

Communicative Subtitling – Six Levels of Functionality

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Two Traditions in Subtitling

- Verbatim – goal and ideal word for word, but, alas...
- Communicative



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The Verbatim Tradition – The Origins

- **Intralingual** subtitling; deaf or hard-of-hearing (DHH) audience
 - Political motivation: “No sensorship!”
 - Receptional factor: Synchrony between subtitles and lip movement
- ⇒ Focus on ***microlevel equivalence*** even in **interlingual** subtitling (goal and ideal)
- ⇒ Reported problems in the reception (e.g. reading speed)



The Communicative Tradition – The Origins

- Subtitling practices in the traditional subtitling countries (particularly the Nordic countries)
- Guiding principle: The reception of subtitled AV content vs. spoken AV content (whether by hearing or DHH audience)
→ Focus on ***holistic correspondence*** & viewing experience vs. Microlevel equivalence on verbal level



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A Not So Untypical Case of Communicative Subtitling

Snap out of it! - Kakista ulos! (Spit it out!)

(*Magnolia*, DVD)

- => No semantic equivalence on the verbal level



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10 Minutes of a German Comedy Subtitled into Finnish

- 13/96 TT lines – No semantic correspondence
- 11 ST lines – No translation in TT
- 75/96 TT lines – Partial adaptation
- 8/96 TT lines – Semantic correspondence → 



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Subtitling as Translation & Communication

– Theoretical Foundations, Part 1

- Teleological concept of subtitling as a form of translation (Vuoristo; Toury; functionalists, such as Nord, Vermeer)
 - Communication precedes language
 - Linguistic communication
 - Purpose
 - Time & Place
 - Six Levels of Functionality (Vuoristo 1982)



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⇒ Context-dependent

- Applies to all translation



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What is Special About Subtitling? – Theoretical Foundations, Part 2

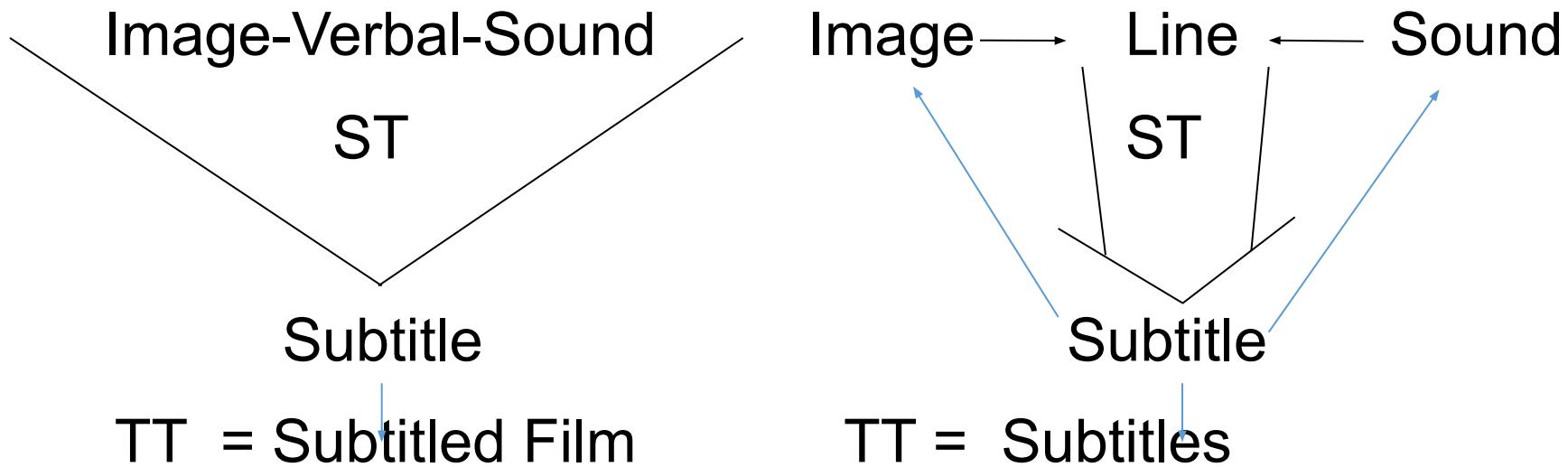
The nature of audiovisual texts

- Media of emotions => viewing experience
- The verbal element **AV-context-specific** vs. **context-dependent** in terms of meaning, function & style
 - ⇒ AV context part of source text & target text (cf. Zabalbeascoa 2008)
 - Highly target communication oriented
 - <= paramount communicative function: viewing experience
 - <= conditions for the reception of **subtitled** AV content
 - ⇒ Subtitling solutions highly **specific** to not only the target language and the **target culture** but also the **target text & medium**
- ⇒ Microlevel, **verbal equivalence** **not** the goal **nor** the ideal



Communicative vs. Verbatim

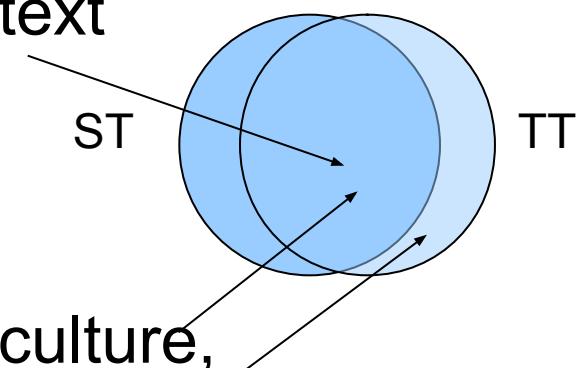
- The Task



Another Definition

- The task is to create a **subtitled script** for **specific** audiovisual material

- elements from the entire source text

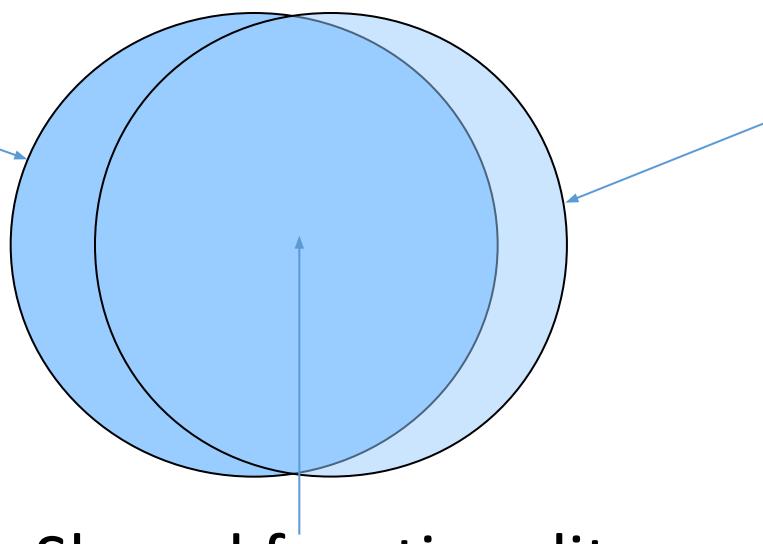


- **specific** target language, target culture, & target medium



Two Different AV Texts

- Spoken Film (ST)



Shared functionality
- Communication
- AV message



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Six Levels of Functionality

Socio-culture

Action

Communication

AV Message

(AV) Textuality

Verbal language

nt



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Example – Role of the Verbal Element in the Subtitled Film

GE: Da unten auf dem Kalbfell ist noch ein Plätzchen frei.

(EN: There is still some room on the calf skin.)

FI: Tuolla vasikannahkataljalla on vielä vähän tilaa.

Finnish subtitle:

Istumaan. (Do sit down.)

(Der bewegte Mann; Yle)



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Levels of Functionality

- Example of Hierarchy

Yeah, and now **it** shows up at the same time as an anthrax outbreak.
Doesn't sound very likely.

Nyt **tauteja** esiintyy yhtä aikaa.

Kumma juttu. (Verbatim: Funny thing. That's funny/weird.)

(Canadian TV Series, *Regenesis*; Yle)

=> The **style** of the subtitle was determined by the levels of
1) communication (programme/text genre: fiction/dialogue)
2) AV message (the style of the character)



Levels of Functionality

– Example of Interdependence

- Socio-culture
- Action & Actors – e.g. Image of the TV Company
- Communication – e.g. Viewing experience
- AV message – e.g. unclear (formulation of) message
- Textuality – e.g. poor cohesion or coherence
- Language – ungrammatical or unidiomatic language



Benefits of Thinking on Functionality Levels

Students learn to

- understand the complexity of subtitling (and all translation; incl. conventions viz à viz context-specific "interventions")
 - conceptualize the subtitling process and their subtitling solutions
 - think holistically, i.e., communicatively
 - focus on the functionality of the TT (subtitled film/TV programme) for the target audience, beyond the meanings in the ST (original spoken film/TV programme)
 - Combine theory and practice
-
- ⇒ Discuss and argue for their solutions; give founded feedback (professionality)
 - ⇒ Demand reasonable terms and conditions for their work (professionality)
 - ⇒ Do research with a holistic tool



Further Implications for Teaching, Part 1

- Film & TV studies from the point of view of AV translation
 - The nature of AV texts
 - media of emotions (Hietala 2007) => viewing experience
 - Interplay of the various modalities (Zabalbeascoa 2008, Chaume 2004, Gambier 2013)
 - Script writing (e.g. Martínez-Sierra 2012)
 - The medium: Film, TV, DVD, video games, etc.
 - Production process, production of manuscripts, etc. (e.g. Cattrysse & Gambier 2008)
 - Genres, including text genres (functions, norms & conventions)
 - Analysis of dialogue (e.g. Remael 2004, based on Linell, P.)
 - Subtitles as a text genre (functions, norms & conventions)



Further Implications for Teaching, Part 2

- Hands-on exercises
 - Analysis of professionally subtitled AV content
 - Initial focus on one level or aspect at a time
 - Intralingual subtitling
 - Subtitling of "Greek" AV content into L1 Language
 - Subtitling from L2 Language into L1 Language



Selected Bibliography

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Thank you!
Спасибо!

Q & A



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Example of subtitled script

Sinähän olet Kööpenhaminassa. You're in Copenhagen, right?

Myös Francis D'Haese According to this credit card transaction,
näyttäisi olevan kaupungissa. so is Francis D'Haese.

Hän maksoi siellä juuri luottokortilla, He just made a transaction at a pub right
muutama sekunti sitten. there in C. We are talking seconds ago.

Kielsin käyttämästä korttitietoja (How do you know it was seconds ago when)
jo muutamia minuutteja sitten. I asked you to stop running it minutes ago?

Haluatko pubin osoitteen vai et? Do you want the address or not?



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