SDH on 30 November 2003, on a prime time national production, the telenovela *Queridas Feras*.

¹²⁸ The document was presented to the Presidency Minister, Morais Sarmiento, at a meeting held at the *Presidência da República* on 20 January 2003.

recorded on a daily basis and analysed in the light of the parameters listed in the table below. These were taken as basic conditions to guarantee effective readability and adequacy to the needs of hearing impaired viewers. A summary of the main findings of this case study may be found in the following table:

| | RTP | SIC | TVi |
|---|-----|-----|-----|
| Coherence between different episodes (series and telenovelas) | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |
| Spelling | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |
| Grammar | 😊 | 😊 | ☹ |
| Formal correctness (written Portuguese) | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |
| Syntactical simplicity and clarity | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |
| Lexical simplicity and clarity | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |
| Sentence structure within subtitle | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |
| Sentence division within subtitle | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |
| Sentence division among different subtitles | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |
| Speaker identification | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |
| Coherence in the way speakers are identified | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |
| Indication of off-screen speakers | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |
| Information on music with narrative value | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |
| Coherence in the type of information on music | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |
| Information on sound effects | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |
| Information on emotions conveyed through voice quality | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |
| Reading time | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |
| Subtitle synchrony | 😊 | 😊 | ☹ |
| Identification of subtitler's name | 😊 | ☹ | ☹ |
| Additional on-line information | ☹ | ☹ | ☹ |
| Additional information on teletext pages | ☹ | 😊 | ☹ |

Table 10 – Quality assessment – SDH on Portuguese television 2003

Recommendations were set forward in view of the improvement of subtitle quality. It is believed that many of these recommendations have been followed since. If this case study were to be repeated one year later, there is a high probability that most of the problems found then have since been or are well into being resolved. The quantity and quality of pre-recorded SDH in Portugal has shown signs of improvement and new steps are now being taken towards the introduction of live subtitling. That will be another important move towards true accessibility for the many Deaf who continue to demand for subtitling in the news, in live debates and in most of their favourite programmes that happen to be broadcast live (e.g. sports events, reality shows, and chat shows, among others). It is hoped that, in the near future, people with hearing impairment will also find the cinema and theatre more accessible for lobbying is being made to that effect. Several other projects are under way to provide subtitling at museums and conferences as well as in religious services and sports events. What began as a research on SDH has grown into a number of other projects that address accessibility as a whole. This means that further to providing SDH, special effort is being made to start offering audio description and other accessible media in a wide range of products and places. It is clear that accessibility is now on the agenda of the Portuguese and has gained social relevance.

VI. Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research

So it is in dialectics. One question becomes another's answer; the answer in turn becomes a question. It is a dance of communication.

McNiff (1988:42)

This thesis has grown out of the belief that Deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers are entitled to access audiovisual texts in all their components, even if mainly through visual codes. This is taken as a basic constitutional human right but also as a pragmatic means to integrate the hearing impaired within society at large for, in short, it implies equal opportunities for all citizens in the access to information, education and entertainment.

All the work that has been developed in this research adopted the underlying premise that deafness and hearing loss are to be addressed as difference rather than as disability. Distinctive parameters were established between being *hard-of-hearing* and being *deaf* and between *prelingual* and *postlingual* deafness. These differences reside, on the one hand, on the amount of hearing that may be retained and, on the other, on the onset of deafness and its relation to the acquisition of language. A clear line has been drawn between the notions mentioned above and that of *Deaf*. Being Deaf implies belonging to a linguistic minority that communicates through sign language and sharing a cultural heritage that may differ from that of the hearing society in which it may be integrated. This does not imply a rupture with the hegemonic system but rather the acceptance of social and cultural differences.

Despite the tacit acceptance that all viewers with hearing impairment will be the potential addressees of SDH, this remains a challenge to be tackled. While it is still commercially unviable to offer a number of different SDH subtitling solutions for the same product, SDH

will have to provide subtitles that will be useful to a wide variety of addressees, including hearers, as is the case of people who use SDH for language learning or because of environmental noise, for instance. It is a fact that, by providing subtitles for all, not everybody is getting their due. However, in order to proceed, there was an implicit acceptance that whatever solution SDH may arrive at, it would always be a compromise between the utopian and the possible.

Another issue that this research hopes to have brought to the fore is the acknowledgment that SDH pertains to Translation Studies, and must be seen as an integral part of audiovisual translation, regardless of the fact that the language transfer may occur between different languages, as is the case of interlingual SDH, or within the same language, as in intralingual SDH. It is also clear that the linguistic transfer that SDH implies goes beyond the transposition of speech into writing for it involves linguistic transfer between various codes.

The essence of SDH lies in transposing messages from acoustic to visual codes and the reproduction of verbal and non-verbal components through verbal and iconic elements. Subtitles for the Deaf and HoH are to be read as multidimensional wholes. Not only do they convey messages through the words they contain but also through their actual form (font formatting, position, colour, and even, at times, motion). An optimal conjunction of words and form will make for high legibility and readability standards that will always be dictated by their adequacy to the needs of hearing impaired viewers.

Although SDH shares many of its characteristics with standard subtitling, a major difference lies in the relation that subtitles in SDH establish with the original text. Whereas standard subtitles interact with the original by relaying speech that continues aurally available in its original form, SDH is expected to fill in for sound that is not perceived by hearing impaired receivers. In other words, for hearers, standard subtitles act as a complement to a soundtrack that can still be heard and directs, to some extent, the reading of the written words that appear on screen. In the case of hearing impaired viewers, subtitles do more than complement the soundtrack, they *are* the visual correlate of sound. This means that,

contrary to standard subtitling, synchrony, cohesion and coherence in SDH need to be achieved mainly with the image, rather than with the sound.

The issues of coherence and cohesion in subtitling are multifarious and have to be guaranteed at various levels. Besides having to be established between subtitles and image, they need to be sustained within each subtitle and among consecutive subtitles. Visual coherence is usually obtained through careful synchrony between subtitles and image. Internal subtitle cohesion and coherence will be linked to linguistic adaptation and may imply the simplification of syntactic structures, so as to produce self contained written utterances, or the inclusion of elements that may aid the identification of anaphoric and cataphoric references.

Subtitling, in general, is known for its linguistic economy. Language is often stripped of redundant elements so as to comply with the media constraints that derive from space and time. However, redundancy is a feature of natural languages which makes up for possible noise and is therefore essential to guarantee effective communication. SDH, in particular, seeks simplicity and readability. Contrary to what might be thought, redundancy often contributes towards relieving the processing load. This also means that effective readability is sometimes obtained through addition rather than through reduction or deletion. By making explicit the implicit, by offering descriptive labels on sound effects, and by guiding the viewer towards referents, the task of decoding may become an easier process, allowing viewers to dedicate more time to the enjoyment of the audiovisual text rather than to the reading and understanding of subtitles. In short, SDH has to strike a balance between two apparently opposing forces: on the one hand, it seeks contention and economy while, on the other, it pursues the conveyance of as much content as possible in as readable a form as possible.

Unlike standard subtitles that are made to be read as written speech, it is my belief that the Deaf will benefit from subtitles that read like written text. This resides in the fact that Deaf viewers read subtitles as their second language, which they relate to in its written form. This matter gains greater relevance in the case of people with prelingual and/or profound

deafness. Unlike the hard-of-hearing, who have acquired deafness or who still have residual hearing and thus can relate subtitles to speech, Deaf viewers find it taxing to interpret written messages they cannot relate to. Here again, faced with the impossibility of providing subtitles for Deaf viewers alone, a compromise is in order. However, I tend to believe that the minimax effect will be achieved through subtitles that are easily read by most, in the knowledge that viewers with residual hearing or acquired deafness will still be able to pick up some of the flavour of orality through sound or even through visual cues.

This matter ties in with an equally problematic issue: that of verbatim subtitling. What many see as the only way to guarantee equal opportunities for hearers and the hearing impaired, strikes me as a fallacy. Transcribing speech seems inappropriate for the reasons mentioned in this thesis and for the inherent issue of reading speed and ability. Even proficient hearing readers have difficulty in keeping up with verbatim subtitles. Reading subtitles differs from reading conventional texts in that it requires attention to be directed at the written text and to all the other visual codes which make up the audiovisual whole. By forcing viewers to keep up with the reading of verbatim subtitles, much of the pleasure of watching an audiovisual text may be lost for there might not be enough time to scrutinise the image for further content. Adequacy and readability will require that subtitles be adapted so that viewers' reading effort is not exceedingly taxing.

Understanding the implications of SDH has taken me on a journey that has been accounted for in the previous chapters. This has meant addressing the topic from a number of different angles. It was my aim to arrive at an overview of the main issues influencing the nature of this particular type of subtitling. The approach taken has been both theoretical and practical. It was clear from the start that I would need to *describe* and to *question* in order to *understand*, but it also became evident that understanding would be clearer by doing the job. My first objective was to discover norms governing translational behaviour in SDH. Moreover, this research was taken as an opportunity to operate change in a particular context. The option to work within the premises of Action Research derived from the nature of the subject, the social context in which the research took place and from the conviction that the synergies that are generated in projects such as this one are beneficial

to all the parties involved. The option to go beyond mere description and to propose a set of guidelines, in what may be considered by some as a prescriptive attitude, is due to the belief that prescriptivism, when based on Descriptive Studies and experimental and dialogic exercises, gains pertinence and utility. Prescriptivism does not necessarily mean imposition. Choice, in the end, will always be in the hands of the practitioners themselves who will use guidelines as something to fall back on, to follow carefully or to simply ignore.

All the answers proposed in this research have given rise to new questions begging to be answered, all of which deserve further research, for much requires greater clarification and analysis in the field of SDH. Issues such as reading speed, reduction, explicitation, readability and legibility, use of colour, conveyance of implied meanings, irony, register, coherence and cohesion have only been touched upon and continue to deserve further study. This research concentrates mainly on pre-recorded SDH for analogue television. All needs to be done on SDH, SDH for the cinema, for DVD and for multimedia materials. Interlingual SDH and SDH for other purposes such as museums and galleries or for educational materials are also potential subjects for further study. Broader issues such as regulations and standardisation are equally open to research. The implications of modern technology on SDH, such as the introduction of digital television or voice-to-text technology also raise problems, possibilities and challenges that deserve further attention. Other issues worth studying are those pertaining to the actual translation action, *i.e.*, working methods and techniques. Among these, special emphasis ought to be given to research into revision and quality assessment. Finally, much is still required in terms of translator training and curriculum development.

As may be gathered from the list above, the field is vast and remains open. There is definitely space for further work on SDH within the frame of Translation Studies and many of the issues that are raised here open up to other fields of research. The study of language acquisition through subtitle reading, the development of conditioned hearing through visual stimuli, the social and legal implications of gaining access to information and culture via audiovisual texts, are only some of the topics that may be studied by psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, lawyers, and specialists working on Deaf culture or Deaf

education. The technological development that the future holds opens up a number of avenues for people working on software development, machine translation or voice recognition technology.

This research has drawn much from other fields of knowledge and it too might feed into those very same areas. Due to its complexity, SDH also opens up to multidisciplinary studies. Whichever the approach taken, and given the functional nature of this translation type, the study of SDH will always take researchers into fields and disciplines that are not their own, if they are to arrive at a better understanding of the whole.

I like to believe that this research has contributed towards a greater awareness of the multiple implications of providing subtitling for people with special needs. I hope to have moved away from the notion of producing a particular text for a potential addressee to an approach that sees SDH as a service for real people. At a time when financial constraints and technical development dictate that profit and speed are to determine the way forward, I see my work as an opportunity to reposition subtitling in the sphere of the human sciences. Subtitling is often addressed as being highly technical and constrained by technology and a bleak future for subtitling is equally envisaged in the dehumanised universe of automation. I hope to have proved that, in order to be useful, SDH needs to be a humanised process. By seeing SDH as a cross-bred between interpreting and translation, whilst requiring particular technical expertise, I place SDH within the field of specialised translation. First and foremost, translators working on SDH must be expert interpreters of words and atmospheres. As mediators between the world of sound and that of silence, they must reposition themselves as hearers so as to consciously interpret sound and to convey its implied meanings in visual forms. Furthermore, they must gain consciousness of the special requirements of their addressees so that they may provide subtitles that are readable, legible and truly relevant.

The speed at which SDH has been developing in the last couple of years may make us ask questions about the future. It is clear that awareness has been raised and that audiovisual texts are now far more accessible to impaired viewers. Not only have these changes

affected the lives of many Deaf and hard-of-hearing people who can now benefit from greater choice in terms of entertainment and information, but so have many blind and partially sighted people gained greater accessibility to the media, thanks to the growing offer of audio description on television, cinemas, theatres, opera houses and museums, among others. These two services – SDH and audio description – are gradually coming together to arrive at what may become a new area for research, that of accessibility to the audiovisual media. There are indicators of such a direction in the inclusion of these two areas in recent conferences on audiovisual translation and on the appearance of new audiovisual translation types such as audio subtitling in which subtitles of foreign films are voiced for the benefit of blind and partially sighted viewers¹²⁹. The inclusion of these areas in workshops and undergraduate and postgraduate course syllabuses is another clear indication that the issue has gained momentum and is now recognised as a subject of interest in academic contexts. This will mean greater insights into the intricacies of these audiovisual translation practices and will bring greater visibility both to the professional translators working in the field and to the impaired viewers themselves.

Both in the academic world and in the industry, the approach to audiovisual text accessibility services, such as SDH and audio description, ought, in the first place, to be one of social commitment. By bringing social implications to the fore, one may need to readdress priorities and question issues such as quantity and quality. An analysis of the present situation in Portugal, after a period in which the offer of SDH of television programmes has more than doubled, brings about a question that may be extrapolated to other contexts where rapid growth is equally visible: does more supply really mean greater accessibility? An increase in quantity is indeed a reason for enthusiasm; however, it alone might not be sufficient to guarantee greater accessibility. While the ideal situation of having SDH on all televised programmes is not attained, as proposed by BBC for 2008, many Deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers will continue to feel left out whenever their

¹²⁹ Audio subtitling is different from “auditive subtitling”, which Gottlieb (1997f:53) clarifies to be a situation “where the audience could listen to simultaneous or tape-recorded interpreting of the film dialog through small headphones installed at each seat. The purpose was to enable cinemagoers to hear the original dialog (as in subtitling)”.

favourite programmes do not carry SDH. In order to make choice easier, the present situation may be greatly improved by small actions such as the identification of subtitled programmes available both while showing and when listed in newspapers, magazines and other means of advertisement.

Great improvements are envisaged with the growing dissimulation of digital media. The new technical conditions made available will allow for subtitling solutions that, in the era of analogue technology, could only be deemed as utopian. Interactive digital television and convergent media call for a review of notions of mass media and audiences. In the future, audiovisual programmes might not be provided as finished products. People will be able to interact with the original text adjusting it to their particular needs and wishes. This means that accessibility services, such as subtitling or audio description, will be available on call and tailored to the individual needs of each viewer.

In face of the present technological advances it is possible to foresee that subtitling in the future will be very different from that which is offered today. This will require translators to develop new skills and techniques and to take a new approach to the whole issue of audiovisual translation. Initial steps are already taking professionals in that direction. An instance of such changes may be found in re-voicing, which demands the integration of interpreting skills with speech-to-text technology. Another development that could soon be in order may well be multi-level or multi-track subtitles, allowing people to determine the characteristics of the subtitles they want to receive. This will mean the possibility to choose among a number of graded subtitle types, moving from verbatim subtitling across edited or adapted subtitles to suit the needs of different readers. In addition, the possibility to “pick and choose” will allow viewers to select the content they want to include in their subtitles: extra information on sound effects and music, colour or displacement, among others. Subtitle size will also be changeable, catering for the special needs of those people who, further to hearing impairment, may also have poor eyesight, a condition which is common in an aging society.

The technological advances that begin to be made will impose profound changes in the way subtitling is now carried out. Rather than finished wholes, subtitles will take the form of “DIY kits”, which means that subtitlers will be providing parts that viewers will assemble according to their own requirements. This may be daunting at this stage but subtitling may soon share ground with software localization, running the risk of dissociating parameters in order to provide apparently non-contextualised parts that will only become meaningful when integrated with other parts. The borders that now exist between subtitling, dubbing and audio description, for instance, may soon disappear and we may well be speaking of new audiovisual translation types that allow for the overlay or convergence of various solutions at any one time. Subtitles may also grow away from their verbal form and appear in iconic or multi-dimensional forms, conveying sound through visual or tactile solutions. Even if this may now appear very close to science fiction, the technical conditions are now realities begging for creative exploitation.

The challenges that come with such progress are diverse. In this context, issues such as standardisation, R & D and translator education and training, among others, may be questioned anew. If, at present, standardisation may be seen by many as impossible or even undesirable, it may become an essential component when so much compositional choice is passed over to viewers. Interactivity is bound to demand greater standardisation and homogeneity. The Television Without Frontiers Directive anticipates many of the problems that come with digital technology and call our attention to the steps that need to be taken if we are to keep up with the times. Adjustments will also be in order in the development of software packages to assist professionals in the new tasks that will be required of them. Education and training will be required to re-assess curricula and methodologies in order to make space for the new demands.

If technical development is accompanied by thoughtful national and international policies and if technology is supported by conscientious professionals who understand their role as facilitators bridging gaps between different “worlds”, the future of SDH and that of audiovisual translation in general may be addressed with optimism. Perhaps, then, true

inclusion will be achieved for services will be supplied to all alike, allowing for subtle adjustments that will guarantee adequacy to viewers as individuals.

While the picture sketched above is still in the making, much can be done to improve present standards. All the areas that may be developed within the present context will result in a better future for the millions of people who depend on the work of professionals who understand transadaptation as a concept worth pursuing. In short, this means accepting the fact that people with impairment are entitled to enjoy watching television, going to the cinema, the theatre or the opera, playing video games or surfing the net, and that all this can be made available through accessibility services such as SDH.

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Filmography

Films

American Beauty (1993) – Sam Mendes – USA

Desperanto (1991) – Patricia Rozema – Canada

Four Weddings and a Funeral (1994) – Mike Newell – UK

Goodfellas (1990) – Martin Scorsese – USA

Head On (1998) – Ana Kokkinos – Australia

Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain (2001) – Jean-Pierre Jeunet – France

Surname Viet Given Name Nam (1989) – Trinh T. Minh-ha – USA

The Piano (1993) – Jane Campion – New Zealand

TV Series / Serials / Telenovela

EastEnders (2001 [1985]) – various – BBC / UK

Mulheres Apaixonadas (2003) – Walter Avancini – Rede Globo / Brazil