

EXPLICITATION AND TECHNICAL ASPECTS IN FAN-MADE AND COMMERCIAL SUBTITLING FOR ENGLISH-LANGUAGE HORROR MOVIES IN BRAZIL

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RESUMO: Este trabalho apresenta um estudo no campo dos Estudos da Tradução, mais especificamente, nos Estudos da Tradução Audiovisual, analisando um corpus composto de fragmentos extraídos de dez filmes de terror distintos produzidos entre 2000-2006 em inglês e legendagens comerciais e feitas por fãs (piratas) em português, utilizando categorias: 1) dos estudos de aspectos descritivos em modalidades da Tradução Audiovisual (DÍAZ-CINTAS, 2003; DÍAZ-CINTAS; REMAEL, 2007) e ii) dos estudos sobre a explicitação em modalidades da Tradução Audiovisual (PEREGO, 2003), com vistas a uma caracterização das legendagens piratas em contraste com as comerciais. Certas diferenças foram encontradas entre os dois tipos de legendagem. As piratas apresentaram maior número de caracteres por legenda. A localização e o tipo de fontes das legendas comerciais são estabelecidos pelos profissionais que as produziram, enquanto, nas legendas piratas, são escolhidas pelo espectador. Maior redução, condensação e omissão encontradas nas legendagens comerciais. A explicitação foi encontrada em quantidades semelhantes nos dois tipos de legendagem, sendo a categoria mais frequentemente encontrada a explicitação motivadas em decorrência de aspectos culturais realizada por meio de adição. As ocorrências de explicitação foram encontradas em quantidades relativamente pequenas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: legendagem; legendagem pirata; explicitação

ABSTRACT: This paper reports on a study carried out within the field of Translation Studies, more specifically, Audiovisual Translation Studies, analyzing a corpus comprised of fragments extracted from ten different horror films produced between 2000-2006 in English, with both commercial and fan-made subtitles (“fansubs” or “fantitles”) in Portuguese, drawing on categories from: i) studies about descriptive aspects in Audiovisual Translation modalities (DÍAZ-CINTAS, 2003; DÍAZ-CINTAS; REMAEL, 2007); and ii) studies about explicitation in Audiovisual Translation modalities (PEREGO, 2003), aiming towards a characterization of fan-made subtitles in contrast with commercial ones. Certain differences were found between the two types of subtitling. Fan-made subtitles presented a greater number of characters per subtitle. The placing and type of fonts of commercial subtitles are established by the professional who produced them, while, in fan-made subtitles, those are chosen by the viewer. Greater reduction, condensation and omission were found in commercial subtitles. Explicitation was found in similar quantities in both types of subtitles, being the most frequent category found the explicitation motivated by cultural aspects performed by means of addition. Occurrences of explicitation were found in relatively small quantities

KEYWORDS: subtitling; fan-made subtitles; explicitation

Introduction

This paper reports on a fragment extracted from my doctoral thesis, conducted at *Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais* (UFMG), advised by Prof. Dr. Adriana Silvina Pagano (UFMG) and co-advised by Prof. Dr. Vera Lúcia Santiago Araújo (UECE).

Subtitling is still a rather incipient field in Audiovisual Translation. Different modalities can be observed, such as: voice-over, dubbing, subtitling, closed-captioning and audio-description. In the case of subtitling, researches focus on descriptive or technical issues and fan-made subtitling (“fansubs” for non-Asian films) is scarcely dealt with in literature.

This study draws on categories from subtitling descriptive studies (Audiovisual Translation) as exposed by Díaz-Cintas (2003) and Díaz-Cintas & Remael (2007), as well as studies regarding the phenomenon of explicitation in Audiovisual Translation, categorized by Perego (2003).

This paper aims to analyze both commercial and fan-made subtitles in Brazilian Portuguese for movies originally produced in English: i) according to the criteria proposed by Díaz-Cintas (2003) and Díaz-Cintas & Remael (2007) in the area of Audiovisual Translation Studies; and ii) regarding explicitation, according to the categories pointed out by Perego (2003).

Corpus

The corpus is comprised of initial fragments from ten horror films produced in English between 2000-2005 and both commercial and fan-made subtitles available for them in Portuguese. The selected fragments are cut from the beginning of each film to the first change of scene after a minimum of ten minutes of running time. So the total analyzed corresponds to over two hours of audiovisual recording, but analyzing different films, so as to characterize a wider range of movies rather than only one in the genre. As the fragments always take place in the beginning of each film, no reference to previous scenes, not included in the corpus, are possible. In addition, since each fragment is cut in a change of scene, only complete scenes are found.

Certain films rendered inadequate for young audiences in English are subtitled or dubbed in Portuguese in Brazil with changes in the text, removing or softening any coarse language found, so as to widen the range of the audience. For genres that are visually adult (e.g. horror or pornography), no censorship is applied in that sense, as the films would be considered inadequate for children with or without such language. Pornographic films do not

seem to include very much conversation to analyze, so, to observe the language with no regards to censorship, horror films were chosen.

The selected films are: “The Cell” (USA, 2000), “Cube Zero” (Canada, 2004), “Cursed” (USA, 2005), “Hannibal” (USA, 2001), “The Hole” (UK, 2001), “House of Wax” (USA, 2004), “Saw 2” (Canada, 2005), “The Skeleton Key” (USA, 2006), “The Texas Chainsaw Massacre” (USA, 2003), and “Willard” (USA, 2003). The commercial subtitles were extracted from the DVDs commercially available in Brazil and the fan-made subtitles were downloaded from the website <<http://titles.box.sk>>.

These DVDs all included subtitles in English. They do not seem to be made for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, since they do not include sound descriptions; they only include what is said. The purpose of these subtitles included in the Brazilian DVDs is unknown. They included practically everything the characters said. They were extracted along with the Portuguese subtitles and whatever was omitted in them that could be heard from the audio channel was manually added, so that they would match what can be found in the audio channel and compared to the subtitles in Portuguese.

The subtitles were extracted from the DVDs using *SubRip*, a freeware tool to extract subtitles from DVDs using OCR (Optical Character Recognition) and converted to text files. Those text files (.srt) are really plain text (.txt) files with time-stamping. They are the same type of files used for the fan-made subtitles found at the aforementioned website.

In order to show the dimension of the corpus, the data are presented quantified in tokens in Table 1.

English language film	Commercial subtitles in Portuguese	Fan-made subtitles in Portuguese
Cursed	2 961	3 389
The Hole	1 774	1 890
The Cell	1 392	1 459
House of Wax	2 299	2 672
The Skeleton Key	2 189	2 187
Cube Zero	1 629	1 559
Hannibal	1 453	1 751
Saw 2	1 811	1 708
The Texas Chainsaw Massacre	2 471	2 153
Willard	1 355	1 618
Total	17 979	18 768

Table 1. Number of tokens of each set of subtitles comprising the corpus

The number of tokens in Table 1 above indicates that, for most films in the corpus, fan-made subtitles were longer than commercial ones. The reasons for this are indicated further on in this paper.

Analysis categories

The categories used to describe the subtitles in technical descriptive aspects (DÍAZ-CINTAS, 2003; DÍAZ-CINTAS; REMAEL, 2007) are as follows:

- Formatting: number of lines; placing; number of characters per line; font type; color; position; duration; time-setting.
- Textual features: reduction; condensation; omission.

The categories concerning explicitation (PEREGO, 2003) regard whether they were brought about by:

- *cultural differences*: expressions or elements present in one culture that need further clarification so as to be understood by viewers who are not familiar with such elements in the other culture, e.g. names of commercial products unavailable or unknown in the other country, expressions that are typical of that specific culture, etc.
- *changes in the semiotic channel*: something written, not spoken, that requires translation, for example.
- *need for reduction*: when, in order to reduce the text, a cultural element ends up simplified towards an explicitation.

Each of the three above mentioned forms of explicitation can be performed by means of i) addition and ii) specification. The annotation was made with tags created for this research as presented in Table 2 below:

Category concerning an explicitation concept	Tag
Explicitation brought about by cultural differences, performed by means of addition	<ECA>
Explicitation brought about by cultural differences, performed by means of specification	<ECE>
Explicitation brought about by changes in the semiotic channel, performed by means of addition	<ESA>
Explicitation brought about by changes in the semiotic channel, performed by means of specification	<ESE>
Explicitation brought about by the need for reduction, performed by means of addition	<ERA>
Explicitation brought about by the need for reduction, performed by means of specification	<ERE>

Table 2. Tags used for categories regarding explicitation to annotate the corpus

Each occurrence of explicitation found in the corpus was tagged accordingly and later quantified and compared with the help of *Wordsmith Tools* software.

Data analysis

Each category will be presented here grouped in the following sections: i) technical aspects (DÍAZ-CINTAS, 2003; DÍAZ-CINTAS; REMAEL, 2007); ii) textual aspects (DÍAZ-CINTAS, 2003; DÍAZ-CINTAS; REMAEL, 2007); and iii) explicitation (PEREGO, 2003).

Technical aspects

- *Maximum number of characters per line in each subtitle*: Every subtitle found contains one or two lines each. The number of characters in each line, however, varies significantly. In commercial subtitles, no line contained more than 32 characters, so it seems to be something translators who work for those companies observe. Fan-made subtitles, on the other hand, do not seem to be made observing a maximum number of characters per line. For all films of the corpus, lines with more than 32 characters could be found, as shown in Table 3:

Film	Maximum number of characters per line in each commercial subtitle in Portuguese	Maximum number of characters per line in each fan-made subtitle in Portuguese
Cursed	32	38
The Hole	32	49
The Cell	32	41
House of Wax	32	40
The Skeleton Key	32	40
Cube Zero	32	36
Hannibal	32	41
Saw 2	32	48
The Texas Chainsaw Massacre	32	49
Willard	32	34
Average	32	41.6

Table 3. Maximum number of characters per line in each subtitle

- *Number of lines per subtitle*: Each subtitle presents one or two lines. Yet, in the case of fan-made subtitles, the viewer can choose what type and size of font to use, depending on how one configures the player. So, if the subtitles will not fit one line, the software can be set to automatically either reduce the font or to split the line in two or more lines. Therefore, the maximum number of lines may be more than two in fan-made subtitles, depending on how the viewer decides to play the subtitled film. A mandatory line break can be inserted by the

translator who makes the subtitles, but no mandatory line break was found to cause more than two lines.

- *Placing*: The commercial subtitles were all placed horizontally centered at the bottom of the screen. Since they are really *.gif* pictures, the viewer can only choose whether to display subtitles or not and which language, but not elements such as placing or font type. Still, fan-made subtitles can be placed anywhere the viewer prefers, depending on how one sets the software to play the subtitled film.

- *Font type*: The font observed seems to be Arial, size 16, from a visual estimate, on all commercial subtitles. Fan-made subtitles are plain text files with no formatting whatsoever, so the font type and size is chosen by the viewer.

- *Color*: The colors differed. Commercial subtitles for five of the films were white and for the other five films were yellow. A possible reason for this might be the colors present in the picture of the films, since white subtitles were used in films with darker pictures and yellow subtitles were found in films with more scenes with brighter pictures. Again, for fan-made subtitles, the viewer can choose from a large selection of colors.

- *Duration*: This did not differ. Subtitles with one line were displayed for two seconds. Subtitles with two lines were displayed for four seconds. This happened to all subtitles in the corpus. Two seconds per line.

- *Position*: While the placing will characterize the texts as “subtitles” (bottom) or “overtitles” (top), position is whether the subtitles are aligned at the left or centralized. All commercial subtitles in the corpus were horizontally centralized. Fan-made subtitles, again, can be aligned anyway the viewer sets the player to display them.

- *Time-setting*: All subtitles were synchronized with the speeches, for both types of subtitling.

Textual aspects

- *Reduction*: Certain terms found in spoken language can be removed from the written text in the subtitles, so that viewers can understand what is said with no great loss. This was often found in the commercial subtitles in the corpus, but not so much in fan-made ones. Here is an example:

Example 1:

Original movie in English	Commercial subtitle in Portuguese	Fan-made subtitle in Portuguese
“No! No, no. I need you to read my friend's.”	“É pra você ler a mão dela.”	“Não! Não, não. Quero que leia a mão da minha amiga.”

(Extracted from the film “Cursed”.)

The “No! No, no” from the English audio is not translated in the commercial subtitle, but it is in the fan-made one. Many similar occurrences were found throughout the corpus, as will be quantified later on in this paper.

- *Condensation*: When subtitling a film, the shortest words possible are typically preferred in commercial subtitles, so as to obtain shorter subtitles. For example:

Example 2:

Original movie in English	Commercial subtitle in Portuguese	Fan-made subtitle in Portuguese
“Bummer! You mean you're just an ass wimp-wad for no reason?”	“Não diga! Você é só delicado?”	“Quer dizer que você é um bundão sem motivo algum?”

(Extracted from the film “Cursed”.)

- *Omission*: Certain sentences may be completely omitted if the translator decides they are not important for the viewer to enjoy the subtitled film, hence presenting shorter (or even fewer) subtitles, as shown in the Example 3 below:

Example 3:

Original movie in English	Commercial subtitle in Portuguese	Fan-made subtitle in Portuguese
She's on a jump-out squad all night. She's saving her strength.	Participou de batidas a noite toda.	Está numa brigada-surpresa noturna. Está poupando forças.

(Extracted from the film “Hannibal”.)

Explicitation

This phenomenon was present in rather small numbers and similarly in both types of subtitling. The occurrences for each are shown in Tables 4 and 5.

Explicitation brought about by aspects regarding:	culture		semiotic channel		reduction	
	addition	specific.	addition	specific.	addition	specific.
Cursed	—	1	9	—	—	—
The Hole	—	3	3	—	—	—
The Cell	—	—	1	—	—	—
House of Wax	1	1	3	—	—	—
The Skeleton Key	—	—	11	—	—	—
Cube Zero	—	—	2	—	1	—
Hannibal	1	1	2	—	1	1
Saw 2	1	2	2	—	—	—
The Texas Chainsaw Massacre	—	4	1	—	—	1
Willard	—	4	1	—	—	—
Total	3	16	35	—	2	2

Table 4. Number of occurrences of explicitation in commercial subtitles.

Explicitation brought about by aspects regarding:	culture		semiotic channel		reduction	
	addition	specific.	addition	addition	specific.	addition
Cursed	—	1	11	—	—	—
The Hole	—	3	3	—	—	—
The Cell	—	—	1	—	—	—
House of Wax	1	1	3	—	—	—
The Skeleton Key	—	—	11	—	—	—
Cube Zero	—	—	2	—	1	—
Hannibal	1	1	2	1	1	1
Saw 2	1	2	2	—	—	—
The Texas Chainsaw Massacre	—	4	1	—	—	1
Willard	—	4	1	—	—	—
Total	3	16	37	1	2	2

Table 5. Number of occurrences of explicitation in fan-made subtitles.

The cells highlighted in gray in Tables 4 and 5 indicate differences between the two types of subtitles. Nevertheless, the differences in numbers are very small and not very significant. Also the total number of occurrences of explicitation is small.

In total, 61% of the occurrences correspond to cases of explicitation brought about by changes in the semiotic channel, performed by means of addition, as shown in Figure 1 below:



Figure 1. Example of explicitation brought about by changes in the semiotic channel, performed by means of addition.

Something appears written on the screen and the information is important for the viewer to understand what takes place at that moment in the story. A subtitle is added, even when there is no speech in the audio. Most cases of explicitation refer to this in the corpus.

The second most frequent case regards explicitation brought about by cultural differences, performed by specification. This is when something from the culture where the film is produced is not widely known among the speakers of the language used in the subtitles. For example:

Example 4

Original movie in English	Commercial subtitle in Portuguese	Fan-made subtitle in Portuguese
<i>Frankie's not going. She saw wellies on the kit list and nearly had a seizure.</i>	<i>A Frankie não vai. Ela viu as botas na lista, e quase teve um troço.</i>	<i>Frankie não vai. Ela viu galochas na lista de materiais e teve um treco.</i>

(Extracted from the film “The Hole”.)

The British informal term *wellies*, referring to Wellington boots (US “rubber boots”), would not be understood by Portuguese speakers. Instead, commercial subtitles in Portuguese simply display “boots” while fan-made subtitles, longer but more specific, indicate a name for

rubber boots (“galochas”), even if not a very specific type as indicated in the original film in English.

26% of the cases of explicitation in commercial subtitles in Portuguese in the corpus and 28% of the cases of explicitation in fan-made subtitles in Portuguese referred to this category. They actually occurred in the same quantity. The percentages change because the type indicated in Figure 1 happened more often in fan-made subtitles, since omissions are not so frequent in fan-made subtitles in the corpus.

Conclusions

Regarding Audiovisual Translation descriptive aspects, the conclusions are as follows:

- Formatting: *placing, font type, color* and *positioning* are chosen by the viewer in fan-made subtitles.
- Textual features: *reduction, condensation* and *omission* are mostly found in commercial subtitles, which present a smaller number of characters and tokens. It seems fan-made subtitles translate “everything”, regardless of the time it takes for one to read the subtitles or the space required for the characters. At discussion forums on the Internet (e.g. <www.videoloucos.com.br>), where some of these subtitles were discussed by fans, it seems they prefer to pause the film and read everything that is said, from time to time, rather than possibly miss something.
- Maximum number of characters per line in each subtitle: *commercial* 32 characters maximum; *fan-made* seems to have no maximum, varying up to 49 characters per line in the corpus.
- Reading time for each line: 2 seconds for all subtitles.

Regarding explicitation: a rather small number of occurrences was found. Fan-made subtitles, with fewer omissions, presented slightly more occurrences: 61; while fan-made subtitles presented 58. 61% of the cases refer to explicitation brought about by changes in the semiotic channel, performed by means of addition. Approximately 27% refer to cases of explicitation brought about by cultural issues, performed by specification.

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