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Abstract

Truth is in the eye of the beholder:

Investigating the effect of translation on language learners watching subtitled films: preliminary results

A growing body of research in AVT (Audio-Visual Translation) has demonstrated that a number of structural characteristics of subtitles affect the viewing experience. Physical constraints of space and time, subtitle position and segmentation, sentence length and word frequency all play a role in the reception of subtitled material. In what is commonly referred to as vulnerable translation (Díaz-Cintaz and Remael, 2007: 57) where both source and target code are simultaneously available to the viewer for comparison, the interaction between the written (subtitles) and the oral (dialogue) might also easily play a role in the perception process. Furthermore, as subtitles are increasingly used for language learning purposes, they are also likely to have an impact on the acquisition process.

Focusing on a specific translation modality, reverse subtitling (native-language soundtrack, foreign subtitles) and language pair (English and Italian) this study explores the relationship between translation and the language learner. Can translation type have an effect on the way a viewer processes filmic information? Can source-target translational differences also play a role in acquisition, when the viewer is a learner with knowledge of both linguistic codes? Can these differences lead to higher (or lower) memory retention after one viewing? The present paper addresses these questions through an eye-tracking experiment, attempting to analyse the perceptual and mnemonic effect exerted by different degrees of translation proximity (both syntactic and lexical) between the original soundtrack and its foreign translation. Rationale, methodology and preliminary results of the study will be discussed.

Díaz Cintas, J. and A. Remael. 2007. *Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling. Translation Practices Explained*. Manchester, St. Jerome Publishing.