Sketching Tomorrow's Mediascape – And Beyond

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Dear Readers,

As the guest editors of this special issue of JAT, we hope that you will enjoy reading the selected articles and that they will inspire you to explore new research avenues. It has been a pleasure for us to edit this issue and to acquaint ourselves with the research presented in it. We hope that our introduction will also provide food for thought.

We have always enjoyed working in audiovisual translation and media accessibility and trust that it will continue to be a thriving, expanding and creative field of practice and research.

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1. Sketching Tomorrow's Mediascape: And Beyond

The Media for All 9 conference, "Sketching Tomorrow's Mediascape" (2021), the source of inspiration for this volume, pointed to a mediascape of the future as a transformed space "where collaboration, partnership and mutual understanding [would] be key to success for traditional and new players". The most recent developments in Audiovisual Translation (AVT) and Media Accessibility (MA) research have confirmed this.

Researchers at the forefront of AVT and MA, which we consider to be two related forms of multimodal (Boria et al., 2020) and multisensory translation (Neves, 2020), are seeking out new partnerships, new technologies and new translation modes to tackle today's challenges. Central in this is the aim to reconcile the requirements of the diversity that defines our world with the demand for inclusion of this diversity in all aspects of culture and life.

Views on the relationship between AVT and MA have also been debated in recent years (see e.g. Greco, 2016, 2018; Romero-Fresco, 2018; and Neves, 2020, 2022; for an overview). This discussion will undoubtedly intensify as multimodal translation continues to diversify. However, largely in line with Marais (2014, 2019), we see translation as fundamentally semiotic and central to the way in which humans communicate and make sense of the world. Meaning is generated as we interpret signs and translate them into other signs, whether they be linguistic, aural, visual, olfactory or haptic, and this therefore applies to all forms of media accessibility. In this we also follow Neves who sees accessibility as "a natural component of communication and translation, a subject integral to TS" (2022, p. 442). More generally speaking, we believe there is no need to rename practices or create new terminology except to denote and define sub-fields or focus on specific modes of such a sub-field for research purposes. In such contexts, the distinction between AVT and MA or even accessibility can be useful.

Whereas a broad definition of translation creates a framework for the inclusion of present and future variants, it does not resolve the problem of how it can cater for the inclusion and diversity of its many target users of varying abilities. The issue is complex and is tackled in depth by scholars such as Romero-Fresco (2019), Fryer and Cavallo (2021), Neves (2020, 2022) and many others. We will limit ourselves to highlighting a few aspects of the challenge, relate them to the articles in this special issue and point to what we perceive to be an avenue for fruitful alliances. However, the status quo within the practice and research of multimodal translation presents a mixed picture.

On the one hand, a creative and inclusive movement is evolving among translator-practitioners and researchers, e.g. in the form of integrated audio description (AD) in the theatre (Fryer, 2018; Fryer & Cavallo, 2022) and accessible filmmaking in the cinema (Romero-Fresco, 2019). This trend questions claims of universality and aims to provide practices and scope for diversity or achievement spaces in which the multisensory and cognitive capacities of all can be exploited to the full, as convincingly argued by Neves (2020, 2022). On the other hand, the mainstream localisation industry, the term preferred by the 2022 Languages and the Media conference in Berlin among others, is confronted by

ever-growing quantities and diversity in the content to be translated for different purposes, different contexts and different platforms. The mainstream localisation industry is therefore widely embracing new technologies and integrating automation to cope with the exponential growth in content. While their provision of SDH and AD steadily grows in keeping with legislation and mercantile considerations, and quality has become a major concern for many language service providers (LSPs), the inclusion of diverse users and practitioners in the workflow is not yet obviously trending.

Meanwhile, the concepts of diversity and inclusion with respect to audiences have also made their entry. Awareness of different audience needs is on the rise as debates at the 2022 conference demonstrated. This can be attributed partly to increased awareness and activism among users, practitioners and researchers. However, we are also seeing some changes in the content to be translated. Greater diversity is evident in the casts of TV series, for instance, even if not yet in their production teams. Thus, diversity is becoming visible. It has an exemplary function which may well generate further inclusion and visibility of diversity in all areas of social interaction.

Overall, consensus is growing on the illusory nature of achieving universal design and "accessibility for all", given the tenuousness of the very concept of "universality", the diversity of the user population and the heterogeneity of artworks requiring some form of multimodal translation. Moreover, users and artists who experience their specific disabilities as part of their identity question the ableist nature of attempts to make artworks designed for a so-called non-disabled audience accessible to them. This, they feel, equates to an attempt to integrate them in an ableist world (see, for instance, the work of Kleege, 2018). Furthermore, some people with specific needs remain beyond the reach of (media) access despite recent developments, as Dangerfield and Romero-Fresco illustrate in this volume (see also Dangerfield, 2021).

Recent proposals such as bridging the maker-user gap (Greco, 2018), creating achievement spaces in which users would be able to participate actively in communication in accordance with their abilities and wishes (Neves, 2020), offering users an active choice, a "cluster of possibilities" (Roofthooft, 2021) in deciding which forms of translation to use, as well as experiments involving artists in the translation of their work and involving users in the creation of art lead the way forward. However, they cannot fully resolve the catch-22 of matching diversity and inclusion. A work of art made accessible for or created by a person who is blind will probably not be (fully) accessible to a person who is Deaf. Moreover, there are so many gradations in blindness and deafness (to give just these two examples) in people who create art and in people who enjoy art that defining what they can and cannot (or do not want to experience) may not even be possible. Nevertheless, in any form of translation there is loss and there is gain. The issue is how we deal with this.

Artworks, be they film, a theatre play, a painting, performance, happening or other event, are themselves translations of the ideas, ambitions, visions and creativity of one person, or, very often, a number of people, and the result of a prolonged non-linear process. In art "the" intention of "the" creator is often hard to define and therefore hard to grasp and reproduce in translation. Users of artworks produce their own mental translations on the basis of their background, knowledge,

feelings and senses, whether they are "direct" users or translators themselves. The source texts that they interpret and transform into their own personal source text-cum-translation are different every time. In art, and certainly in the case of multimodal and other complex works, it is the user-translators who define what their source text is: The so-called "original" does not exist. It consists of too many source texts for all of these to be included in the next target text. All translator-users create a new source text for further translation, be it for audio description, a guided touch tour or simply for conversations with friends.

Translation takes many forms and is an emergent phenomenon (Marais, 2014). It is the result of the context-bound choices that translators make and of the interactions between translators, users and the tools of their trade, such as the technology they use. In other words, translation is the result of interactions between human but also non-human actors (Latour, 2005, see also Remael et al., 2019). Interaction, or in Per Linell's terminology, dialogicity, is central to the way in which human knowledge develops (2009). Through dialogicity some meanings are shelved but others are recreated, and some new meanings are even created. Translation is also a gain and is inherently diverse.

Above, we have briefly mentioned the intensified engagement with diversity and inclusion in art. A parallel development is the apparent increase in multisensorial creation in very different art forms that are not necessarily focusing on inclusion, translation or accessibility in the/our narrow sense. Moreover, a concern with all the senses has been present in different art forms across the ages and is merely taking a more truly sensorial shape today.

Take, for example, *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* (1432), a magnificent renaissance altar piece consisting of twelve panels painted by the brothers Van Eyck of Ghent. It not only represents religious themes but is also a realistic and minute representation of the prosperous city of Ghent, its inhabitants and culture at the time. On an altar in the centre of the central panel, in the middle of a green landscape stands the lamb, representing Jesus Christ. The lamb is alive, but its blood is spurting from a wound into a chalice. The allusion is to the death and resurrection of Christ. Another panel represents singing angels, and yet another, angels playing musical instruments. From the expressions on the faces of the singers one can deduce the pitch of their voices, while the musicians' instruments and the way they are played evoke the polyphonic music of the time (Schmidt, 2022, pp. 129–132). In *The Lamb of God*, the theatrical translation of the painting by Milo Rau at the Nederlands Toneel Gent (2018), all 12 panels come to life in a staged representation of 21st century Ghent and its multicultural inhabitants. The lamb, live on stage, can be heard and smelled. It is shorn rather than killed and refers to elements of Islamic culture practised in Ghent today. A local children's choir can be heard and seen singing on the stage and a live band appears at different times during the performance. As is the case with many contemporary plays, the staging makes use of oral and written text, sound, music, projections and olfactory stimuli. Moreover, the combination of all these creates an almost haptic feeling of presence.

Other examples are rife. The Flemish theatre company F.C. Bergman introduced a herd of sheep onto the stage in its creation *The Sheep Song* (Toneelhuis, 2021). The animals could be smelled well up to

the second balcony and heard before the curtain was raised and they could be seen; no audio description required. The company regularly creates plays that do not involve any dialogue at all but rather visual movement compounded by sound effects that often have a haptic resonance (Toneelhuis, 2015a, 2015b). Such experiments with creative sensorial translation and with the introduction of diversity in the broad sense in the arts are not limited to the stage.

In *Feeling her Way* in the UK pavilion at the Venice Biennale Arte 2022, for instance, Sonia Boyce's exhibition explored:

> the potential of collaborative play as a route to innovation. Boyce's installation brings together video works featuring five Black* female musicians (Poppy Ajudha, Jacqui Dankworth MBE, Sofia Jernberg, Tanita Tikaram and composer Errollyn Wallen CBE) who were invited to improvise, interact and play with their voices. (British Council, 2022)

In this installation Boyce literally gives a voice to black women and although visual representations in the form of objects and video recordings complement the sound, it is the strength of the women's voices that is prominent and enticing and draws the user into the exhibition space.

All art involves interaction, a form of conversation between the work of art and its user and all art is fundamentally intended to be participatory. However, in art that consciously calls itself "immersive", the users are central to the outcome of the work. The maker-user gap is bridged. Moreover, this type of work purposefully "provides information or stimulation for a number of senses, not only sight and sound." (Machon, 2016, p. 29). Another feature of immersive art is that it increasingly blurs the borders between different types of artistic experiences, partly thanks to the affordances offered by technology and digitisation. A fitting example at this point is the innovative programme series "Immersion" that the Berliner Festspiele curated at Berlin's Martin-Gropius-Bau exhibition space and various other locations in the city from 2016 to 2021:

… under the artistic directorship of Thomas Oberender and with changing curatorial teams, [it] presented the work of artists who transcended the conventional oppositions between work and viewer, stage and auditorium, object and observer. The programme series also aimed to articulate and establish "immersion" as a key term for a different understanding of the world – representing both a new genre and an ancient principle of connectedness. (Berliner Festspiele, 2021

In one event, *Symphony of a Missing Room* by Christer Lundahl and Martina Seitl, (27 October – 20 November 2016), which was first created at the Swedish National Museum in 2009 and has been recreated at more than a dozen international museums since then, visitors were admitted in small groups. They were fitted with opaque snow goggles and wireless headphones and were then guided through many of the rooms and exhibition halls of Martin-Gropius-Bau, aided by a combination of audio instructions, sound effects and the light, gentle touches of trained individual guides. Being unable to see the rooms that would normally be familiar to regular Martin-Gropius-Bau patrons was intended as a way to activate not only the visitors' senses of hearing and touch but also their memories of the rooms in an experience that made them "see" in quite a different way. The users'

perceptions and projections were intended to be, and were, "the single medium of the work: a closed system in which reality fundamentally originates from the perceiver as a form of projection." The aim of the work was not to create an experience of blindness for people who can see, it aimed to broaden the spectrum of experiences of its participants.

Many of the concerns of multimodal translation and especially its sub-field of accessibility are present in contemporary art, even if its creators do not always consciously envisage audiences of different abilities. It shares the desire to promote audience participation, even user autonomy, and diversity in terms of gender, race, age, physical appearance and abilities. It promotes immersion and the creation of a sense of presence, thus blurring the borders between production and consumption and staging what has traditionally been seen as physical or mental disability or difference. To give one further example, choreographer Florentina Holzinger's new work *Ophelia's Got Talent* (performed in Volksbuehne Theatre in Berlin in 2022) challenges conventional ideas of ableness in an all-naked female revue featuring very different women who all somehow break the accepted norm in an "unflinching and unsentimental look at women's bodies and desires." (Goldman, 2022)

It is clear that the diversity in the content to be translated today requires a diversity of approaches from multimodal translation practitioners, scholars and users. Each piece must be considered anew in terms of its artistic complexity, context and the wishes and needs of the users who want to enjoy it. However, the diversity in art today also invites dialogue and more interdisciplinary collaboration in the vein of integrated access in the theatre and accessible filmmaking (see also Fascioli-Álvarez in this special issue). In a somewhat simplistic representation one could say that art deals with a myriad of forms of diversity and inclusion whereas multimodal translation and its sub-domains deal with linguistic and sensorial diversity and inclusion. However, just as artists with different abilities are becoming part of production teams and creating their own art, and integrated accessibility develops, diversity in the full sense of the word is becoming relevant in multimodal translation as well.

In 2021, ARGOS, the major Belgian gallery and centre for video art in Brussels, hosted an online exhibition, *Activating Captions*, introducing "new forms of media that question the assumption that audiovisual output is comprehensible for everyone" [and to] "underscore audiovisual culture's inherently exclusive nature, as well as its relationship to written languages" (Activating captions, n.d.). A collection of commissioned writing and video art probed the limits of captioning, reinventing their use in such a way that the diverse artists offered hearing users some insight into how people with hearing loss experience audiovisual projects (see also Dangerfield & Romero-Fresco in this volume). In this experiment, multimodal translation is turned on its head and gives supposedly non-disabled users access to a world to which they previously had none. As Neves (2022, p. 453) writes: "Accessibility should simply be seen as ability-sensitive adaptation/mediation [we would add: translation] that will serve any person, including those who have a disability", no matter how one defines the latter.

Art, too, is a translation. Enjoying translated art is no different from enjoying art. The experience is an unstable one and reveals difference. This also holds for art experienced through traditional forms

of AVT, such as subtitling in the case of multilingual films: The complexities of the socially-determined language variation introduced by some directors to paint the social fabric of an era, for instance, can never be captured in subtitles, even if they, too, are multilingual, use different fonts for different languages and/or are combined with dubbing (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2021, pp. 182–194). The different linguistic and social skills of the individual viewers will co-determine the film they see. As cited above (see p. 6): "(R)eality fundamentally originates from the perceiver as a form of projection." It is important that all users and producers are aware of the limitations of what they can expect but that they are offered more opportunities and more choice (see also Arias-Badia et al. in this volume). Resolving the dichotomy between diversity and inclusion is an ongoing dialogic process, not one of linear progress but of increased understanding of both the affordances and limitations of all actors involved, including new ones from other disciplines, with attention to similarity as well as difference, and openness to the unexpected.

In this introduction, we are inevitably raising issues beyond *Sketching Tomorrow's Mediascape*. This reflects the current debate on how one interprets "media", since multimodal translation is branching out into different domains and disciplines while more traditional forms and applications continue to exist and thrive. Nevertheless, as indicated in the first paragraph, "collaboration, partnership and mutual understanding [remain the] key to success for traditional and new players." We are in a period of transition: more traditional forms of multimodal translation that give access to traditional productions and forms of production claim their place next to innovative approaches.

All the contributions in this volume are contributing to the journey towards more inclusion and diversity in different ways. The time has come to introduce them! The twelve contributions in this volume have been subdivided into two sections, although some overlap is inevitable: (1) Inclusion, Diversity and Agency; and (2) Emergent Forms of Translation.

2. Inclusion, Diversity and Agency

Inclusion, diversity and agency are central in *Accessibility as a Conversation* by Pablo Romero-Fresco and Kate Dangerfield. The authors point out how mainstream cinema, with the complicity of so-called "invisible" AVT modes, such as subtitling and dubbing, has managed to create and maintain a cinematic illusion of reality and universality, thereby also creating the image of the normative individual. However, the need for translation has always undermined this illusion since it reveals difference. In this sense, translation holds a promise. MA, too, has long aimed for "universality" and "accessibility for all". Regardless of the benefits of its universal claims, it has, nevertheless, failed to address individuals who could not or would not fit its mould. In addition, the universalist perspective, including quantitative universalist approaches in research for instance, ignores issues of diversity that determine a person's identity and have political significance. Recently, however, a different practice countering the universalist trend has been gaining traction: creative or alternative media accessibility. In this context, accessibility is no longer an add-on to a more or less finished product but becomes a creative process in its own right. The authors demonstrate that this subjective

approach to inclusion is often multisensorial and linked to larger issues of inclusion and diversity, vindicating users' rights to full participation in the arts and in society. At the same time, they show that some individuals might still not be reached by alternative access. Access must be a participatory and joint process from which all can benefit with interaction between those who "produce" and those who "use" it, a distinction that may actually not be relevant. It is a mode that requires ongoing conversation and continued research from novel angles.

Novel angles abound in *Accessible Stories Within Mediascapes: Voicing Otherness in Digital Museums*, which focuses on giving an authentic voice and agency to immigrant representations in museums. The potential of digital storytelling is shown to be an instrument of epistemic and poietic agency and a means to diversify access and promote inclusion that has received little research attention to date. Gian Maria Greco, Alessandra Rizzo and Cinzia Spinzi address this issue by exploring how migrant voices in the UK, USA, Australia and Italy project their unique experience into the narrative space and how identities are (re)constructed within digital museum settings. For their research the authors compiled an ad-hoc comparable corpus of migrant narratives in English and in Italian and employed a combination of corpus linguistics, systemic functional linguistics and lexical semantic analysis to scrutinise the conceptual categories they identified in the migrants' stories. They meticulously present the data and methods they employed and elucidate their quantitative observations and qualitative analysis. Giving migrants the opportunity to tell their own stories goes beyond a mere acknowledgment of their role as epistemic agents. It highlights their poietic agency by providing occasion for them to create their own accounts of their past, present and future. The authors underscore the huge potential not only for research but also for museums and other agents to harness the intertwined effects of new information technologies and accessibility, thus embracing a role as enablers of novel forms of transmedia texts rather than solely passive depositaries of knowledge constructed and established by curators.

We have pointed out above that the call to include prospective users in all aspects of the production process and creation of art and cultural events more generally is loud and clear today. However, practice varies greatly. In *Designing, Making and Validating Accessible Products and Services: An Updated Account of Users' Perspectives*, Blanca Arias-Badia, Joan Bestard-Bou and Irene Hermosa-Ramírez present the users' perspective on the role they play in the design, production and validation of accessible products and services. For their study they draw on in-depth interviews with representatives from third-sector entities such as charities, voluntary associations and social cooperatives in Catalonia. Such organisations are non-governmental, non-profit and value-driven. The article delves into the meaning of the concepts of universal design and accessibility consultancy versus validation in supposedly accessible practices. It looks at their varied interpretation of the concepts and forms of implementation, taking the discussion well beyond the Catalonian context. The authors give the users a voice and express their balanced, articulate and detailed views on the present state of affairs in accessibility consultancy, validation and/or participation. They also point the way forward, highlighting the need for more user involvement in production and management in both the industry and research. The article includes concrete proposals for good practice in terms

of methodologies for user consultations, suggestions for user awareness and accessibility training as well as different views on expert collaboration and input into accessibility standardisation.

Close collaboration among filmmakers, media accessibility experts, translators and end users is central to accessible filmmaking (AF) and a good example of the type of interdisciplinary collaboration between multimodal translation and the creative arts that we feel must be expanded to additional domains. However, the close interaction required to make a film accessible appears to be the exception rather than the rule. In *Accessible Filmmakers: Towards a Professional Profile*, Florencia Fascioli-Álvarez first surveys the concept and practice of accessible filmmaking, citing examples of specific filmmakers and the ways in which they played an active role in making their films accessible. She delves into the meaning of film accessibility and throws light on the relationship between filmmaking, multimodal translation and accessibility and the complexity of training accessible filmmakers. Fascioli-Álvarez then zooms in on the situation in Uruguay and employs a qualitative methodology based on fourteen semi-structured interviews with Uruguayan film professionals. The interview outcomes indicate their different levels of involvement with accessibility and highlight the qualities and awareness required for enhanced engagement among film professionals. While restricted to filmmaking in a single country, the study invites replication and further reflection on the skill set to be honed in training courses on accessibility, which is of utmost importance if we want to professionalise the practice.

The Use and Reception of Varieties of Spanish in Videogames deals with a more traditional form of multimodal translation, the linguistic localisation of video games, but here, too, the users' wishes are the central concern. Today, players increasingly expect videogames to be available in their own language; localisation is therefore the key to success in this area. Such linguistic localisation has been stimulated due to the increased presence of indie studios and developers but also because the majors are developing and publishing games in an ever-growing number of languages. Moreover, differentiation between language varieties is on the rise, and Spanish is a case in point. In this user-centred study Itziar Zorrakin-Goikoetxea presents a detailed analysis of the varieties of Spanish in use in the videogame industry and their identifying markers. This is followed by a detailed observational study carried out between 2006 and 2016 on the Steam website and focusing on geographical variation. It is based on considerable e-mail correspondence conducted with both game developers and users in combination with corpus analysis. The study covers the localisation process as well as product and reception analyses including how players' preferences impact their playing habits. The study offers some new insights into the distribution of Spanish language varieties in videogame localisation that merit more large-scale research but also replication in other languages.

In the final contribution of this first section, *Audio-Describing Sound – What Sounds are Described and How? Results From a Flemish Case Study*, Gert Vercauteren and Nina Reviers ultimately aim to improve the immersive film experience of audio description users by focusing on how dialogues, music and sound effects are integrated into the AD. The authors introduce their innovative model for AD sound analysis based on insights from film studies, multimodality research and audionarratology, which they test on two carefully selected Flemish films. More specifically, their study aims to reveal

what types of film sounds are common in narrative film, what the narrative position and function of these sounds is, and how/whether they are described, covering both diegetic and non-diegetic sounds. The authors test the theoretical framework, terminology and methodology that they have adopted and developed, while also highlighting the shortcomings and benefits of their theoretical sources of inspiration. An interesting methodological discussion examines what is considered a sound description and how to identify, annotate and classify the same. The authors candidly discuss the methodological challenges they faced in their research and reveal some surprising but prevalent trends in their AD corpus. Their findings demonstrate the need for further research to fine-tune theoretical and terminological frameworks for the study of AD sound as well as the need for further experimental, cognitive research into the reception and processing of film-AD sound interaction.

3. Emergent Forms of Translation

Multimodal translation takes many shapes and forms today and it continues to diversify due to the actions and interactions of those who produce and/or use it, adapt it to new needs or integrate it into new contexts and other forms of communication. It is a truly emergent phenomenon that can not only cater to new demands or create variants of existing forms for new audiences, it can even create demand when new usages of existing translation modes show unexpected potential, be it in terms of inclusion, creation or technological innovation.

In *Accessible Cinema for Older Adults. Can an App for Blind Viewers Benefit the Sighted Population?* Sonia Szkriba expands the use of an app designed for one target group to include older members of the population whose enjoyment of film can be limited due to their difficulties processing subtitles. Research that focuses on the specific preferences and accessibility needs of older users of audiovisual products in translation are rare even though this sector of the population is growing. Moreover, many new technologies which can be considered standard in multimodal translation for younger adults, such as the use of apps, may themselves pose an obstacle for older consumers. The author puts some of these issues on the research agenda and in so doing broadens the scope of both diversity and inclusion. Following a survey of relevant literature on aspects related to the use of technology and age, Szkriba introduces the AudioMovie application, originally developed for people with a visual impairment, in an exploratory qualitative study with a small focus group of sighted older people. The study's aim is to ascertain whether older adults would be willing and able to use a smartphone application when watching films in the cinema and to watch them with audio subtitles, having also established whether or not the candidates encounter problems reading standard subtitles on the screen. The meticulous presentation of the methodology used as well as the detailed discussion of both expected and unexpected results are an open invitation for much needed additional research into this aspect of diversity that is so central to our societies today. Szkriba also highlights specific paths that could be explored further to enhance both the usability of specific technologies and the target group's willingness to use them.

Audio Description as a Pedagogical Tool in the Foreign Language Classroom: An Analysis of Student Perceptions of Difficulty, Usefulness and Learning Progress expands the use of AD to a didactic context while investigating whether its new users experience this transfer as beneficial. The usefulness of audiovisual media and AVT in the context of language learning is well documented. AD, too, already has a respectable tradition as a language learning tool and research has demonstrated that it can enhance linguistic skills in different ways. Moreover, as Adriana Bausells-Espín points out, the analysis of student perceptions can provide insight into the pedagogical value of particular learning tools and teaching methods and contribute to the investigation of the metacognitive processes involved in language use. In this study the author investigates how a carefully selected target group of second-year learners of Spanish at the University of Manchester, UK, perceives the challenges and advantages of using AD for the acquisition of various language skills. She focuses on the development of integrated skills as well as communicative and lexical skills within the context of communicative language teaching (CLT). Her project consisted of two phases spread over 5 weeks and involved both carefully designed AD writing and the completion of follow-up questionnaires. This not only yields interesting results for each of the variables, i.e., the students' perception of the difficulty of the AD tasks, their perception of the usefulness of the tasks and their perception of their own learning progress, but also demonstrates that there was an obvious link between their perceptions of each.

Sometimes contingencies contribute to the creation of new translation variants. In *Immersive, creative, inclusive: areas of cross-fertilization between accessible captions for D:deaf audiences for the stage,* Pierre-Alexis Mével, Jo Robinsons and Paul Tennent investigate the challenges and opportunities offered by the Covid-pandemic that forced theatrical productions online. While the pandemic was a financial and artistic disaster for many in the creative arts with knock-on effects for the general population, the move to digital performances also made productions more widely available, and therefore more accessible in another sense of the word, be it in a digital form. However, carefully crafted and integrated stage captions for audiences with a hearing impairment were often reduced to inadequate, automatically generated versions for the digital productions. This article shines a light on current creative captioning practices for the screen and stage to provide insight into the creative possibilities and limitations when converting accessible and inclusive stage performances to online video versions. The authors identify problematic issues with the captions as a tool and an artistic practice. In investigating creative captioning practices for both the screen and the stage, they pinpoint the overlaps and differences between them and explore ways to overcome the maker-user gap (Greco, 2018). They then focus on accessibility examples created for the theatre in the context of the inclusive *Red Earth Project*. Their study identifies the challenges of adapting accessibility features for online videos providing insight from a user perspective while also considering technical and creative possibilities and limitations. The article provides a further example of the emergent nature of multimodal translation and illustrates the impact of human and non-human actors leading to the creation of new variants of existing modes.

Audio introductions are known to be a useful addition and sometimes a replacement for AD in the theatre but they have also made inroads into other media, such as film (Romero-Fresco, 2022, pp. 423–433). In *Bringing the Stage to the Screen: Enhanced Audio Introductions to Complement*

Broadcast Audio Description, Jonathan Penny gives a behind-the scenes chronicle of television broadcaster ITV's initiative to develop a series of audio introductions to complement and extend the use of the AD it produces for blind and visually impaired television audiences, offering them an additional choice. Penny first contextualises AD and audio introductions in the broadcast industry. He presents an outline of where (with examples mostly in the U.K.), when and how audio introductions can usually be found and why they have not been standard practice in the broadcast TV industry so far. After describing the two-stage consultation process that ITV conducted with blind and visually impaired users, he explains the central features of the broadcaster's ultimate concept of the optimal audio introduction for its drama series and soaps. A further aim of the project he describes was to determine the extent to which ITV audio introductions might also support the channel's efforts to improve representation of onscreen diversity in its AD provision. Penny highlights the potential of audio introductions in the broadcast industry as a viable means to provide an add-on service for visually impaired and sighted audiences alike when incorporating audio introductions into the AD production process and tapping into the technological assets that are already an integral part of viewers' lives.

Earlier in the introduction we mentioned the role the localisation industry plays in developing new technologies and workflows to deal with ever-diversifying content and that mercantile considerations, too, can lead to innovation and new or adapted translation modes. As a major player in the distribution and proliferation of non-English-language content in today's mediascape, Netflix has initiated new trends in the Anglophone dubbing industry. Lydia Hayes and Alejandro Bolaños-García-Escribano take a concerted look at these emergent macro-strategies and their importance in generating demand for Netflix's productions dubbed into English from other languages in *(Main)streaming English Dubs: A Snapshot of Netflix's Playbook on Dubbing Strategies*. Fueled by the acknowledgement of consumers' preference for high-quality dubbed versions and the financial returns this implies, in 2019, two years after launching English dubs, Netflix began hiring creative dubbing supervisors across the globe, capable of recognising "regional cultural differences". For their contribution the authors analysed a corpus of 82 Castilian-Spanish films and TV series and their English dubs on Netflix and identified the main dubbing strategies adopted by the studios involved. They provide an in-depth account of the creative approaches they have identified and show that the scale of postproduction at Netflix is blurring the lines between originals and localised versions with the latter being treated with the creativity typically reserved for originals. This, they indicate, is likely to have far-reaching implications for English-language AVT in the 2020s. It may also be a sign of a further rapprochement between creative and multimodal translation production processes.

Last but not least, technology itself is an important actant or force in all forms of human communication today, allowing for new forms of creativity and propelling change. Immersive media technologies in eXtended Reality (XR) such as VR and 360° videos are attracting new and increasingly diverse audiences as they enable interactive and hyper-personalised experiences, as do many other art forms (cf. our discussion above). The present contribution is part of a larger accessibility study but in *VR 360° Subtitles: Designing a Test Suite with Eye Tracking Technology*, Marta Brescia Zapata focuses on the development of engaging and aesthetically pleasing immersive subtitling for XR. The

key challenge for XR subtitle placement is that the users' Field of Vision (FoV) is limited since they cannot take in all the virtual scenery simultaneously, while aural input is also vying for their attention. Moreover, there is no linear narrative and the users can move around actively in the scene. In a bid to improve current subtitling options and better understanding of the variables at play, Brescia Zapata's innovative pilot study used a web-based simulator and subtitle editor designed for rapid prototyping of subtitles to test different options experimentally and compare solutions. Users were presented with alternative subtitle stimuli while their behaviour was observed with eye-tracking technology. Questionnaires as well as focus groups complemented the data producing psycho-physiological self-reports and qualitative analyses. The study is eminently replicable and paves the way for further research and improved user experiences that can target audiences with different abilities.

We trust that you will enjoy reading the articles in this volume, which, as we mentioned in the first paragraph, originated in the 9th Media for All Conference, held in Barcelona in 2021 in the middle of the Covid pandemic. As the Media for All conference series develops, we may have to reconsider the meaning of both "media" and "for all". Media keeps diversifying and "for all" may continue to mean, yes, *for* all, but in different ways, with growing awareness of the possibilities and limitations of translation and the potential of ongoing interaction *with* all.

To conclude, we would like to thank all the authors for their contributions – this special issue is essentially theirs. Our thanks also go to the many referees for their careful reading and assessment of the numerous articles we received. And finally, we thank the entire editorial team at the Journal of Audiovisual Translation for their attention to detail and continued support.

Mary Carroll and Aline Remael

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