Measuring quality: chances and challenges

About the approach of developing a model to evaluate the quality of German film subtitles

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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.

(Künzli 2017: 116-117, Díaz Cintas 2014: 55-90)

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.**

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