

# **Conference Review - Languages & The Media, 6th International Conference & Exhibition on Language Transfer in Audiovisual Media, October 25-27, 2006, Berlin - By: ELLEN CHRISTOFFERSEN**

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## **Conference Review**

- Languages & The Media, 6th International Conference & Exhibition on Language Transfer in Audiovisual Media, October 25-27, 2006, Berlin

The participants of the conference, which had as its theme "Free Access - Priceless Rights?", were professionals involved in subtitling, voice-over or translation, language industry specialists, distributors of audiovisual media products, producers of media programmes, broadcasters, researchers and representatives of viewer organisations.

### **Accessibility**

The main focus at the conference was accessibility - i.e. making films, TV-programs and video games accessible to people with hearing and visual disabilities, in other words, subtitling, voice-over, sign language interpreting, speech recognition, audio description, audiovisual translation and semi-live and live subtitling.

### **Subtitling**

Broadcasters are increasingly turning to live subtitling to give deaf and hard-of-hearing people better access to news, sporting events and entertainment. Some methods were presented and discussed. Re-speaking is a relatively new way of producing subtitles for live programmes. An operator re-speaks the commentary into a microphone, while listening. This technique can help bring voice-recognised subtitles to an acceptable accuracy. Speech recognition has always been an ultimate goal for subtitlers, but it is only accurate in perfect circumstances. Main problems are: Who should re-speak? How to re-speak? Lesser problems are lack of qualified people and cheap technology allowing TV to broadcast real-time subtitles. The "traditional" method, stenographers, is still used to subtitle the increasing number of programmes produced for the benefit of the deaf and hard-hearing. The stenographer sits at a TV screen, headphones on, following every word. Gaining the skills takes time, and there is a very high dropout rate. Consequently, stenographers are still in demand.

As subtitlers are being pressed on price and delivery time, most are learning to subtitle more efficiently. Subtitle translation can be made more efficient by integrating the workstation with machine translation tools or translation memory techniques. Advantages are: cost reduction, increasing the amount of films, television broadcasts, subtitled lectures and tutorials and generally making the whole task easier. Furthermore, it is now possible to download a video over the web and start subtitling.

### **Audio Description**

Audio Description includes a separate audio track in which a narrator uses spaces in the original sound track to describe to hard-seeing people what is going on. Criteria for inclusion or exclusion in audio description in a given context were discussed, e.g. the overlap between thematic dialogue and visually important information such as the external appearance of a person, place or thing. Issues such as what can be added, left out, anticipated or moved to a later stage were addressed.

### **Translation Strategies**

Other issues discussed included translation strategies in the transfer of verbal and visual language in subtitling and voice-over and the localization of voice-over films. Translating a video game, for instance, poses a unique set of challenges as the game seems to feature a variety of texts in the same application. Translators of video games have to deal with technical, oral, and literary texts, with the limitations of the user's interface and menus, with lip-sync for voice-over, and the space and time constraints for subtitling. Furthermore, the translator is to make translations natural for different cultures, but how can this be achieved when cultures and traditions often collide?

### **Tools**

The evolution of tools and technologies affects the way audiovisual translators work, improving productivity and quality and lower costs. Fully automatic systems might prove the only practical solution in the case of live subtitling or even in the case of subtitling the millions of video files available on the internet.

### **Audiovisual Translation**

New modes of audiovisual translation (e.g. live subtitling, intralingual subtitling) imply new skills and competences. Consequently, there is a need to discuss and define the curriculum and the training profile of an Audiovisual Translator. A proposal for a typology within an audiovisual translation framework was presented, including all activities like e.g. audio description, voice-over, interpretation, subtitling, re-speaking, machine translation.

## **Authors' rights**

Speakers paid little or no attention to authors' rights even though such rights were part of the title of the conference. The League of Subtitlers, Dubbers and Adaptors delivered a handout stating "if copyright protection is to fulfil its societal purpose, the rights of authors and performers on the one side, publishers and producers on the other and the interests of users and society in general on a third have to be carefully balanced. There are no well-founded arguments for tipping the balance of interest so entirely in favour of the publishers/distributors/broadcasters".

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