Languages & The Media

9th International Conference on Language Transfer in Audiovisual Media

POST CONFERENCE REPORT

Translating in Multilingual Communities

November 21 – 23, 2012
Hotel Berlin, Berlin

www.languages-media.com
Languages & The Media 2012, the 9th International Conference on Language Transfer in Audiovisual Media, took place at Hotel Berlin, Berlin, from November 21 – 23, 2012. An international audience of two hundred and fifty participants from thirty countries gathered at the event. The Steering Committee included Mary Carroll, Carroll Communication, Germany; Minako O’Hagan, Dublin City University, Ireland; Jorge Díaz Cintas, Imperial College London, UK; and Yves Gambier, University of Turku, Finland.

Prior to the event on Wednesday, November 21, 2012, six workshops were held. International experts shared their experiences by presenting best practices and giving applied examples of their practical knowledge. The topics of these hands-on sessions included:

- **Audio Description: The Visual Made Verbal – Making Visual Images Accessible to People Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision**
  - Joel Snyder, Audio Description Associates, USA

- **Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing – With a Focus on Young Audiences**
  - Soledad Zárate, Imperial College, UK

- **Practical Workshop on Eye-Tracking**
  - SensoMotoric Instruments (SMI), Germany and Tobii Technology gmbh, Germany

- **No Roses Without Thorns – Audio Describing the Subtleties of Film Language**
  - Gert Vercauteren, Artesis University College Antwerp, Belgium
  - Nina Reviers, Artesis University College Antwerp, Belgium

- **Respeaking Theory and Practice – What’s New in the Field of Speech Recognition Technology**
  - Carlo Eugeni, Intersteno, Italy
  - Alessandro Tescari, Pervoice SpA, Italy

- **Introduction to Eye-Tracking in Audiovisual Translation Reception Studies**
  - Verónica Arnáiz-Uzquiza, Universidad de Valladolid / Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona / CAIAC-Transmedia Catalonia, Spain
**CONFERENCE AGENDA**

**FIRST CONFERENCE DAY**

The opening panel discussion, entitled “Public Broadcasters: A Diversifying Public Service - Innovation in Times of Crisis”, gave insight into the issues that many broadcasters are facing at the moment and set the tone for the upcoming two days of interesting exchanges and discussions. The panelists, drawn from diverse public broadcasting backgrounds, reflected the diversity of the situation facing public broadcasters today. The panel was chaired by Isabel Charleton, Radio Télfis Éireann, Ireland. Panelists included top-level professionals such as Máire Aoiðhinn Ni Ógáin, TG 4, Ireland; Elisabeth Krone, Language Services, ARTE, France; Frauke Langguth, ARD-Text, Germany; Erik de Snerck, VRT, Belgium; and David Padmore, Red Bee Media Limited, UK. The panel itself exemplified the type of powerful thinking that is possible when public broadcasters, the broadcasting industry, and the academic sector work together in facing the future and bringing about innovative solutions.

Referring to debates that have taken place in recent years, the event’s 2012 edition continued to be a conference where panellists and the audience discussed the hot topics related to today’s challenges. In times of globalization and financial crisis, the question of balancing costs and quality is a timely and pertinent issue. Standardisation, technological changes as well as templates and their quality were on the spot. Furthermore, the growing demand for more languages, an increase in the volume of material that needs to be translated, as well as new technical developments engender new challenges for today’s translators. Working profiles need to change, and among the questions raised were: How can new technologies help today’s translator? Are automatic processes getting better? What about quality?

Representing diverse models, the panelists gave insight into possible solutions. Technical demands and their integration into working processes is a necessary development. A dialogue among diverse parties and their cooperation has to be achieved to reach a fruitful approach in order to get the best quality for an adequate price.

The first Conference day covered a wide variety of topics and subjects, such as live-subtitling, sign language, professional practice, audio description, culture and AVT (subtitling), as well as technology and revoicing. Subtitle quality was one topic where participants discussed the use of measurements in caption quality. Local examples, such as Australia, Spain and France showed the variety this topic offers. Diverse situations showed there is still a need for development, e.g. on a basis for agreement as to standards.

The numerous sessions during the day addressed questions from participants, while the evening reception was an opportunity to continue the discussions and also to socialise with colleagues from thirty countries.

“All the subjects discussed and the sessions were really relevant to my work on access on television for those with sensory disabilities.”

Isabel Charleton, Radio Télfis Éireann

*“Good mix of people presenting interesting programme.”*
Soledad Zárate, Imperial College London

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SECOND CONFERENCE DAY

The second Conference day began with a panel discussion on the “The Client Side: Localisation, International Broadcasters and Content Distributors”, chaired by Jorge Díaz Cintas, Imperial College London, UK. Speakers included Patricia Elena Koob, Sky Deutschland GmbH & Co., Germany; Amanda Smith, Discovery Communications Europe, UK; Mark Harrison, Viacom International Media Networks, UK; and Chris Pollard, Cavena Image Products AB, Sweden.

The first day’s discussion on quality, templates, standardisation, quality of templates and costs was followed up in the morning of the second day. More content for less money – this is the challenge broadcasters, service providers, and in-house and freelance translators have to face. As Chris Pollard stated, the world is changing rapidly. Emerging technologies such as interactive services and high definition, and their impact on viewers, are putting pressure on content editing and localization. Further, the internet covers the globe, national broadcasters’ content is restricted, and the web means localization of many hundreds of languages. Again, there is a need to make end users aware of the need of localization - or is it true that “in the online world everyone speaks English”? “Innovate or die”, was Pollard’s summary, and this affects everybody: broadcasters, content makers, industry and subtitlers.

Following the opening panel, the second Conference day included further sessions on topics such as the latest trends and developments in language transfer, innovative approaches to the fields of dubbing, subtitling, and audio description, as well as issues of quality management.

One constant theme running through the Conference was how to achieve a balance between quality and cost in the production process and customer / audience needs. How technology can help or hinder was also part of the discussion. The hot topic “technology” and its changing characteristics was the joy of the closing panel, chaired by Aljoscha Burchardt, German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI GmbH). At Languages & The Media 2010 Burchardt had asked, “Are we too late or well ahead of time?”. In this year’s closing panel

“Human - Language - Technology: Quo Vadis?” this question is still topical. Is it all future science? The panel involved Anna Celinska, Polish Association of Audiovisual Translators (STAW); Claude Le Guyader, Deluxe Media Europe, UK; Volker Steinbiss, Accipio Projects GmbH, Germany; and Martin Volk, University of Zurich, SUMAT Project, Switzerland.

The panellists discussed technological developments and projects and their results, as well as quality standards using new technologies. The final discussion focused on the dialogue among software developers, translators, and service providers. Burchardt stated that there is a need for communication. There is a new awareness of the value of language, and there is a need for more work in languages – more creation and innovation, which should be seen as an opportunity.

The pro-part of the panel pointed out that a machine cannot substitute for a human subtitler. For example, Martin Volk is working to create a tool that helps translator to produce the best possible output. Anna Celinska, however, was more sceptical about technological developments, especially machine translation, but stated that crowd-sourcing could be a solution. One conclusion of the panel was that technology can be used to work collaboratively and support groups in their work. Synergies and collaboration are becoming increasingly important build bridges among specialists with differing skills.

“The programme was very interesting and inspiring.”

Dimitri Molerov, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz

“Always a pleasure”

Robert Paquin, University of Montreal
“Courage and passion are the cornerstones of new developments and pioneering change” (Languages & The Media Report 2010). The first ESIST (European Association for Studies in Screen Translation) Award was conferred on a pioneer of AV translation at Languages & The Media 2010: Jan Ivarsson, one of the founding members of ESIST and a long-time member of the Advisory Committee of Languages & The Media. This year Ivarsson had the honour to bestow the award on a friend and highly respected co-author of “Subtitling” (Transedit, 1998): Mary Carroll. Mary Carroll was Managing Director of Titelbild Subtitling and Translation GmbH, Berlin from 1991 until 2011. She has extensive experience as an audiovisual translator, consultant and trainer, as well as lecturer. She has published widely in the field and is a long-time member of the Languages & The Media Steering Committee. In her thank you address, she stated that in these days of drastic change, there is a need to have respect for change and to change ourselves. The award recognises Mary Carroll’s lifelong contribution to audiovisual translation.

CONCLUSION

Over an intense two days, the Conference addressed the question of the changing needs for broadcasters, translators and industries. Anyone working in the media should be aware of how the process of translation is being transformed and what this means for business. Language practitioners, including translators and interpreters, and all those who produce, market, or distribute audiovisual materials need to discuss the implications of the change that is happening around us. “Translating in Multilingual Communities” was the main topic. Speakers and participants raised a wealth of questions and shared their experiences on the issues of providing accessibility, guaranteeing quality and dealing with time and cost pressures.

Numerous sessions during this year’s Conference addressed multilingualism and cultural identity, localisation, new technologies and changing working profiles. The Conference again tackled areas such as quality standards for translation, dubbing, and subtitling, as well as media access for the hard-of-hearing and visually impaired. Subtitling as well as audio description geared towards enabling media access for the deaf and hard-of-hearing as well as blind and partially sighted audiences was again high on the agenda. Audio description in particular is becoming a major topic and has reached the same level of importance as captioning. Media experts also provided insight into the localisation of media content and presented their observations on technological innovations in machine translation.