

BOOK REVIEW

Accessibilitat i traducció visual
Anna Matamala
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Accessibilitat i traducció audiovisual (*Audiovisual Accessibility and Translation*, in English) by Anna Matamala (2019) is a book written in Catalan which delves into the possibilities of making the audiovisual experience complete for all consumers by modifying content. With the rise of audiovisual and virtual content in the communication media, many people with disabilities such as hearing loss or visual impairment are left behind in the most run-of-the-mill experiences, especially those containing aural and visual elements as they cannot fully participate in the imaginary construct created by the voices, images and sounds. This book not only intends to show how to accommodate films, series and TV programmes to the needs of the audience, namely the hard of hearing and the blind or partially blind, but it also provides a general overview of the job of the translator, including translation techniques, along with an analysis of media accessibility. Furthermore, the book proposes activities for the reader to reach their own conclusions and experience first-hand. In doing so, Matamala captures the reader's attention and attains reader's interaction and participation, making traditionally passive reading an active learning experience.

Although this book covers the subject of translation, it is not only addressed to professional translators inasmuch as they are already acquainted with the information regarding translation techniques and professional aspects of the job. The audiences that, to my mind, would benefit from this book the most are translation teachers and students, due to its manual layout. Matamala has written and designed this book in a way that learning occurs gradually; that is to say, definitions and more general aspects of translation are presented and illustrated at the beginning of the book to culminate in the

explanation of those techniques that cater for the consumers' needs in order to accommodate content. The aim of content accommodation is to maximise the audiovisual experience in people with disabilities, namely subtitles, visual description or audio subtitling among others, in order to approach audiovisual content to them.

The book is divided into 11 chapters, which at the same time could be divided into 4 main blocks. The first three chapters constitute the first block. They are an introduction to the world of translation and the job of the translator. These first chapters contain information about adapting foreign content to the average viewer. The second block (Chapters 4 to 6) focuses on different adaptation or content modification strategies for the general public. Block three, includes Chapters 7 to 10, it focuses on media accessibility. That is, how the content-modification strategies described in previous chapters can be applied to make audiovisual content accessible to all, especially but not limited to those with visual or hearing impairment. The book comes to an end with an analysis of the state of the art and the yet-to-come (Chapter 11 –block 4). All of these chapters include a definition of the items covered as well as the current situation and their use in the Catalan context, along with the analysis of the adaptation methodologies used by public TV broadcasters, most common standards and practices, and some recommendations. Additionally, the author references countless authors and collects an extensive bibliography for further information on the topics.

The book opens with a 'reality check' of the limited accessibility to the audiovisual world. The author refers to the incomplete involvement of people with visual or hearing impairment in the audiovisual experience. In the first chapter, Matamala outlines and defines what the term 'audiovisual content' refers to, i.e. those products based on sound and visual elements. In addition to this, Matamala encourages the reader - and potential translator - to think of the purpose, the target audience or the setting the audiovisual product was designed to be enjoyed in, among others. Once the author establishes the important elements to bear in mind from an audiovisual perspective, a general classification is given to modify the original content and make it more accessible, namely sound and visual modifications. Matamala touches on the accessibility to information and communication, i.e. media accessibility, its evolution in the past decade and how the job of the translator becomes paramount to guarantee equal access to it. The focal point of Chapter 2 is on the barriers and challenges the translation of the

audiovisual elements might pose. The first challenge for the translator is linguistic variation, both interlinguistic, i.e. more than one different language present, and intralinguistic, i.e. dialect and register. The second challenge is terminology, which is presented as a second challenge since it is key to the understanding of the meaning, whether technical or fabricated for the sake of the audiovisual work, in order to be able to transfer this meaning and ascertain that the target audience will be able to decode it. Along these lines, cultural references also pose a quandary to the professional translator, as well as intertextuality, i.e. reference to other works, and humour. The author proposes techniques to conquer these obstacles, but the suggestions are not without their limitations, which are also identified in this book and the reader is warned about them. In Chapter 3, Matamala enumerates and suggests a series of tools for professional practice such as linguistic, translation or time management tools among others, as well as tools for research. The resources mentioned in this chapter may be useful for both the self-employed professional translator and the translator-to-be, as the author reviews their utility and applicability.

All the chapters in the next two blocks include a definition of the technique exposed along with its evolution in the Catalan context. Chapters 4 to 10 include a section in which the author compiles different possible groupings suggested by different authors for such content-modification modality. Furthermore, the author offers a description of the main characteristics as well as information on the technical and linguistic aspects. The last sections in all the chapters of this block aim at the professional world of the translator in which the process of the given modality, industry standards and recommendations are outlined along with further research on the topic.

Chapter 4 focuses on one of the modifications of audiovisual content: dubbing. The definition for this technique is given in the chapter in conjunction with a clarification for many widespread misconceptions about it, namely the mistaken belief that what translators do is merely translate a script. The author goes on to specify the detail and work behind a dubbing script to debunk this myth. The chapter that follows (Chapter 5) introduces voice-over as a second content-modification modality in contrast with dubbing and simultaneous interpreting. According to the author, these three are similar, yet different from each other. Despite having some shared traits with dubbing such as the modification of the soundtrack, voice-over does not require lip synchrony, for

instance; and although in both simultaneous interpreting and voice-over the translation overlaps with the original, in the former the translation is live, whereas there is previous written preparation in the latter (Matamala, 2019). Chapter 6 deals with subtitling for the general audience, its uses, general characteristics and steps that need to be followed in the subtitling process. Matamala underlines the possible variations within the format and detail of the subtitles depending on whether the target audience is able to decode sounds. She goes on to provide a description of this technique by juxtaposing it with other techniques such as dubbing or voice-over.

Chapter 7 has to do with the accessibility of the audiovisual content and the job of the translator in interpreting those contents in an effort to decode them for those with a visual or hearing disability. An example the author points out is sign language. Additionally, Chapter 8 goes back to subtitling, although this time the writer unravels subtitling techniques for the hard of hearing. She recounts how Catalan public broadcasting services pioneered accessibility through subtitling in the Spanish media. Chapter 9 deals with video description, which consists in narrating what the eye can see. In other words, to transfer visual elements to linguistic and aural elements. This modality has been traditionally associated with lack of vision, although, as the author puts it, it can also enhance the audiovisual experience in the average viewer. Matamala provides an insight into the Catalan broadcasting context by giving a myriad of examples of audiovisual works that have been made accessible through this modality, as well as listing official regulations, namely in the Valencia area, which establish that certain government speeches of interest to the general public should be video-described. Chapter 10 is also connected with a modality to make the media accessible: audio subtitling. This modality, as claimed by the author, benefits a variety of audiences ranging from people with a visual disability to a reading disability. In this modality, it is important to identify the characters before their intervention, among other distinctive features listed in the book. Chapter 11 closes the book addressing the issue of new practices and recent research among which the field of virtual reality can be found. The book culminates in a look to the future and a critical eye on the present, including what is exposed in this book.

All things considered, the book is a useful guide book for translation students, professors and professionals since it defines and summarises the uses of translation

modalities and their uses are illustrated with clear examples. These examples add a note of realism, which proves profitable for those who are about to be immersed in the translation labour market.

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