Issues in Defining Film Translation:
A Historiographical Approach to Film Communication from the Perspective of Film Literacy Education

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Introduction

Film literacy education aims to empower audiences to become active, independent creators of film meaning. According to Mikhail Bakhtin (1934-41/1981), "creative consciousness lives in an actively polyglot world" and there "the period of national languages, coexisting but closed and deaf to each other, comes to an end" (p. 12). Translation is one important type of film language for international audiences and a knowledge of film translation could be useful for viewers to gain a deeper understanding of translated films i.e. to become more film literate. From the broader perspective of film communication, it could be also useful for English-speaking audiences themselves.

It is generally said, since 1927 when talkies first arrived, that film translation has become indispensable for international audiences either via subtitling or dubbing.[1] In Japan, for example, the first subtitled Hollywood movie was *Morocco* (1930) which was released after a period of trial and error in translating and printing.[2] However, even in the silent film era, movies were presented through translation in the form of live music or live performances by an explainer (*benshi*) who served as an intermediary between films and audiences.[3] Literal translation was also necessary when

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1　*The Jazz Singer* (1927)
2　This was released in the US on November 14, 1930 and in Japan on February 25, 1931.
3　*Benshi* in Japan are well known as film explainers. Noël Burch (1979) and other researchers (Gunning, 1991; Gerow, 2010) agree that there existed American equivalents of *benshi*, if not exactly the same, in the US during the silent movie period under the names of lecturer, explanator, spieler, or bonimenteur, though these were soon gone as talking pictures took over.

inter-titles were inserted, as in D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), to provide a written explanation of the story and the scene.[4]

Despite the long history and powerful influence of film translation on the huge number of non-English-speaking audiences around the world, few researchers of related areas such as film studies and translation studies focused on this phenomenon until the 1990s. Why was it ignored for so long? Jeremy Munday (2008), for example, first introduced the topic of film translation as a type of "audiovisual translation," and described how "dramatic developments in translation studies have occurred in the field of audiovisual translation" (pp. 182-191). Why has it drawn such a great deal of attention after a long period of ignorance? Is it because of the peculiar characteristics of film translation?

Mona Baker (2011) insisted on historical research "before we can even begin to develop theoretical accounts for this complex phenomenon" (p. xvii). This paper, therefore, revisits how film translation has been studied in the field of translation studies from the perspective of filmic pedagogy (film literacy education). This historiographical approach will illuminate the nature and peculiarities of film translation and will illuminate what differentiates it from other types of translation as well as what approaches can be taken.

Early Days

In the field of translation studies, Katharina Reiss (1971/2000) is considered to be the first to mention film translation as an "audio–medial" text type, a term she devised. She linked language functions to text types and translation strategies, insisting on equivalence at the text level. In her functional approach, she categorized text into three types: "informative," "expressive," and "operative." These are shown in Table 1 which is presented

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4   The inter-title technique can be found earlier in the British films *Our New General Servant* (1898) and *Scrooge or Marley's Ghost* (1901).

Table 1: Functional Characteristics of Text Types and Links to Translation Methods
by Chesterman （1989, p. 105）

Text type	Informative	Expressive	Operative
Language function	Informative (representing objects and facts)	Expressive (expressing sender's attitude)	Appellative (making an appeal to text receiver)
Language dimension	Logical	Aesthetic	Dialogic
Text focus	Content-focused	Form-focused	Appellative-focused
TT should …	Transmit referential content	Transmit aesthetic form	Elicit desired response
Translation method	'Plain prose', explicitation as required	'Identifying' method, adopt perspective of ST author	'Adaptive', equivalent effect

visually by Andrew Chesterman (1989). Later, she added "audio-medial" as a fourth text type, which covered not only films but also visual and spoken advertisements which supplement the other three functions with image and/or sound. However, there is no further development of these ideas on film translation in her discussion, since more of her attention was paid to the translation of advertisements.

Film Translation as an Emerging Research Topic in the 1980s

Researchers in the field of translation studies began to pay attention to the peculiarities of film translation as technology dramatically changed the practice of watching films in the late 1980s. Christopher Titford (1982) referred to subtitling as "constrained translation" focusing on the non-verbal elements of film text that characterize film translation. Roberto Mayoral, Dorothy Kelly, and Natividad Gallardo (1988) also adopted Titford's term in their research on subtitling with a focus on non-verbal elements of film. They

argued that film texts should be approached not only from a linguistic perspective but also from a communication perspective, since film text requires the translation not only of words, but also of texts in association with images, music, oral sources, etc. They also argue that film translation needs to pay attention to "more than one communication channel, and therefore should also include the factors of source culture, target culture, noise, and the role of the translator in this complex process" (p. 356).

Mary Snell-Hornby (1988/95) linked film to literary translation in her integrated approach to the topic. In her diagram of "Text type and relevant criteria for translation" (Table 2), film and stage translation are situated between biblical translation and lyric/poetry translation under the banner of "literary translation" in a horizontal distribution. At the same time, she pays attention to the nature of the sound/rhythm of the text with a special focus on the nature of speakability. However, her main concern doesn't seem to be on non-verbal elements of film but solely on a comparison between written

Table 2: Text Type and Relevant Criteria for Translation by Snell-Hornby (1995, p. 32)
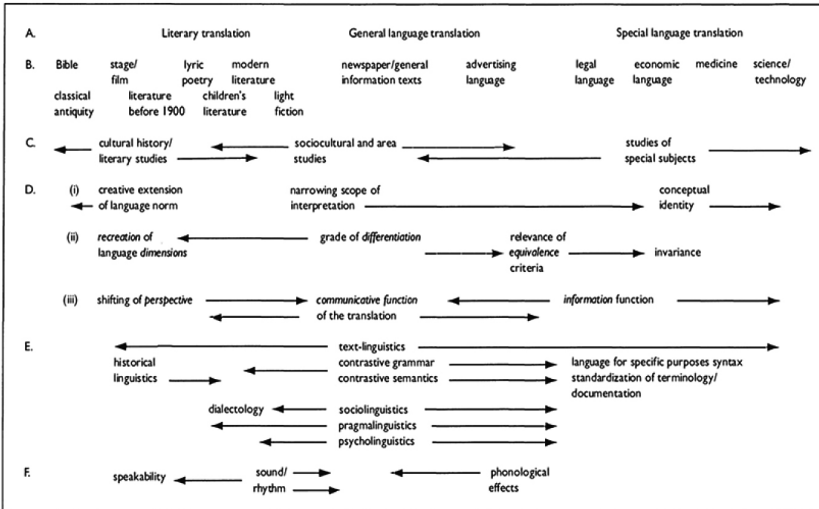
texts and spoken words. This is why Munday（2008）, when introducing her theory, poses the question asking if film translation should be treated as literary translation（p. 77）.

Even more clearly than Mayoral, et al.（1988）, Dirk Delabastita（1989） tried to identify the characteristics of film translation claiming that "film establishes a multi-channel and multi-code type of communication"（p. 196）. He distinguished film communication from radio communication or communication via books, and insisted that film communication takes place through two channels at the same time: the visual channel and the acoustic channel. He goes on to introduce the following four codes（pp. 196-197）:

（1）the verbal code with various stylistic and dialectal features
（2）the literary and theatrical code including plot, dialogue, etc.
（3）the proxemic and kinetic code relating to a multitude of non-verbal behavior
（4）the cinematic code including techniques, genres, etc.

What is also notable about his research is that Delabastita puts an emphasis on how the visual channel, which includes credits, letters and shop signs, conveys verbal signs and on how the acoustic channel, including music, background noise, etc., transmits non-verbal signs. He analyzes each channel by distinguishing verbal and non-verbal signs. In addition, he applies classical rhetoric（repetitio, adiectio, detractio, substitutio, transmutatio）in order to suggest a number of possible translation procedures（pp. 199-200）as indicated in Table 3:

After a painstaking discussion of subtitling and dubbing, he still can't help raising a fundamental question by asking if film translation should be classified with translation or with adaptation. He stated that the field is "still a virgin area of research"（p. 202）. To address the fundamental issue, he

Table 3: Scheme of Potential Translational Relationships between Source Film and Target Film by Delabastita（1989, p. 199）

transmission (channel)	type of sign (code)	*repetitio*	*adiectio*	*detractio*	*substitutio*	*transmutatio*
VISUAL	verbal signs	...	...	...	...	...
	non-verbal signs	...	...	...	...	...
ACOUSTIC	verbal signs	...	...	...	...	...
	non-verbal signs	...	...	...	...	...

adopts the term "text transfer" in order to gain a broader and more flexible understanding of film translation.

At about the same time, Robert Stam（1989）directed his attention to film translation as "language in film"（p. 23）by applying Bakhtinian linguistics to film studies. He carefully distinguished "language in film" from film language which, since the 1960s, had been subjected to study in the field of film semiotics introduced by Christian Metz. Focusing on "the role of language difference within film"（p. 57）and its impact on film, he recognized film translation as a key element for international audiences when they "come to terms with meaning on the boundaries of another set of languages as well as one's own"（p. 59）.

The Year 1990 and the Early 1990s

1990 is an important year to be remembered for both film history and translation studies. That year, the penetration rate of video recorders（VCRs）[5] in Japanese households skyrocketed to 66.8% from lows of 2.4% in 1980 and 27.8% in 1985, as indicated in Table 4. This brought a dramatic change in film

appreciation, perhaps the greatest filmic change since the debut of the first talking film in 1927. Thanks to the VCR, the means of appreciating film changed in every aspect. As shown in Figure 1 below, the size of video audiences was almost 6 times as large as the size of audiences at movie

Table 4: Penetration Rate for Household Electrical Goods
(Consumer Confidence Survey 2016 by Cabinet Office, Government of Japan) [6]

第7節　主要家電製品の普及率・保有数量

3. 普及率（二人以上の世帯）

178

179

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theaters in 1990. The practice of seeing a film moved its base from the movie theater to the living-room and became less public and more private. The VCR overthrew the principle that "Hollywood movies are made to be consumed
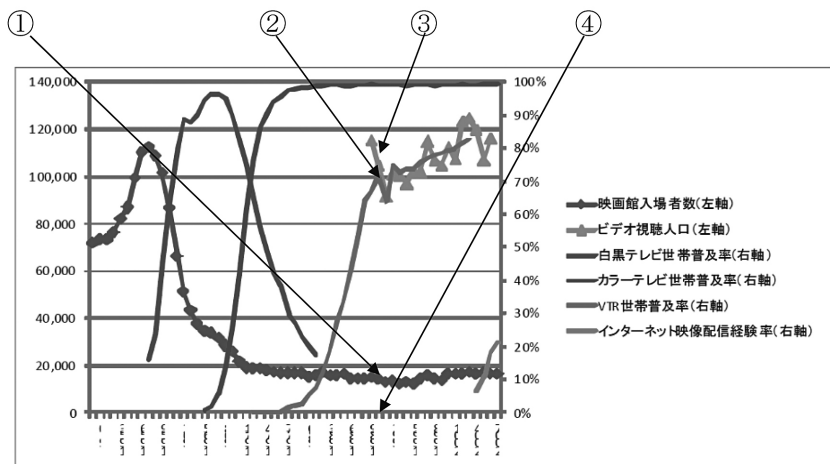

Figure 1: Transition of Film-viewing Population in Japan

(Report of the Film Industry Business Model Workshop by Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, 2009) [7]

once"（Mary Ann Doan, 1987, p. 1）and allowed avid audiences to see the same film as many times as they desired in either way through renting or buying. Now they could appreciate their favorite scenes by rewinding and replaying video tapes, and thus get more involved in the films. They were not satisfied with the usual movie magazines any more, and expected in-depth information about movies such as movie scripts.[8] Under these circumstances,

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7　①: Number of visitors to movie theaters（left axis）, ②: VTR penetration rate for households, ③: Number of video audiences（left axis）, ④: 1990
　　http://www.meti.go.jp/policy/mono_info_service/contents/downloadfiles/movie.pdf#search=%27%E6%98%A0%E7%94%BB%E7%94%A3%E6%A5%AD%E3%81%AE%E3%83%93%E3%82%B8%E3%83%8D%E3%82%B9%E3%83%A2%E3%83%87%E3%83%AB%E7%A0%94%E7%A9%B6%E4%BC%9A%27（Retrieved Oct. 21, 2017）.

8　Movie scripts either with Japanese translations, glosses, or annotations were published by at least three different publishers in the 1990s in Japan.

film translation was not ephemeral any more but was something that could be examined.

Also in 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act[9] was signed. This required that every newly released video from that year on provide access to verbal information in the form of closed captioning. This new technology changed ways of appreciating film not only for the hearing-impaired but also for non-English-speaking audiences. It enabled international audiences to understand what was actually spoken by film characters and to compare the original language with the on-screen translation. Viewers no longer had to go to the movie theater repeatedly to catch a memorable line and make a quick note of it in the darkness of the theater.

On the other hand, the concept of "cultural turn" was introduced to the research field of translation studies in 1990. As part of the wave of cultural studies in those days, Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere (1990) declared a culturally oriented approach to translation which introduced the concept of "cultural turn" advocated by Snell-Hornby (1990)[10] in the introduction to a set of collected essays, all of which are permeated by this concept. They insisted that theories of translation studies "have moved from word to text as a unit, but not beyond" (p. 4) and suggested dismissing the traditional "painstaking comparisons between originals and translations" (p. 4). Instead, they called for more attention to be paid to the interaction between translation and culture with a focus on "the larger issues of context, history

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9　The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability. It is usually called the ADA. It is An Act to establish a clear and comprehensive prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability. The act was based on a law presented in the VA legislature by Warren G. Stambaugh.

10　*Translation, History and Culture* (1990) is a collection of essays edited by S. Bassnett and A. Lefevere. Snell-Hornby's 'Linguistic Transcoding or Cultural Transfer? A Critique of Translation Theory in Germany' is one of the 12 essays contributed. For additional details of this book, please see the reference page.

and convention" (p. 11). Analyzing translation as a rewriting of an original text, they claim that all rewritings "reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way (p. ix). The concept and this anthology had a great influence on researchers not only throughout the decade but up to this day.

This wave broadened the traditional concept of text to be examined in the field of translation studies. Bassnett and Lefevere (1990) emphasized going beyond the traditional recognition of literature as written text to also examine images as literature. This expanded the research area of film translation not only to images but also to commentaries and adaptations, as well as social and cultural institutions, in the process of constructing the image of film.

Since Delabastita (1989), a growing number of researchers in the field of translation studies have become interested in film translation. There has been a variety of discussions about defining and naming this area, depending on the focal point as well as its relationship with the academic field of translation studies. George-Michael Luyken, T. Herbst, J. Langham-Brown, H. Reid and H. Spinhof (1991) suggested the term "audiovisual language transfer" instead of "film translation" arguing that "audiovisual language transfer denotes the process by which a film or television program is made comprehensible to a target audience that is unfamiliar with the original's source language" (p. 11).

Henrik Gottlieb (1994) focused on language transfer in subtitling and described it as "diagonal translation" because subtitling is a form of translation where the source language (SL) is rendered as the target language (TL) alongside the rendering of speech as written text. On the other hand, he explained that "horizontal transfer" happens in conventional types of translation such as interpretation (from speech to speech) and "interlingual translation" (from written text to written text). These ideas are outlined in Table 5-1 and 5-2.

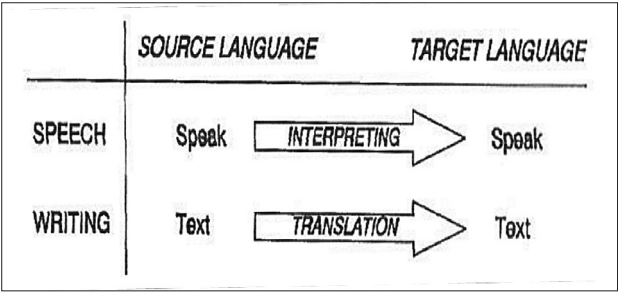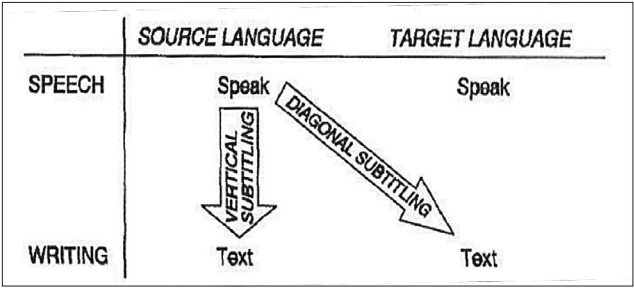Table 5-1: Horizontal Transfer and Diagonal Translation by Gottlieb（1994, p. 104）

Table 5-2: Horizontal Transfer and Diagonal Translation by Gottlieb（1994, p. 104）

"Diagonal translation" is a type of translation between different modes which John C. Catford（1965）claimed to be "impossible"（p. 53）. In order to confirm the relevance of "diagonal translation," Gottlieb（1994）referred to Roman Jakobson's（1959/2012）types of translation and focused on the concept of "intersemiotic translation." Unlike "intralingual translation/ rewording" and "interlingual translation/translation proper," "intersemiotic translation/transmutation" is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs in non-verbal sign systems:

　　（It）operates within the confines of the film and TV media, and stays within the code of verbal language. The subtitler does not even alter the original; he or she adds an element, but does not delete anything from

the audiovisual whole.（p. 105）

The Year 1995

1995 marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of film and saw an increase in the number of momenta, movements, and activities in related fields around the world. In redefining film translation in his historical overview, Yves Gambier（2003）reported that The Council of Europe had agreed to host a forum on audiovisual communication and language transfer as part of its celebrations of the landmark year and that, from then on, the study area became prolific with a number of colloquia, seminars, and publications. To help explain this, he also pointed out the rapid change in technology from analogue to digital. In Japan, for example, the change provided more screens than ever before to arouse interest in the study of film and film culture in the new era. The change also made it possible to carry out research on film either through a qualitative or quantitative approach such as studying digitalized early films and constructing databases. Gambier suggested, as a further reason for this new popularity, changes in language policy and language awareness among minority groups and argued that these groups became convinced that the media could be a useful tool to promote and reinforce their language and cultural identity.

In Japan, a new project of media education proposed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology was about to be officially launched in the 1990s, responding to the rapid development of technology since the late 1980s. According to Takashi Sakamoto（2001）, the definition of media education is not only to utilize media for education but also to consider the peculiarities of media as an object of study and education（pp. 22-23）. As part of the revision of the national Course of Study（government guidelines for school curricula）in 1998, the first step was to provide audiovisual equipment to schools. It didn't take long before every classroom was

furnished with a VCR. Teachers saw possibilities in the use of film as an effective teaching material for language learning as well as for cross-cultural training. In addition, since 1990, newly released videos had been provided with closed captioning and caption decoders made it possible to download lines of dialog from movie scripts onto personal computers. With all these devices and technologies, the time was ripe for teaching through movies, so it was quite natural that film experts and English language teachers came together in the year 1995 for the purpose of sharing their knowledge and experiences with each other and of building up a film-English database.[11]

In the context of this growing momentum for research on film translation and related areas in the East and the West, Baker (1998) included "dubbing" and "subtitling" as independent items among traditional issues such as equivalence and translatability in her reference work on translation studies, a publication that was actually an encyclopedia and compilation of "the discipline of the 1990s" (p. xiii).

Film Translation in the 21st Century

Discussions of terms and definitions of film translation have not yet reached any conclusions in the new century. Gambier (2003), after years of research, re-examined current terminology in his introduction to a special issue of *The Translator* which featured the new term, "screen translation." Why did this happen?

One answer could be the change in filmic circumstances starting in the late 1990s, especially the transition from analog to digital. The first DVD players became publicly available in Japan in 1996. Manufacturers around the world followed the new technology and made it available over a relatively

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11 A number of teachers formed a group known as ATEM (The Association of English through Movies) in 1995. Thanks to more than twenty years of their efforts, teaching English through movies has become a common teaching methodology now in Japan.

short time. According to the June 20, 2003 Friday edition of *The Washington Times*, DVD rentals had overtaken videocassette rentals in mid-June. By that time, about 50 million Americans had bought DVD players since they were introduced in 1997 – at a rate faster than the purchase of black-and-white TVs, color TVs, VCRs, and CD players. One person interviewed in the article stated that the American public had fallen in love with DVDs.[12] According to a Consumer Confidence Survey in 2016 (Table 4), the penetration rate for DVD players in Japanese households reached 25.3% in 2003, then rapidly grew to 61.1% in 2006, to 71.7% in 2008, and to 75.9% in 2016. What is noteworthy is that the proportions have remained at approximately the same level after 2008 and that the maximum rate (77.7% in 2013) is lower than that of VCRs (82.5% in 2004). One possible reason is that there were alternative DVD players: *Nintendo PlayStation 2*, a home video game console, was released in 2000 and the penetration rate for personal computers in 2003 was already 63.3%.

The new DVD technology had many advantages. It was much clearer than VHS and much more compact. Despite their small size, DVDs offered far greater amounts of content than larger VHS cassettes. DVDs of Hollywood films sold in Japan, for example, contain a menu of optional multi-language closed captioning. In contrast, VHS could handle just one language, with Japanese subtitles always on the screen.

Because of their huge storage capacity, DVDs typically carry bonus materials such as audio commentary, interviews, deleted footage, behind the scenes stories, official trailers, games, photo galleries, additional information and so on. The Washington Times interviewee mentioned above said that he spent three evenings watching just the bonus material of his favorite movie, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). The compactness and affordable price could be an

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12 http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2003/jun/20/20030620-113258-1104r/ (Retrieved Oct. 21, 2017).

advantage, too. For international audiences, likewise, DVDs provide a much greater amount and variety of information, including film translation, than ever before.

A New Term for the Field: "Audiovisual Translation"

According to Gambier (2003), early studies mainly referred to this area as "film translation." After TV and video became popular, the term "language transfer" was introduced focusing on "language" in spite of the fact that the verbal content is supplemented by images and sounds. Since the 1960s, the term "audiovisual translation" has become prominent, which includes the multi-semiotic dimension of all broadcast programs such as film, radio, television and video. On the other hand, the term "screen translation" is frequently used to cover all media distributed through screens, e.g., television, cinema or computer screens.

Another form of terminology is "multimedia translation." This sounds somewhat confusing because it could apply too broadly. For example, this terminology was once applied to theatre, comics, film, and at other times, TV, cinema, and video as well as on-line and off-line products and services such as web pages, CD-ROMs, and computer games. Gambier himself proposed using the term "transadaptation" with the explanation that it would "go beyond the usual dichotomy (literal/free translation, translation/adaptation, etc.) and take target audiences into consideration more directly" (p. 178). As yet, however, this term has not become popular among researchers in the field. More interestingly, Gambier himself now uses the terms "audiovisual translation" and "screen translation" instead. Meanwhile, Bernal Merino (2006) seeks to create a distance from traditional translation studies and advocated the new concept of "transcreation." Jorge Díaz-Cintas and Aline Remael (2007) examined the concept of "transadaptation" concluding that the term "audiovisual translation (AVT) has been gaining ground in recent years and

is fast becoming the standard referent"（p. 12）.

　　Besides revisiting terminology, Gambier（2003）identified the different types of audiovisual translation that came into usage in/up to 2003. First, he divided these into two groups: "dominant types" and "challenging types." "Dominant types" of AVT include "interlingual subtitling, dubbing, consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, voice-over, free commentary, simultaneous（or sight）translation, and multilingual production"（p. 172）. "Challenging types" include "translating scenarios/ scripts, intralingual subtitling, live（or real time）subtitling, surtitling, and audio description"（p. 174）. What is notable here is his analysis of scenario/ script translation as a type of audiovisual translation. He pays attention not only to the image and sound to be translated but also to the literal element of film. However, he explains "scenario/script translation is needed in order to get subsidies, grants and other financial support for a co-production. These translations are usually not edited"（p. 174）and therefore do not imply any educational value.

　　In reviewing all these terms, concepts and discussions, Munday（2008）introduced film translation as "audiovisual translation" in a newly added chapter entitled "New directions from the new media"（pp. 179-196）, something that he didn't address in the first edition of his popular translation studies course book（2001）. Here, he included not only subtitling and dubbing but also Fansub and Video game translations, the new fields that he felt should be discussed in relation to film translation in the digital age. It is obvious that there is a pressing need for studying these new phenomena. He comments:

　　　　Although they do not represent a new theoretical model, the emergence and proliferation of new technologies have transformed translation practice and are now exerting an impact on research and,

as a consequence, on the theorization of translation.（p. 179）

Baker（2009）integrated the entries of "dubbing" and "subtitling" in her first edition（1998）and adopted the term "audiovisual translation." Besides this, there were significant revisions in the second edition of her book（2009）. Only 11 articles out of 80 in the first edition remained and the others had new headings and/or new authors. This shows that the term "audiovisual translation" standardized as an inescapable topic in translation studies despite all the discussions and controversies about the huge departure from the norm of translation studies. At the same time, the norm per se was contested and was pressed to redefine itself during those years.

Need for an Interdisciplinary Approach

Earlier, Fredelic Chaume（2004）proposed an integrated model of "analysis of texts focused on the signifying codes of cinematographic language"（p. 16）. This model includes the following ten codes（pp. 16-22）:

1. the linguistic code
2. the paralinguistic codes
3. the musical and special effects code
4. the sound arrangement code
5. iconographic codes
6. photographic codes
7. the planning code（types of shots）
8. mobility codes
9. graphic codes
10. syntactic codes（editing）

The first four codes deal with the acoustic channel and the latter six with

the visual channel. This suggests that the first code is the only one dealing with linguistics while all the others deal with non-linguistic aspects. This means that audiovisual translation could deviate from the norm of conventional translation studies. Chaume emphasized "the different signifying codes within the linguistic one" (p. 22) and insisted that "a translation that does not take all the codes into account can be seen only as a partial translation" (ibid.). It is, therefore, quite natural that he insists on the need for an interdisciplinary approach to audiovisual translation, not only from the perspectives of translation theory and film studies but also from those of related areas such as discourse analysis and communication studies.

Following Chaume's (2004) appeal for constructing a bridge between translation studies and film studies, Munday (2008) underlined the absolute necessity of an interdisciplinary approach to audiovisual translation. Munday (2016) again insisted on research from the perspectives of both linguistics and aesthetics, complaining that many studies in the field of translation studies "continue to limit themselves to the written word on the screen and its comparison to a researcher-produced transcription of the spoken dialogue" (p. 298). He explained that the visual image is hardly ever altered in the target text without sufficient knowledge of film theory, which translation studies theorists rarely have. He, therefore, puts an emphasis on the approach based on theories of translation studies, film studies and metalinguistics (ibid.).

Conclusion

Film translation has now become a flourishing topic in the area of translation studies even though it was hardly ever discussed until the 1990s. The historiographical approach of this paper illuminates its peculiar nature which may be one reason for the long overdue attention only recently paid to this phenomenon. Non-linguistic elements of film and technical restrictions, for

example, differentiate this from other types of translation, and therefore, make it difficult to approach in a traditional way.

What is notable is that Munday（2016）discussed film translation together with Fansub and game translation under the heading of "audiovisual translation." What's also notable is that he discussed audiovisual translation in juxtaposition with localization/globalization and corpus-based approaches in the same chapter of his book. This shows that film translation is more appropriately studied through a multi-faceted and interdisciplinary approach, because it is intricately interrelated with technology, politics and commercialism. As film challenged the traditional concept of art, from aura to mechanical reproduction, in the 1930s, film translation seems to have challenged traditional theories and approaches of translation studies. The knowledge gained from this new perspective can be expected to contribute to film literacy education.

Film translation is an important film language. However, it actually doesn't belong to the diegetic space but is attached to it. Subtitles on the screen are quite obviously presented from outside. Even dubbed voices, no matter how skillfully lip-synchronized, are hardly believed to belong to the character portrayed on screen. It is its otherness to establish a complicity between itself and audiences, who share it being kept out from the diegetic space after all. In doing so, film translation can exert a great influence on audiences and manipulate their understanding of films. Further research is necessary on film translation from the perspective of meta-linguistics which could provide theoretical explanations for such a filmic polyphony composed of film, translation and audiences.

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