

THE THIRD LANGUAGE: A RECURRENT TEXTUAL RESTRICTION IN AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

Montse Corrius Gimbert
University of Vic, Espanha
montse.corrius@uvic.es

Abstract: If the process of translating is not at all simple, the process of translating an audiovisual text is still more complex. Apart from technical problems such as lip synchronisation, there are other factors to be considered such as the use of the language and textual structures deemed appropriate to the channel of communication. Bearing in mind that most of the films we are continually seeing on our screens were and are produced in the United States, there is an increasing need to translate them into the different languages of the world. But sometimes the source audiovisual text contains more than one language, and, thus, a new problem arises: the translators face additional difficulties in translating this “third language” (language or dialect) into the corresponding target culture. There are many films containing two languages in the original version but in this paper we will focus mainly on three films: *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), *Raid on Rommel* (1999) and *Blade Runner* (1982). This paper aims at briefly illustrating different solutions which may be applied when we come across a “third language”.

Keywords: third language, restrictions, audiovisual translation, source audiovisual text, dubbing.

This article aims at showing that the “third language” used in audiovisual translation is a recurrent problem that may be resolved in a number of ways. It is widely acknowledged that audiovisual translation is one of the most commonly used types of translation. However, most of the existing models of translation cannot be applied to dubbing or subtitling, and do not take into account the prob-

lem of a “third language”. By “third language” I mean any language that may exist in an audiovisual source text (ST) and that is not the main language of this ST. In this paper I will refer to it as L1b, or L1c if there are more than two in the source text.

Until now most theorists have dealt with models based on translating a source text in one language into a target text in another language (L1 translated into L2, an interlinguistic process), but sometimes the text is not translated to be read but to be seen and/or heard, ([L1 + Non verbal] translated into [L2 + Non verbal]). This is the case of films, cartoons, documentaries, etc., what we call *audiovisual translation*. In this case, the oral component constitutes an integral part of the total audiovisual communication: apart from the language or languages existing in the ST, we also have images, which help us to understand what is being said, but which, in many cases, operate as restrictions when translating. I have taken the term “restrictions” from the *P-R Model* by Patrick Zabalbeascoa. This model is based on two concepts which he calls ‘priorities’ and ‘restrictions’ and are the key concepts for all translation solutions and techniques. According to Zabalbeascoa (1994) “translation as a textual operation might be defined as the production of a text (target text or TT) which presupposes the previous existence of another text (source text or ST) along with a need and a purpose for a new version of the ST. A TT can be said to be the translation of its ST if the two texts are equivalent in a number of aspects. The relationship between ST and TT can be explained in terms of the similarities and differences in their priorities and the types of restrictions that have been active to prevent complete identity between one text and the other.”

Translators (1) have to set up a hierarchy of priorities. We have to consider priorities as goals of the translation, and this is shown in Zabalbeascoa (1999: 161): “from a text producer’s angle, priorities are the formal and functional characteristics that the text will have once it is finished, or from the user’s point of view, priorities are the characteristics that a text is interpreted as having – its ex-

PLICIT and implicit aspects.” “Restrictions” are difficulties, such as sociohistorical factors, sociocultural background, professional restrictions, etc., that are in or surround the text and that translators come up against. The existence of these restrictions obliges the translator to hierarchize the aforementioned priorities. Therefore, translators are establishing criteria of equivalence, which will mean that the TT will be more equivalent in some aspects than others. Audiovisual translations are thus affected by image synchronisation – what is being said or seen on the screen cannot be contradictory to what the characters are doing – and by time synchronisation – the translated message, either written or oral, should coincide with the linguistic act – (Diaz Cintas, 2001: 23).

Nowadays, it is becoming more and more frequent to come across a film (an audiovisual text) that contains more than one language in the original version [L1a + Non verbal + L1b]. L1b, which I have called the “third language”, stands for the second language of the original audiovisual text. This third language can be an invented language as we find, for example, in *Blade Runner* where the invented language is called “Cityspeak”, which is a mixture of words and expressions from Spanish, French, Chinese, Hungarian and Japanese, or it can simply be a natural language. In this latter case it may or may not coincide with the language of the target text, $L1b = L2$ or $L1b \neq L2$. Thus, apart from the usual difficulties found in any translation that has to be seen and listened to, that is to say audiovisual translation, translators have to overcome another problem which becomes a recurrent textual restriction, that of the third language. As shown in figure 1 below, the aforementioned third language can be translated in a number of ways. If L2b is an invented language, it can be the same as L1b or it can be different. In the case of *Blade Runner* the “Cityspeak” in the target text is different from the one used in the source text. If L2b is a natural language there are several possibilities: The “third” language used in the TT can be the same as the TT main language ($L2b = L2a$), the same as the ST secondary language ($L2b = L1b$),

the same as the ST main language (L2b= L1a) or a completely different one.

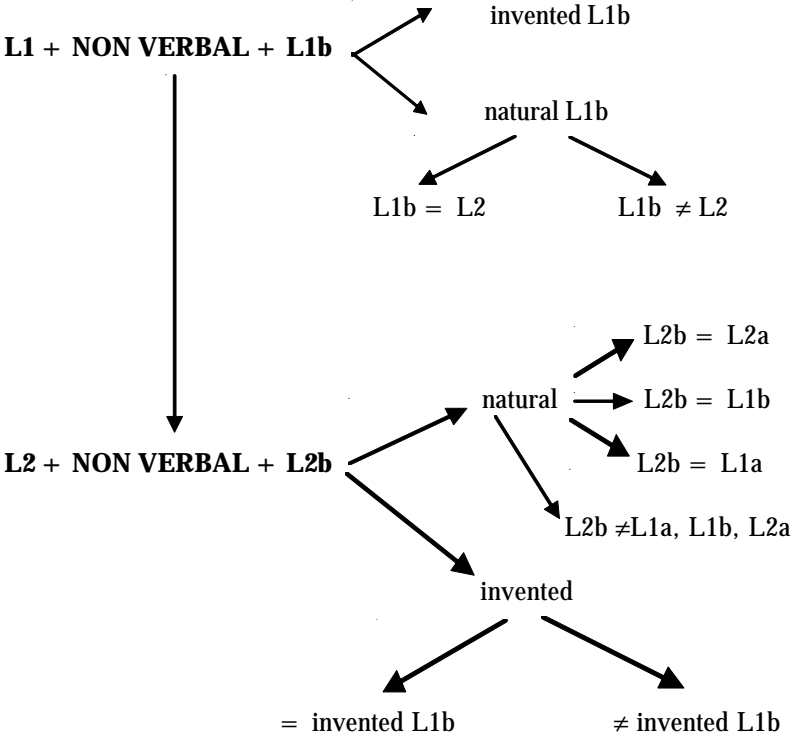


Fig. 1. Audiovisual text with a third language

An example of L1b coinciding with L2 (L1b = L2), is the film *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) in which the source languages are: English, as the main language (L1a), and Spanish, as the secondary language (L1b), because part of the film is set in Bolivia. The film was translated into Spanish as *Dos hombres y un destino* and this secondary language of the source text is the same as the main language of the target text. That is to say, both the

secondary language of the original version and the main language of the dubbed version are Spanish.

On the other hand, in the film *Raid on Rommel* (1999) translated into Spanish as *Comando en el desierto* we find an example of the second case, L1b not coinciding with L2 (L1b \neq L2). The third language (L1b), German, is not the language of the target audience, and therefore it does not coincide with L2. In fact, this film has three languages in the original version: English (L1a), German (L1b) and Italian (L1c). The film is set in North Africa during World War II. Several British commandos set out to destroy the heavy German artillery at Tobruk. In order to carry out this mission they are assigned the job of becoming prisoners of war and they are led by Captain Foster, an English officer posing as a Nazi officer. The mistress of an Italian general is also a prisoner who travels with them to Tobruk. English is spoken by the prisoners, German is spoken by the German soldiers, and Italian is spoken by the female prisoner, though this latter language is only heard a few times.

Raid on Rommel	Comando en el desierto
L1a English (spoken by the English prisoners)	L2a Spanish (spoken by the English prisoners)
L1b German (spoken by the German soldiers)	L2b Spanish (spoken by the German soldiers)
L1c Italian (spoken by the Italian woman)	L2c Italian * (spoken by the Italian woman) * Italian with Spanish words

Fig. 2. The languages in *Raid on Rommel* / *Comando en el desierto*

The translators responsible for the Spanish version did not provide the same solution for L1b and L1c. We said that in the original version L1b is German and L1c is Italian. However, in the Spanish version L1b was translated into Spanish, the same as L1a, so there

is no language difference between the German and the British commandos. In contrast, Italian is partially kept in the dubbed version; “partially” kept because, to a Spanish viewer, the dialogues sound Italian although there are some Spanish words mixed in to help people understand the message. Thus, L2b= L2a; L2c= L1c. Below is the script from a scene where “Signorina” (the Italian mistress) asks a German captain why she is not leaving on a plane to Tobruk.

(English version)

Signorina: Porco Cretino. E' l'ultima volta che mi fa questo gioco. Il generale sentira' per questo.

Captain: Italienische Huren beeindruckten mich nicht!

Signorina: Why don't you speak English?

Captain: What seems to be the problem, signorina?

Signorina: Why I'm not leaving on that plane to Tobruk? Why?

Captain: Signorina Galliaro, especially air transportation calls for special authority.

Signorina: I got! Ecco

“Courtesy shown the bearer will greatly oblige General Giordano Banducci”

Commando Officer. Head of the Division

Captain: Yes, I know of your position with the General.

Signorina: Position?

Captain: You are very attached to his staff. Extremely attached.

Signorina: He's molto grande, il Generale! You only piccolo Captain.

Captain: Italians are very stylish warriors but I wish they'd keep their women on a leash.

Signorina: Any other jokes?

Captain: Yes, you will travel like the rest of us.

Signorina: How is that?

Captain: In a truck. Continue packing.

(Spanish version)

Signorina: Porco cretino. Un mentiroso é l'ultima volta que m'engaña. El general l'arrestará per questo.

Capitán: Cuando hayamos ganado la guerra, su general volverá a ser un camarero

Signorina: ¡No le permito que me hable a gritos!

Capitán: ¿Cuál es su problema?

Signorina: ¿Por qué no voy yo quello avión a Tobruk? ¿Perche?

Capitán: Signorina Galliaro, para ir en este avión se necesita una autorización especial.

Signorina: Yo la tengo

“Le ruego traten con cortesía la portadora de este documento”
General Giordano Fanducci. Oficial en mando.

Capitán: Conozco muy bien su relación con el general.

Signorina: ¿Mi relación?

Capitán: Está usted muy vinculada a él. Mucho

Signorina: Es muy importante il general y usted es un vulgar capitán.

Capitán: Los italianos son unos soldados muy elegantes, pero no puedo decir lo mismo de sus amantes.

Signorina: ¿Algún otro chiste?

Capitán: Sí, viajará usted como todos nosotros

Signorina: ¿Y cómo lo harán?

Capitán: ¡En un camión! Siga preparando sus cosas.

In the original version and at the beginning of this scene the woman is very angry and speaks in Italian. Just afterwards, the German soldier goes on speaking in German and we can see subtitles in English. The “signorina” gets still angrier and asks the soldier why he does not speak English, “Why don’t you speak English?” He immediately changes into English, so now they both talk to each other in this language, although we hear some Italian words from the “signorina” and a German accent from the soldier. In the

Spanish version the “signorina” is supposed to speak Italian, but in fact she speaks a mixture of Italian and Spanish. The soldier goes on in Spanish (in the dubbed version both L1a and L1b were translated into Spanish). At this stage, part of the content has not been adhered to since there is no point in asking the German soldier to speak English because English is not used in the dubbed version and the audience is supposed to be Spanish. She says: “No le permito que me hable a gritos!” which means “I will not be shouted at”, something completely different from what she said in the original version. Translators clearly omitted the reference to the English language, which was a textual restriction for them, because the audience of the target text is the Spanish speaking world, and it is of no use for people to speak English. In this scene the content priority is ranked low. When the content priority, locally, becomes weaker, it is because the translators’ own purpose is to satisfy other priorities and, therefore, these become higher on a vertical scale of importance. The tone is here in a higher position than content itself.

There is a remarkable difference in the translation of the German and Italian dialogues depending on whether they retain parts of the source language or not. Why did the translators keep part of the Italian and not the German? On the one hand, Italian is a Romance language and similar to Spanish. Besides, there are only a few Italian dialogues in the film and these are very short, so it does not prevent the audience from following and understanding the film, and also Italian is only kept partially, as there are some Spanish words combined with the Italian statements to help viewers comprehend these Italian dialogues. On the other hand, German is a very difficult language for Spanish people to understand if they have not studied it, and there are numerous dialogues in German in the original version. Without translation, most Spanish viewers would have no clue about what was going on. A possible solution to differentiate the two commandos with regard to language might have been subtitling the German dialogues, but subtitling is not a very widespread practice in Spain. Like other big European countries,

Spain favours dubbing rather than subtitling and thus most of the foreign films that can be seen on Spanish screens are dubbed (Dannan 1991: 606; Agost 1999:17).

Let us now turn to an example of a German dialogue. There is a scene in which the English comando is travelling to Tobruk but they arrive at a forbidden area where they are stopped by German soldiers and they are not allowed to continue. They finally manage to get through by pretending to have two prisoners with typhus. Below is the script of the English version, in which all German dialogues have been subtitled in English.

(English version)

(At the roadblock)

Captain Foster: Na, wie geht's?

Soldier: Mein Gott, furchtbar!

Captain Foster: Gut.

Captain Foster: Ich bringe die Gefangenen nach Tobruk, es ist eine Infektionskrankheit.

Soldier: (on the phone) Das Lazarett, bitte!

Wir haben zwei Gefangene hier, mit Typhus. Sie sind sehr krank.

Ya. Er will dem Arzt sprechen.

Captain Foster: Der spricht kein Deutsch.

Der englische Arzt sagt, es ist eine Infektionskrankheit, und wir müssen zum Krankenhaus.

(At the hospital)

Doctor: Hauptmann Schröder, der Arzt, soll den Abstrich untersuchen.

Captain Foster: Hier haben Sie die Probe.

Captain Foster: Rommel

Rommel: Doktor

Rommel: Hallo

Rommel: Wie sind die Schmerzen?

Patient 1: Besser, Herr General.

Rommel: Geht's gut?

Patient 2: Danke.

Soldier 1: Das ist der gefangene englische Doktor mit seinen kranken Männern.

Soldier 2: Darf ich für Sie übersetzen, Herr General?

Rommel: It is not necessary. It is good of you to help us. Do you really believe they might have Typhus?

Doctor: We are making tests now General, but let's hope for all concerned it's something less serious.

Rommel: You're being well-treated?

Doctor: Very well. Thank you.

Rommel: Good.

Doctor: Despite the circumstances, I'm particularly pleased to meet you.

Foster is the only person travelling to Tobruk who speaks German, so he is the one who talks with the German soldiers. It is quite clear to the English-speaking audience that the two enemies speak different languages, and the dialogue itself accentuates this fact. In this scene, for example, someone on the phone asks to speak to the English doctor who accompanies the genuine prisoners of war and Foster says that he does not speak German. Another example is when Rommel arrives at the hospital and starts talking to the English doctor. Foster asks him if he needs a translator. At this point, he says that this will not be necessary and begins speaking in English. In the Spanish version Foster does not speak to the German soldier in German but in Spanish. Apparently, there is no communication problem. The two references to language have disappeared in the Spanish version, so when the German soldier tells Foster that the person on the phone wants to speak to the doctor, he simply replies that he will take the phone ("No, deme! Les hablaré yo"), and he says nothing about speaking German or any other language. Later, when Rommel starts talking to the doctor in the hospital, nobody asks if he needs a translator because everybody speaks in Spanish and there is no reference whatsoever to the German lan-

guage, except for the sign posted by the German soldiers, which reads “HALT”. Thus, the third language (L1b) can be a written text, any sign that can be read on the screen by the viewer, as in the example we have just mentioned, “HALT”, or an audiovisual text, that is, a language spoken by speakers whom the viewer sees and listens to. Translators found in this scene another textual restriction, which they solved in a similar way to the previous example.

In some films there is a further difficulty: a translation within the audiovisual source text. This may happen when two groups of people of different nationalities speak clearly different languages. In this case, communication problems, for one reason or another, are brought to the fore. Then, one character typically plays the role of interpreter.

Let us take an example to illustrate this point. In the film *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (Goldman, 1968: 151) there is a scene where Paul Newman (Butch) acts as interpreter. In this scene there are some Bolivian bandits (speaking Spanish) and Butch and Sundance (who speak English) approach them. Butch speaks some Spanish and Sundance none, but he wants to say something to the bandits. Butch translates for him:

Sundance: Tell him we were hired to take it back – it’s our job– tell him the money isn’t ours

Butch: El dinero... no es nuestro...

In the Spanish version the interpreting done by Butch has disappeared. The translators did not solve the problem by using a translation within the translation, which in my view would have been an interesting solution; they did not consider this fact an important priority, so they simply omitted this communication problem.

Final remarks

Coming across audiovisual texts that contain a third language is an increasingly recurrent problem. This paper shows that there is no single way of translating this third language because there are many variables that can influence the translators' decisions. Several solutions are plausible depending on the aims of the translation and the priorities and restrictions of the translators. In this paper I have presented different possibilities for the translation of the aforementioned third language, which, taking into account the P-R Model, may be deemed appropriate. We have seen that the third language, in the translated version, can coincide with the main language of the translation, ($L2b = L2a$); it may not be changed, that is to say $L2b = L1b$; it can also coincide with the ST main language ($L2b = L1a$); or it can be a completely different language, ($L2b \neq L1a, L1b, L2a$).

Success in translating audiovisual texts is not only a matter of language and language differences, although these are very important, but there are many intervening factors, such as cultural tradition and the target audiences' preferences. Translators, who are responsible for successful translations, have to be aware that, depending on the different factors, it might be more appropriate to translate in one way or another, completely adhering to the content or choosing any other priority. At all times, translators have to be aware of a set of priorities and a set of restrictions. Translating an audiovisual text with a third language is not necessarily more constrained than other forms of translation. However, the third language does represent an additional textual restriction that audiovisual translators have to account for when carrying out their task.

Note

1. I use the term “translators” (in plural) instead of the “translator” (in singular) because, in my view, the term “translator” is a concept rather than a concrete person. An audiovisual translation is a task that includes the process of translating plus the act of adjusting for timing and lip movement. Obviously audiovisual translators are not entirely responsible for the final version of the translation because there are other people who are involved in the process, such as technicians, the dubbing actors and the dubbing director, all of whom have something to say about the final product.

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