

Intra and extradiegetic Translation of the Linguistic Barrier in Works of Fiction. The Case of Sign Language in the Comedy *La Famille Bélier*

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Abstract

This communication presents a study aimed at evaluating the representation and reception of the linguistic barrier in fiction works, specifically audiovisual works. A detailed analysis of several scenes from the comedy *La Famille Bélier* (Lartigau, 2014), a multilingual film that frequently exploits the linguistic barrier created by sign language and its translation in its story line, demonstrates the complexity and narrative possibilities, including those of humorous kind, of the inclusion of this phenomenon in a work's plot. The aim of this report is to provide evidence that situations of multilingualism can also be caused by visual languages and also to give value to the work of sign language experts and translators in making cinema accessible to everyone: those who need oral language subtitling and those who need visual language subtitling.

1 Research background

As we have found in previous research (Cuéllar Lázaro, 2016; idem, in press), (Hurtado Malillos, 2017), access to the audiovisual media for the deaf and hard of hearing has evolved significantly in recent decades. The advances in legislation in different countries (see: the *Gemeinsame Untertitelrichtlinien für den deutschen Sprachraum* in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, the *Charte de qualité relative au sous-titrage à destination des personnes sourdes et malentendants* in France, the *Code of Guidance on Standards for Subtitling* in the United Kingdom or the standard UNE-153010:2012 in Spain), together with the development of new technology (dual-subtitle track for hearing and non-hearing public in

DVD products, subtitling options integrated in TV and video equipments) have provided solutions for many of the existing obstacles, although some still remain.

In the same way, the rise of multilingualism or presence of several languages in audiovisual works, both in products that combine several hearing languages (e.g. English, French, German), (Corrius and Zabalbeascoa, 2011) and in products that use hearing and visual languages (sign language), (Krentz, 2006), (Bauman, 2006) as well as their academic interest is growing.

2 Method and analysis description

Following the classification scheme proposed by the experts in audiovisual translation Cronin (2009) and O'Sullivan (2011), who in turn base their research on Genette's narratological model (1983), when translating the linguistic barrier posed by the presence of these languages, the audiovisual medium has two main options: the translation by a fictional character within the diegesis (interpreter, cases of self-translation) or the translation of this segment at an extradiegetic level through subtitling. However, so far there are no specific studies on productions that mix both options in order to translate the same case of language barrier.

In this report, we aim to sketch a new research path by analysing several scenes from the film *La Famille Bélier* (2014), in which this combined resource is used to produce a humorous effect in the audience. We carried out a descriptive-qualitative study of the audiovisual work following a contrastive approach. First, we created a catalogue of all the sign language interpreter interventions present in the film. A filtering criterion was then applied to select those cases in which there was a contradiction between the subtitled sign language message and the message delivered

orally by the interpreter. Once the definitive corpus of scenes was established, a comparative analysis of the intradiegetic and extradiegetic translations of the message and its variation was carried out, which ultimately led to the appraisal of the effects that this translation technique has on the spectator's story reception.

More specifically, the subcorpus of scenes that have been selected for analysis in this study and will be commented on in the presentation are the following:

In scene no. 1 (Figure 1), the current mayor M. Lapidus goes to the Béliier family's market stall to ask how the electoral campaign is going and wish them luck, hinting indirectly that M. Béliier is not a candidate at his level. M. Béliier's angry response in sign language: "*Quelle petite merde!, Je vais te défoncer, Je vais te péter les deux jambes*" is softened by his daughter in order to maintain good manners with the mayor and preserve her father's reputation as "*Il vous remercie. Il vous demande si ça va*". Although, ultimately, his rival's facial expression of enmity makes M.Lapidus suspect that the supposedly polite message is not such.



Figure 1. Dispute between current mayor M. Lapidus and candidate M. Béliier in the market in the context of elections, min. 24:53.

In scene no. 2 (Figure 2), when a TV set comes to the family's home to record an interview on M. Béliier's project for the municipality candidature, his daughter, tired of her father's obsession and sickly dedication to the election campaign, interprets M. Béliier's answers to the journalist into oral language in a very shortened form and unwillingly, thus distorting his message and reducing his possibilities of being elected. Paula's oral interpretation for the journalist's question "M. Béliier, vous avez décidé de vous présenter aux élections municipales de Lassay, pourquoi?" is "Je veux donner un nouvel élan à Lassay", when his father had actually gone into much more detail

in the answer "Depuis quelques années, nos commerces ferment. Nos jeunes s'en vont. Il n'y a plus de médecin et l'école est à l'abandon. Vous pensez quoi? Que je vais laisser faire la fatalité? En se mobilisant, on va redynamiser Lassay et lui donner un nouvel élan". The same thing happens when he is asked if the condition of being deaf could be a problem to serve as the city's mayor, Paula answering a simple "Non". M. Béliier, realizing that something is not working, asks his daughter to stop interpreting and, as a nod to the viewer, requests that the recording be later subtitled as it actually happens on the film's DVD.



Figure 2. Local TV interview with M. Béliier about his project as electoral candidate, min. 48:50.

In scene no. 3 (Figure 3), the situation changes and now the communicative barrier for Paula's parents is acoustic. At the end of the school performance, the music teacher reprimands the woman's parents for not supporting her in her facet as a singer and helping her to develop her full potential. Knowing that this is a subject that her parents do not accept, as they do not want her to leave the family and go to Paris to continue her career in music and performance, Paula interprets the reproaches of her teacher "Voilà, votre fille a une voix exceptionnelle. Alors, je comprends pas, au lieu de l'aider à la portée, vous êtes en train d'enfoncer là" as a "Merci d'être venus" in sign language, forcing both conversation parties to say goodbye and leave.



Figure 3. Conversation between the music teacher and Paula's parents about their daughter's skills at singing, min. 01:22:05.

3 Outcomes assessment and conclusions

Paula, the film's protagonist and only hearing family member, acts as an interpreter for her deaf parents and brother. This family bond often causes her interpretations to be influenced by the relationship that exists between them, either by protecting them or by trying to sabotage them.

The analysis carried out shows how the film director and scriptwriter opted to provide the viewer with two simultaneous and mutually contradictory translations of the original sign-language fragments emitted by the characters: a non-faithful interpretation by the natural interpreter orally at an intradiegetic level and a proper correct interpretation of the message visually, through subtitling, at an extradiegetic level. When the viewer realizes that the two translations differ and the double intention that the young woman has, a comedic situation arises.

With this analysis, we will demonstrate that these situations, in which a change of point of view takes place and it is now the hearing viewer who needs subtitles, are cases of multilingualism too and that can also cause barriers to communication. At the same time, we will study the functional possibilities offered by these situations of communicative distance as a narrative and stylistic resource in fiction.

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