Measuring quality: chances and challenges

About the approach of developing a model to evaluate the quality of German film subtitles
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• Defining quality criteria: the chances
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Challenges
Three main challenges

1. There are challenges related to **readability**.
2. There are challenges related to the source and target text's **function**.
3. There are challenges related to information transfer, the **oral vs. written discourse**.
Readability

• Subtitles need to be *in sync*.
• The in- and out-timecodes need to start/end after/before the *shot change*.
• Subtitles should be displayed for *at least 1 sec.* but no longer than *7 sec.*

(Künzli 2017: 116-117)
Text function: source text

- “To move the **storyline** forward.”
- “To reveal **aspects of character** not otherwise seen.”
- “To present **exposition and particulars of past events**.”
- “To set the **tone** for the film.”

(Blacker 1996: 5-16)
Text function: target text

• The target text’s main function is to enable the audience to follow and comprehend the film (cf. Künzli 2017: 157).

• Viewers should spend as little time possible reading subtitles and as much time possible enjoying the visual experience.
Oral vs. written discourse

• The speed at which we speak varies, our **reading speed** does not.
• Some words might be **acceptable** in speech but not in writing.
• Speech is marked by redundancies, written texts by **cohesion/coherence**.

(Reinart 2014: 276)
Quality criteria: meaning, style and readability

- **Meaning** refers to the information transfer from language A into B.
- **Style** refers to the usage of the appropriate register, mode and tone.
- **Readability** refers to the technical norms and constraints.

Quality criteria under scrutiny

• There are currently two subtitling methods being worked with in the subtitling industry.
  • **Method 1:** The translators are provided with a template.
  • **Method 2:** The translators time and spot their subtitles.
Method 1: Translation with template

• Templates were created when companies needed to find a way to produce subtitle files “in increasingly short turnarounds, using cost-effective methods”.

• Companies are able to “manage and check all files centrally”.

(Georgakopoulou 2006: 117)
Method 2: Translation + timing and spotting

- Method 2 includes the linguistic transfer and timing and spotting.
- Whereas the translation with template might be a faster way of producing subtitles, the translation without template might give translators more flexibility.
Chances
The approach

There are two groups of students creating subtitles.

• **Group 1** creates subtitles using a template.

• **Group 2** creates subtitles by timing and spotting their translation.
The evaluation

The subtitles created by both groups are evaluated using the quality criteria previously identified:

- meaning,
- style
- and readability.
Prospects
The prospects

• The evaluation of the subtitles show how quality criteria are related.
• Having viewers judge if they prefer the subtitles generated by method 1 or 2 gives further input into those quality criteria that should ultimately form a model for quality evaluation.
Bibliography
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