

6th International Conference & Exhibition
on Language Transfer in Audiovisual Media

Languages & The Media

October 25 – 27, 2006

Hotel InterContinental, Berlin

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LANGUAGES & THE MEDIA

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THE EVENT

The sixth **Languages & The Media**, an international conference and exhibition on Language Transfer in Audio-Visual Media, took place at Berlin's Hotel InterContinental from October 25 - 27, 2006. The steering committee was composed of Mary Carroll (TITELBILD, Subtitling and Translation GmbH) Germany, Yves Gambier (University of Turku) Finland and Corinne Imhauser (ISTI-HEB) Belgium.

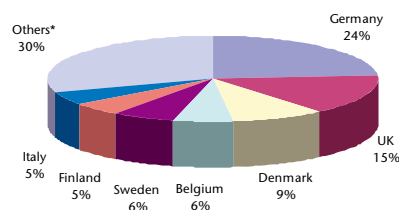
CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

The conference agenda was created through a selection process involving both a public call for proposals and a thorough investigation of the international media sector. On the agenda were 45 contributions covering twelve very diverse themes. 48 speakers from 14 countries gave lectures on their areas of expertise for an international audience of 200 participants from 26 countries.



Participation Statistics

200 participants from 26 countries



* Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Kenya, Lebanon, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, The Netherlands, USA

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

The prelude to the event consisted of a Pre-Conference day, where five workshops with a limited number of participants were held, and the following themes were worked on intensively:

- Audio Description: The Visual Made Verbal
- On the Importance of Sound...
- Putting Pleasure First: What Is Different about Translating and Localising Video Games?
- Live Subtitling: How to respeak for which audience? Theory and practice
- Forum - Live Subtitling and Public Broadcasting

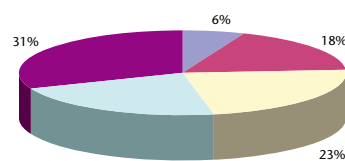
CONFERENCE AGENDA

FIRST CONFERENCE DAY

The conference started with the **opening** made by Yves Gambier from the University of Turku, Finland. Gambier gave an overview of the past Languages & The Media conferences in the last decade. He pointed out how themes and issues have changed over the years, and especially how the use of technology has affected the language translation sector in the audio-visual mediascape.

Gambier also chaired the first **plenary session on Accessibility**, which focused on audiodescription. Joan Greening from the Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB), the leading organisation representing the needs and interests of the two million people in

Sector Representation



■ Representatives of consumer/viewer associations
■ Distributors of audio visual media products and services
■ Decision makers on language from the media
■ Experts, researchers and students in the field of media studies
■ Subtitling, dubbing, translation companies

the UK with a sight problem, described RNIB's rich experiences with accessibility for audio-visual media. The UK leads the world in digital television access services for sensory-impaired people and is therefore able to serve as a role model for the transformation of other European media markets.

RNIB has played a major role in ensuring that blind and partially sighted people are considered at every stage of digital switchover, Joan Greening pointed out.

Audio description is already available across all digital platforms in the UK - digital terrestrial, satellite, and cable.



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Current UK government legislation states that ten percent of all programmes have to be audio described by the fifth year of a digital licence being issued to a broadcaster. The UK is currently at around 8% of programmes being broadcast with audio description, rising to 10% in November this year – although some broadcasters are already describing over and above their legal obligation.

Other topics related to access such as best practices for Audio description, intralingual subtitling (e.g. English to English, Catalan to Catalan), or sign language interpreting were addressed in the following sessions.

This year a great deal of attention was given to live subtitling, a relatively new phenomenon in the audio-visual media. On the pre-conference day, two workshops dealt with this important topic. **The closing plenary on Thursday focused on Live Subtitling strategies and practices.** With the increase of media coverage of events around the globe and the speed-up of information flow, live subtitling is becoming increasingly important for broadcasters. It is currently used mainly for sports and news, but entertainment events such as pop concert transmissions could also be live subtitled.

Magnus Rönnlid, who works for SVT, the Swedish public service TV broadcaster, gave insight into subtitling and live subtitling practices at his organisation. All foreign programmes and movies are subtitled in Swedish; only children's programmes are dubbed to Swedish. The subtitling of Swedish programmes is generally optional through text-TV. SVT has made a technology shift and has hooked up live subtitling to the news system. Several subtitlers are working simultaneously at the moment; however, there is also a shift towards speech-driven subtitling as a result of the governmental push towards raising the rate of subtitling for the deaf and hearing-impaired up to 100% in the coming years.

Beatrice Caruso from Swiss Text in Switzerland sees her unit faced with similar problems. The current efforts on the European level towards an equally accessible media and information society for all demands an increase of thirty to forty percent of subtitling for the Swiss broadcasters, to rise eventually to 100%. This results in significant financial pressure on the subtitling and translation department, as they have to cater for three languages and even for the Rumantsch-speaking minority. Technology could offer a relatively inexpensive solution here admitted Caruso, although there is concern as to what extent software solutions can replace human subtitlers or translators.

Thijs de Korte demonstrated a new interlingual live subtitling system that was developed by NOB Hilversum in 2002. Translators work twenty seconds ahead of the broadcast. The incoming signal is delayed by twenty to thirty seconds while translators working in pairs translate and add the subtitles. The subtitles are then added to the delayed signal, and the subtitled transmission is broadcast. After massive problems with correct and synchronous subtitles in the beginning, the system is running efficiently now.

David Padberg from Red Bee Media impressed the audience with a wealth of experience in live subtitling from the UK. Having started with access services in the mid 1980s, RBM now covers all the major live sports tournaments, such as snooker, football, tennis, and golf and provides live subtitles for BBC News 24 and all the news on the main BBC channels. In 1990 they started with live subtitling, using mainly stenographers. In 2001, they introduced speech-recognition software for the live-subtitling of the snooker world championship, also due to a shortfall of professionally trained stenographers. Padberg reported serious grammar problems in the first phase since the sports vocabulary is particular and hard to translate or transcribe.



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CONFERENCE STRUCTURE

Languages & the Media was supported by the following organisations:

- ARTE
- Associazione Dialoghisti adattatori cine-televisi – AIDAC
- Australian Interactive Media Industry Association – AIMA
- Berufsverband der Gebärdensprachdozenten Berlin/Brandenburg e.V. – BGDBB
- Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer – BDÜ
- European Association for Studies in Screen Translation – ESIST
- European Society for Translation Studies – EST
- Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs – FIT Media Committée
- Royal National Institute for Deaf People – RNID
- Societé Francaise des Traducteurs – SFT
- TITELBILD Subtitling and Translation

The following discussion touched on factors such as the today's highly competitive market conditions, which put pressure both on translators and subtitlers, as well as on broadcasters. A realistic level of quality and price was demanded by Magnus Rönnlid, to ensure quality for the consumers of audio-visual media products. Broadcasters have to be cost efficient, and at the same time they have to value quality services. There was consensus that quality in live subtitling does not mean one-to-one captioning of the transmission: live subtitling sums up what is said live and does not translate every single word.

A solid objection was made by Joel Snyder, the Director of Described Media at the National Captioning Institute in the USA, who contended that broadcasters should also understand the value of offering access to all. This concerns not only the visually or hearing impaired; captioning and subtitling also open other important markets. One example is the Spanish-speaking community in the US: there are 35 million Hispanics nationwide, including 28 million Spanish speakers for whom English is a second language.

Another question was raised on how a subtitling rate of 100% could be financed and how the consumers of television programmes should be involved in the costs. All participants and panellists agreed that live subtitling is a practice that ensures more accessibility to audio-visual media and that broadcasters are likely to expand their live subtitled programme – to reach new markets as well as to fulfil national and international regulations.

The numerous sessions during the day raised questions, and the evening reception offered the opportunity to extend the discussions as well as to socialise with colleagues from 26 countries after the final session had closed.



SECOND CONFERENCE DAY

On the second day, the conference took off with a **first session on Tools and Technology** chaired by Mary Carroll from Titelbild Subtitling and Translation GmbH, Germany. The presenters focused on access to the media for the deaf and hearing-impaired and the blind and partially sighted. They discussed the role translation tools play in audiovisual translation, as well as how speech recognition can increase productivity and accessibility. A special emphasis was given to efforts to make cinemas and museums more accessible.

In the **plenary discussion on Language Policy and Broadcasting**, global broadcasters cast light on the language policies of their stations and discussed the reasons shaping these decisions. **Omar Asmar** from MTV Europe admitted that MTV has not established a language policy as such; the broadcaster is aware, however, of various needs and expectations of its viewers worldwide. MTV prefers live subtitling for its entertainment shows, working with a delay of one-and-a-half minutes in live broadcasts.

Omar Asmar also explained that MTV has learned about the varying demands towards transmission and translation quality that have to be catered for. For example, the German branch is working with 100% subtitlings that are generally of high quality due to the demands of the sophisticated German audience. Translators at MTV face linguistic challenges, especially with regard to the so-called "cool lingua". The translation of slang idioms such as "wazz up" or "mo' money" into any language is a difficult task for the interpreters at MTV, but it is considered essential to creating authentic language for a young audience.



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Elisabeth Krone explained the sophisticated language policy of ARTE, the German-French cooperation TV channel that broadcasts parallel in French and German. Krone is responsible for all language transfer services at the channel. ARTE is working with a mixture of dubbing, subtitling, and voice over. Therefore, the demand for quality interpreters is very high.

Peter Templeton elaborated the language policy of SBS Australia, which broadcasts in sixty languages. The SBS Subtitling Unit is one of the largest in the world, and the station was explicitly set up to foster multiculturalism in Australia. As well as regularly subtitling all the major world languages and community languages spoken in Australia, the Subtitling Unit has successfully risen to the challenges presented by languages encountered less frequently on the Australian context, such as Mongolian, Amharic, Wolof, Haitian Creole, Esperanto, and Zulu, among many others.

The discussion that followed the presentations picked up questions such as quality of language transfer, cost aspects of translation services, and customers needs.

CONCLUSION

During Languages & The Media 2006, many challenges and issues related to live subtitling, audiodescription, and the complex market were debated. Demands are increasing and time pressure, cost, and quality remain the three pillars of the work of both translators and broadcasters, summarised Yves Gambier in his closing remarks. Participants discussed strategies to better inform potential users such as broadcasters, museums, film festivals, etc., and clients about their services and how much AV translation can serve social integration and cultural diversity. Technology implementation and the changing language of the different media user groups have been identified as the main challenges to be mastered by language service providers and those responsible in the audio-visual media field in the coming years.

Participants and speakers valued Languages & The Media as an exchange forum where changes in the mediascape have been followed up and even anticipated. The conference has also proven to be an extremely worthwhile platform to bring representatives from TV channels and technology providers outside of Europe together with their colleagues from European countries, thus creating a network for exchange about mechanisms of quality control, new standards for translation services, and the use of technology.

EXHIBITORS

The conference was accompanied by a parallel exhibition that featured the following companies:

- Softel
- TITELBILD Subtitling and Translation GmbH
- SysMedia Ltd
- SoftNI Corporation

SoftNI
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Solutions



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

October 29 – 31, 2008
Hotel InterContinental, Berlin



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