

## Presentation

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La manipulation de la traduction audiovisuelle  
The Manipulation of Audiovisual Translation

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## Presentation

Given the growing pervasiveness of audiovisual communication in all domains of private and public life, audiovisual translation (AVT) has become a very powerful social activity and a highly significant form of intercultural contact among communities that are repeatedly referred to as being multicultural and multilingual, and that increasingly communicate in multimedia and multimodal ways thanks to great technological strides of recent years.

AVT has seen a continued boom since the late 1990s and nowadays numbers a respectable following of researchers. Traditionally, AVT has often been studied from a professional point of view, with research focusing mainly on its mechanics, on technical issues such as time and space constraints, lip synchronisation, spotting or cueing of subtitles, and so on. The good news is that topics of research in this field are timidly widening in scope to encompass the socio-cultural dimension. The downside is that despite the crucial role played by audiovisual media in our society, little has been written on the impact that power, ideology, censorship, and manipulation have when translating these programmes into other languages and cultures.

In this respect, I would like to argue that in order to raise the status and visibility of our specialist field, we need to find synergies with other disciplines and apply the same rigorous interrogation that other areas of translation have recently undergone. This special issue sees itself as an attempt in that direction and aims to contribute to these new developments by presenting a set of contributions focussed on these crucial issues.

The concept of manipulation can be understood in a positive (technical) as well as in a negative (ideological) manner, but it is the latter meaning of *ideological manipulation* that runs throughout these papers, becomes its thematic spine, and gives cohesion to the whole anthology. In this sense, manipulation is not restricted to the political arena, but is rather understood in a more general way by the various authors.

In this compilation of articles, the scholars and practitioners of AVT set off to unmask the ideology that motivates and justifies some of the most telling deviations from the source texts. In so doing, they expose the power struggle at play between the different agents that participate in the translation process and the impact it has in the final shape of the translated text. Although faithful translation can also help propagate and perpetuate certain ideas and behaviours akin to certain regimes and structures, it is the *deviational* translation that becomes the primary focus of this volume.

The contributions that follow dispel the fantasy and ill-conceived assumption that practices like censorship, and to a lesser extent manipulation, belong to the past or that they are the sole hallmark of dictatorial, repressive regimes and draws conclusions regarding the dynamics of manipulation in the specific case of AVT, as well as in the reception and circulation of audiovisual materials in the receiving culture. Translation is not, and never has been, an innocent activity and the manipulation of (audiovisual) texts has taken place over time and continues to be rife, irrespective of the political regimes that happen to be in power. This special volume takes a look at these issues from a diachronic as well as a synchronic perspective, with some of the contributions firmly rooted in the past, whilst others concentrate on case studies that illustrate the extent to which manipulative intervention in AVT exchanges is present in today's society. Acknowledging the vast array of genres that pertain to the audiovisual realm, the papers here contained do not only deal with films but they also resort to *anime*, TV series, news reports, documentaries, and video games as their sources for the different case studies. The audiences they address are also varied and cover children, youths, adults, and the sensory impaired.

A real effort has been made to break away with the often Eurocentric nature of most of the volumes published on translation and to come up with an international panel able to provide a more comprehensive overview of what is happening globally. The several authors make extensive use of primary sources taken from national archives, broadcast on television and distributed on DVD in order to challenge the implicit and explicit structures of power and to illustrate how manipulative intervention manifests itself in various national contexts that are usually absent in these debates. They offer theoretical and empirical perspectives on the broad topic of manipulation in AVT and reflect on the situation in countries such as Belgium (Flanders), Brazil, China, Egypt, Italy, Poland, South Africa, South Korea, Spain (the Basque Country), and the UK of different historical periods. Their examples and case studies instantiate and explore many of the meanings attached to manipulation in relation to AVT and show, to a more or less significant degree, how ideologically loaded the act of translating can be in this sphere. Challenges like the translation of taboo language, religious, sexual, and political references are dealt with in detail, together with the impact of globalisation and the role of exogenous forces in the shaping of AVT.

As for the content of this special issue, it starts with an introductory article by **Díaz Cintas**, which offers a critical and methodological approach to the subject of manipulation and translation in the audiovisual realm and highlights the main hurdles and issues at stake when adopting a line of enquiry centred around the realisation that the way in which cultural values are translated is dependent not only on linguistic asymmetries between languages but also on fundamental decisions based on power, dominance, and ideology. The rest of papers have been grouped under three main themes. The first part, *Censorial Forces at Play: Past and Present*, contains four contributions that look into the impact that censorial intervention had and still has in shaping the final outcome of translations. From a diachronic perspective, **Mereu** sets out to explore the censorial interferences in the Italian dubbed versions of foreign films that were publicly screened during Fascism (1922-1943), whereas **Garnemark** analyses several censored fragments from the movie *En el umbral de la vida* (*Nära livet*, 1958), by Ingmar Bergman, in order to establish how censorship

influenced translation practice during the Spanish Francoist regime (1939-1975), with special emphasis on the way in which maternity was portrayed. But the tentacles of censorial intervention spread well beyond the traditional field of cinema to get hold of new forms of popular culture. In their articles, **Parini** pays attention to the censorship that takes place both on the visual and the verbal levels when dubbing Japanese *anime* into Italian for television broadcast, and **Zhang** investigates censorial operations in digital games against the socio-cultural background of Mainland China, providing an overview of the censorship system that includes the reviewing procedures, the authorities involved, the regulations, and the standards in game content.

The second part of the volume is entitled *Manipulating for Different Audiences* and begins with an article by **Zanotti** in which she aptly shows the role played by translators themselves and distribution companies in deciding the level of manipulation imposed on the film dialogue of youth films dubbed into Italian. **Ranzato's** paper, on the other hand, takes a look at how gayspeak and gay characters are dealt with when dubbed into Italian and illustrates how some of the features are substantially altered in the Italian adaptations. The third and last paper in this section is written by **Remael**, who discusses the complex issue of combining audio description with audio subtitling to allow blind and partially sighted audiences access to Dutch multilingual films, and considers the way in which manipulation takes shape on different levels to preserve textual cohesion.

The last series of papers, grouped under the title *Broadcasting with Intent*, is centred on the television universe, and starts with the paper written by **Barambones Zubiria, Merino and Uribarri**, in which the authors delve into the multifarious interventionist forces that compete for control in the translation of audiovisual programmes that are broadcast by the Basque public television service. In her article, **ElGebaly** uses the subtitling into English of two audiovisual programmes by two Islamic televangelists as her case study to shed light on the strategies activated by translators in their attempt to render complex Islamic concepts intelligible to a wider, international audience. **Kang**, on her part, explores how discourse is reframed when subtitling a television news magazine that deals with mad cow disease. The programme created uproar in South Korean society and played a significant role in sparking off many months of massive street rallies against the government for its alleged sloppy handling of the beef import negotiation talks.

**Alfaro de Carvalho's** study seeks to understand the origins and reasons behind the style guidelines elaborated by Brazilian broadcasters and video producers and applied to the translated subtitles of cable television shows. After outlining the history of censorship applied to content and language during the Brazilian military regime, she offers her findings that clearly show how the language of the translation is often controlled, and how coarse and scatological vocabulary tends to be curbed or avoided, among other restrictions. **Holobut** adopts a diachronic perspective on Polish screen translation and compares the voiceover version of the British series *The Saint* broadcast on public service television under the old regime with more recent ones, in order to discover any traces of socio-cultural manipulation in the consecutive portrayals of Western reality, in a journey that goes from a communist state to a capitalist one. The next article, by **Kruger**, investigates the ideological component of patronage in the subtitling of four South African soap operas, paying special attention to the language policy of the South African Broadcasting Corporation. The article concludes

that having full access to the content of programmes plays a smaller role in subtitling in South Africa than the ideology of fostering multilingualism and multiculturalism. In the final paper, **Steffensen** investigates Western representations of non-Western languages and cultures through the use of Tswana and Japanese accents in two BBC productions. He concludes that accents are used to represent and translate the *outside* in stereotyping ways that tend towards racialisation and towards actors using generic *Southern African* and *East Asian* accents that bear little resemblance to the actual phonological profile of native speakers of Tswana and Japanese.

Drawing on the work of some of the most prominent scholars in AVT, this collection of articles is a serious attempt at covering some of the central areas of concern and aims to provide a forum for reflection on questions closely related to power, identity, ideology and manipulation in the ever expanding field of AVT. The authors' insightful analyses evidence how dubbing, subtitling, voiceover and audio description absorb, elaborate, and repress dissonant discourses. Allowing for different views and perspectives, it is in their very diversity and wealth of examples that these articles offer a panoramic view of the many facets in which translation and manipulation intertwine. I hope that this volume will awake the interest of other colleagues and will encourage further research in such an exciting field.

Finally, I would like to thank the contributors for being so generous with their time and for sharing their work with us. Thanks should be extended to all the anonymous reviewers (well, I do know who they are!) for their constructive comments and suggestions on individual papers. Finally, I would like to express my most heartfelt thanks to the *Meta* team for their help with the editing, and especially to Sylvie Vandaele for her encouragement and her relentless support and advice with this project.

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