Audiovisual Translators and the Skills Needed for this Profession in Romania

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Abstract: Translation is characterized by its internal interdisciplinarity (Mayoral, 2001: 65), so the audiovisual translation process requires specific skills from the translator, such as: an extraordinary facility for the foreign languages used, a developed visual sense, an excellent understanding of the rhythm, both of films, as well as of reading, but also a special ability to condense and know how to exclude conversation from different sections that are not crucial for comprehension (Ivarsson and Carroll, 1998: 1). This study particularizes and defines all these competencies and abilities stated above, which audiovisual translators in Romania have or consider necessary. To define them, we conducted questionnaires and interviews addressed to both translators and employers in which they classified the most important from their point of view.

Keywords: audiovisual translation, competencies, Romania, audiovisual translators, employers.

1. Characteristics of audiovisual translation

Audiovisual translation is characterized by its internal interdisciplinarity (Mayoral, 2001: 65), however, this feature has over time been the subject of study by many theorists, who have tried to define and clarify the importance of these elements in the development and explanation of audiovisual translation. In this sense, Chaume (2001: 45) emphasized the specificity of audiovisual translation as an object of study, defining it as follows:

> La traducción audiovisual es una modalidad de traducción que refleja con suma nitidez la necesidad de utilizar enfoques pluridisciplinares para acercarse con rigor a su objeto de estudio. En efecto, los textos audiovisuales, por su carácter híbrido, tanto desde el punto de vista textual y genérico —es difícil delimitar dónde acaba un género y

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empieza otro—, como desde el punto de vista de sus variadísimos contenidos, así como, especialmente, desde el punto de vista de los múltiples códigos de significación que operan simultáneamente en la producción de sentido, incitan al analista a emplear enfoques diversos para intentar comprender mejor tanto la RELACIÓN entre los elementos que configuran su objeto de estudio, como las claves textuales y contextuales para la transferencia de estos elementos a otra lengua y cultura.

The most used modes of audiovisual translation are subtitling, dubbing and voice-over (Dejica & Dejica-Cartis 2020), and to briefly present their specific characteristics we will use the definitions of theorists who have conducted in-depth studies dedicated to these types of translation.

Thus, subtitling is, as stated Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 8), a process that consists in incorporating the translated text generally written at the bottom of the screen, keeping the original soundtrack unaltered and defining it as follows:

> Subtitling may be defined as a translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavors to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, placards, and the like), and the information that is contained on the soundtrack (songs, voices off).

At the same time, another fundamental feature of this type of audiovisual translation is the change in the way of expression, which it involves - from oral to written, as stated by Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 61):

> Not only is subtitling an unusual form of translation because it is added to the ST, it also stands out as a unique translational genre because it renders speech in writing. This feature too, determines the shape subtitles eventually take.

Regarding the dubbing Chaume (2012: 1) defines it as follows:

> […] it consists of replacing the original track of a film´s (or any audiovisual text) source language dialogues with another track on which translated dialogues have been recorded in the target language.

Thus, dubbing is a complex process that involves a larger number of participants and involves higher costs compared to subtitling, given its characteristics (Luyken et al., 1991: 112). Synchronization is one of the most important and corresponds to the different phases of the process, which are performed by different participants: content phase (translator), visual phase (controller), acoustic phase (director), as determined by Chaume (2004: 61-79). One of the fundamental objectives of dubbing is to make speaking in the target language sound as natural as possible (Chaves, 2000: 20), and for this reason, writing a dialogue that does not seem fictitious and is as plausible as possible can be the greatest and the biggest challenge for a translator.

Regarding voice-over, it is a translation method like dubbing, which is mainly used in documentaries and interviews. Authors such as Díaz Cintas and Orero (2010: 441) consider that this type of audiovisual translation could be defined as:

From a translational perspective, voiceover consists in presenting orally a translation in a TL, which can be heard simultaneously over the SL voice.

From a technical perspective, there are many possibilities of synchronizing the ST and the TT in the case of voiceover. The standard approach is to reduce the volume of the original soundtrack to a faint auditory level that can still be heard in the background, whilst the translation is being read. Usually, the viewer is allowed to hear the foreign language for a few seconds at the onset of the speech, before the volume of the original is subsequently reduced so that the translated speech can be superimposed. The translation typically finishes a couple of seconds before the foreign language speech does, the sound of the original is raised again to a normal volume level and the viewer can hear once more the original speech.

There are no rules for overlapping and synchronizing voices, but usually the translation starts later and ends earlier, allowing listening to the original dialogue. The synchronization requirements are lower than in other types of translations, and this gives the translator more freedom in style and reformulation. However, it is necessary to formulate a translation version that provides a normal reading speed for announcers (or voice actors).

As we can see, audiovisual translation is a complex process that requires different skills and competencies from professionals who are dedicated to this activity. Each of these modalities has its own characteristics, which the audiovisual translation professional must know and apply in order to obtain an optimal result in the translation process.

2. Competences of the audiovisual translator

The audiovisual translation process requires specific skills from the translator, such as: an extraordinary facility for the foreign languages used, a developed visual sense, an excellent understanding of the rhythm of both films and reading, but also a special ability to condense and know how to exclude conversation from different sections that are not crucial for comprehension (Ivarsson and Carroll, 1998: 1).

Although Leboreiro Enríquez y Poza Yagüe (2001: 323) refers only to subtitling, we believe that the description of the audiovisual translation process can be extended to other ways, because as this type of translation states it is an art:

Subtitular no es solamente una técnica, sino también un arte: el arte de reproducir un diálogo de cincuenta caracteres en una frase de quince sin perder información; o el arte de engranar a todas las personas implicadas en el trabajo (localizadores, traductores, simuladores, técnicos de láser) dando cabida a todas las peticiones de subtitulación; o el arte de llegar a tiempo con plazos muy ajustados (¡subtitular en un solo día!); o el arte de dar lo mejor de uno mismo para que el resultado final lo disfruten miles de ojos ávidos de leer y entender lo que tiene que contar un director bosnio, de Hong Kong o de la Colombia más profunda.

Therefore, audiovisual translation is an art, but also a profession that requires a professional profile. In order to outline this profile, we will start from the analysis of the functions and tasks performed by professionals, according to the following hypotheses proposed by Yániz (2004: 5):

- Any profession can be described in terms of functions and tasks;
- Each field of activity requires a set of specifically identifiable knowledge, attitudes and skills, which professionals must have to perform their task;
- Skilled and efficient professionals are the best source to describe and define their occupation.

In a comprehensive study dedicated to the skills of audiovisual translators, Cerezo Merchán (2012: 338-339) proposes the following:

- Comprehensive knowledge of the target language in all dimensions (spelling, morphological, phonetic, syntactic, lexical, phraseological and textual)
- Deep knowledge of the source language (excellent written and oral comprehension, recognition of colloquial registers and varieties, dialects)
- Ability to synthesize and paraphrase (knowledge of techniques for reducing and expanding information in translation)
- Linguistic creativity
- Ability to analyze and produce texts based on their way of speaking (false orality)
- Good knowledge of work cultures and adaptation of translation to the requirements of the target culture
- Competence in managing specific audiovisual translation programs (subtitling, dubbing, audio description, etc.)
- Notions of software localization
- Good user of programs for digitizing, encoding or converting audiovisual materials into another format
- Good mood and spirit for learning new software packages and programs
- Knowledge of resource and documentation search strategies
- Knowledge of sign language techniques
- Ability to view text and images together
- Knowledge of voice dubbing and adjustment procedures, taking over the division, the symbols used the use of time codes, etc.
- Know the setting or location and adjust the subtitles to the reading speed of the target audience
- Knowledge of the most appropriate translation strategies and techniques to translate different audiovisual genres
- Ability to direct audiovisual translation projects (ability to develop, develop and organize projects, teamwork)
- Knowledge of the profession and the labor market situation

- Thorough knowledge of the specific characteristics of the target audience
- Knowledge of cinematography
- Knowledge of theater
- Theoretical knowledge of one or more types of audiovisual translation
- Knowledge of cinematic language and image semiotics
- Knowledge of the characteristics of different audiovisual genres

As we can see, the profession of audiovisual translator requires a series of skills and abilities that can be acquired through adequate academic training of the professional and extensive experience, which can sometimes replace the lack of training specific to this type of translation.

3. Competences of the audiovisual translator in Romania

In order to customize and define all these competencies and abilities stated above, which audiovisual translators have or consider necessary in Romania, we conducted a study in which both translators and employers have classified the most important in terms of their view.

Thus, two similar questionnaires were created addressed to the two categories of participants in the audiovisual translation process, translators and employer companies, and at the same time we interviewed different translators and employers. Regarding the competencies (specific / generic), the participants selected five that they considered essential in carrying out this activity.

Although a large number of speakers did not participate in our study, the long experience and extensive activity of those who collaborated gives reliability to the data provided, as stated by Hernández, Fernández y Baptista (2006: 190):

> […] Para determinado diseño de estudio que requiere no tanto una "representatividad" de elementos de una población, sino una cuidadosa y controlada elección de casos con ciertas características especificadas previamente en el planteamiento del problema. Para el enfoque cualitativo, al no interesar tanto la posibilidad de generalizar los resultados, las muestras no probabilísticas o dirigidas son de gran valor, pues logran obtener los casos (personas, contextos, situaciones) que interesan al investigador y que llegan a ofrecer una gran riqueza para la recolección y el análisis de los datos.

Therefore, using data provided by audiovisual translators, employers and adding theoretical data on this type of translation we used triangulation of methods (collection and analysis of theoretical information, questionnaires as tools for collecting quantitative data and interviews as tools for collecting qualitative data) (Fig. 1).

Taking into account the limitations mentioned above and taking into account the small number of academic training courses for audiovisual translation that are currently offered in Romanian universities, as shown in our questionnaires and interviews, our inclusion criteria for translators graduating from the sample of this study are based on two factors that we consider significant in this particular case:

a) Have a professional experience of over three years.
b) To have practiced the profession of translator of audiovisual texts in the last three years.
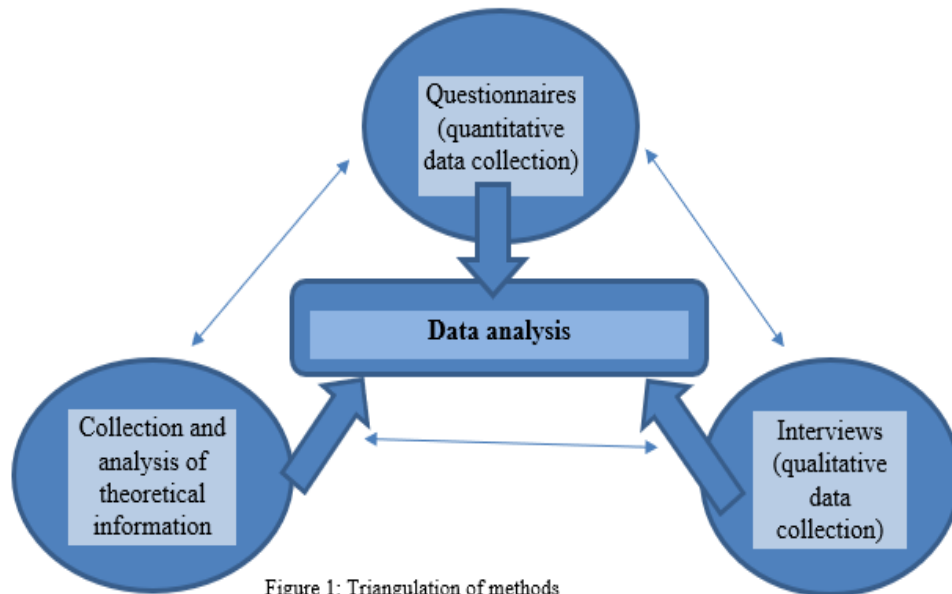

Figure 1: Triangulation of methods

However, we considered it necessary to add to our analysis, as a secondary object, the hiring companies, because they directly or indirectly influence the socio-professional situation of audiovisual translators in this country. Thus, the inclusion criteria for the group of employers in the sample of our study were:

a) To have its headquarters in Romania.
b) To have at least three years of activity on the Romanian market.
c) Dedicates at least 50% of its activity to audiovisual translation.
d) Contracting the service of an audiovisual translator in the last two years.

We considered that these two population groups are the two relevant factors for our study, as they complement each other and complement each other, which helped us to analyze, describe and define the specific and generic competencies of the audiovisual translator currently in Romania.

Given the fact that this study focuses on defining the generic and specific competencies of audiovisual translators, we will present the results obtained from both professionals and employers. Thus, the results obtained from the professionals are the following:

Specific skills	
Answer options	Percentage
1. Thorough knowledge of the target language	**75,0%**
5. Ability to synthesize and paraphrase	**75,0%**
2. Knowledge of the source language	**62,5%**
3. Good knowledge of working cultures	**62,5%**
4. Linguistic creativity	**62,5%**
9. Abilities to achieve perfect synchrony: linguistics and image	25,0%
10. Knowledge of techniques, strategies and terminology specific to audiovisual translation	25,0%
11. Knowledge of search strategies for specific resources and TAV documentation	25,0%
12. Excellent handling of specific TAV programs (subtitling, dubbing, etc.)	25,0%
7. Knowledge of the characteristics of different audiovisual genres	12,5%
8. Written communication skills to write appropriate translations	12,5%
13. Knowledge of methodological principles and professional aspects governing TAV	12,5%
6. Understanding the specificity of audiovisual text due to the interaction of different semiotic codes	0,0%
14. Knowledge of the characteristics and conventions of audiovisual translation	0,0%
15. Knowledge of economic, professional and market aspects	0,0%
16. Others	0,0%

Table 1: Specific skills of translators

Using the categories of Kelly's (2002) competence model to include the collected results, we can state the following: we notice that the habitats / competencies that stand out from the professionals are those of communicative-textual type, both in the target language and in the source language. and skills synthesis and paraphrases, followed by cultural, which implies a good knowledge of work cultures; and finally, for those of the instrumental-professional type, such as the skills to achieve a perfect synchrony (dialogues and images), mastery of techniques, strategies and terminology specific to audiovisual translation, mastery of resource search strategies and specific documentation of TAV, as well as the excellent handling of specific TAV programs (subtitling, dubbing, etc.).

Generic skills	
Answer options	Percentage
11. Ability to work under temporary pressure	**87,5%**
4. Concern for quality	**62,5%**
15. Quick problem solving	**62,5%**
5. Critical and self-critical ability	**50,0%**

7. Ability to search and analyze information from various sources	**50,0%**
13. Ability to comply with the requirements of the undertaking	**50,0%**
1. Ability to analyze	37,5%
2. Ability to learn	12,5%
3. Ability to apply knowledge in practice	12,5%
6. Knowledge of the profession and the situation of the labor market	12,5%
14. Spirit of negotiation	12,5%
8. Teamwork	0,0%
9. Ability to motivate and lead	0,0%
10. Ability to formulate and manage projects	0,0%
12. Ethical commitment	0,0%
16. Others	0,0%

Table 2: Generic translator skills

The first highlighted (87.5%) and which also identifies the activity carried out by this group of professionals, is the ability to work under temporary pressure. The following generic competencies selected by respondents (62.5%) are concerned with quality and quick problem solving. And finally, with a percentage of 50%, the ability to search and analyze information from various sources, the critical or self-critical ability and the ability to adapt to the requirements of the task are mentioned. The skills that are less important, in the opinion of translators, are those related to teamwork, the ability to motivate and lead, as well as the ability to formulate and manage projects or ethical commitment.

We could observe that among the specific competencies is the exhaustive knowledge of the two working languages: the target language and the source language. Likewise, the next most appropriate specific competence involves knowledge of the cultures involved, which gives the professional an adequate capacity for textual adaptation. In all these, in the opinion of our respondents, is integrated the ability to synthesize and paraphrase and linguistic creativity.

In terms of generic capacities, according to the results, the ability to work under pressure over time differs by a high percentage. Given the characteristics of this profession, this result does not surprise us.

The next skills selected are concern for quality and quick problem solving. Finally, the critical and self-critical capacity is noted, along with the ability to adapt to the requirements of the task and the ability to search and analyze information from various sources.

Consequently, the specific and generic competencies, mentioned above, are those that characterize the group of professionals of audiovisual translators who participated in our survey.

On the other hand, the competencies selected by the employing companies are the following:

Specific skills	
Answer options	Percentage
1. Thorough knowledge of the target language	**100%**
2. Knowledge of the source language	**100%**
4. Linguistic creativity	**60%**
5. Ability to synthesize and paraphrase	**60%**
6. Understanding the specificity of audiovisual text due to the interaction of different semiotic codes	**60%**
12. Excellent management of specific TAV programs (subtitling, dubbing, etc.)	**60%**
3. Good knowledge of working cultures	40%
9. Abilities to achieve perfect synchrony: linguistics and image	40%
10. Mastery of techniques, strategies and terminology specific to audiovisual translation	20%
11. Mastery of search strategies for specific resources and TAV documentation	20%
13. Knowledge of methodological principles and professional aspects governing TAV	20%
7. Knowledge of the characteristics of different audiovisual genres	0,0%
8. Written communication skills to write appropriate translations	0,0%
14. Knowledge of the characteristics and conventions of European audiovisual translation	0,0%
15. Knowledge of economic, professional and market aspects	0,0%
16. Others	0,0%

Table 3: Company specific competencies

Consequently, it can be observed according to the competence model of Kelly (2002), that the main specific competencies highlighted by companies are of the communicative-textual type, both in the target language and in the source language, followed by the instrumental-professional type, such as it would be the understanding of the specificity of the audiovisual text due to the interaction of different semiotic codes or the excellent handling of specific AVT programs (subtitling, dubbing, etc.). Contrasting the specific skills selected by the employing companies with the specific skills selected by the audiovisual translation professionals in this country, we can see that the selection is similar. This fact offers empirical and methodological solidity to our study, because the reality is observed in the same way from two different points of view.

Regarding the generic competencies selected by the employing companies, the result was the following:

Generic skills	
Answer options	Percentage
4. Concern for quality	**100%**
11. Ability to work under temporary pressure	**100%**

13. Ability to comply with the requirements of the commitment	**100%**
7. Ability to search and analyze information from various sources	**80%**
3. Ability to apply knowledge in practice	**60%**
15. Quick problem solving	60%
6. Knowledge of the profession and the situation of the labor market	20%
1. Ability to analyze	0,0%
2. Ability to learn	0,0%
5. Critical and self-critical ability	0,0%
8. Teamwork	0,0%
9. Ability to motivate and lead	0,0%
10. Ability to formulate and manage projects	0,0%
12. Ethical commitment	0,0%
14. Spirit of negotiation	0,0%
16. Others	0,0%

Table 4: Generic competencies of companies

In the case of generic skills, both the employing companies and the translators surveyed ranked the concern for quality and ability to work under temporary pressure in the first two positions on the list. The next competencies selected are the ability to find and analyze relevant information, as well as the ability to coordinate knowledge with practice and quick problem solving.

4. Conclusions

As we could see, out of the five specific competencies selected by the two population groups, four of them coincide, although located in different positions, depending on the percentage received by the respondents. This result highlights the fact that both the group of professionals and that of the employing companies value, in general terms, the same skills and abilities to carry out this profession in Romania, which are: exhaustive knowledge of the target language, ability to synthesize and paraphrase language proficiency source and linguistic creativity.

It should also be noted that the knowledge of the working language culture, which the translators had selected, does not distinguish between the skills indicated by the companies. In addition, experience becomes the best guarantee for professionals, as the excellent management of specific audiovisual translation programs is one of the fundamental requirements for the selection of candidates, as it appears in the companies' results. Moreover, if we make a general comparison of the competencies obtained in our study with the specific competencies defined by professionals in audiovisual translation and employing companies in Spain, according to Cerezo Merchán (2012: 389), we can see that they are the same as those determined by to the two study groups, professionals and employers in Romania.

Regarding generic competencies, we noticed that out of the six generic capabilities that appear in the table, five coincide. However, the order of these

competencies varies in the two groups. It should be noted that both professionals and companies place in the first two levels the ability to work under temporary pressure and the concern for quality, factors that we can say that characterize the profession of audiovisual translator and that professionals and companies have highlighted, also employers. in the survey and in the interviews we conducted for this study. It also highlights the rapid resolution of problems, as well as the ability to search and analyze information from various sources and the ability to adapt to the requirements of the task.

The only generic competencies that do not coincide in the list of the top five specified by the two groups are critical and self-critical ability (selected by translators) and the ability to apply knowledge to practice (selected by employing companies).

Despite these slight final differences, it is important to note that the analogy of the first five specific /generic competencies selected by the two groups (professionals and companies) represents an almost perfect coordination between supply and demand, in terms of qualities and skills needed in this profession.

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