

**ARIAS-BADIA, BLANCA. SUBTITLING TELEVISION SERIES. A CORPUS-DRIVEN STUDY OF POLICE PROCEDURALS. OXFORD, BERN, BERLIN, BRUXELLES, NEW YORK, WIEN, PETER LANG, 2020, 248 PP., ISBN 978-1-78707-796-6 (PRINT), ISBN 978-1-78707-798-0 (EPUB)**

The Audiovisual Translation (AVT) and Media Accessibility fields have demonstrated an ongoing interest in corpus research both for descriptive purposes (Matamala, 2008; Baños, 2013; Reviere, 2017) and for teaching purposes (Rica Peromingo, 2019; Baños, 2021). In an interdisciplinary fashion, Blanca Arias-Badia's book *Subtitling Television Series: A Corpus-Driven Study of Police Procedurals* takes on the task of describing the principal linguistic features of crime fiction television scripts and their corresponding Spanish subtitles. Its interdisciplinary nature lies on the combination of Film and Television Studies, Linguistics, and Translation Studies (TS). Notably, the author explores the notion of norms and patterns through the lens of these three disciplines, by contextualising the source and target texts in the oral-written language continuum. The book follows a clear structure of nine chapters including a theoretical and methodological contextualisation of the (quantitative and qualitative) morphosyntactic and lexical analysis of the Corpus of Police Procedurals.

Chapter 1 introduces the broader context of AVT, specifically highlighting the existing research on «lifelike language» (p. 2) or fictive orality of scripted dialogue and its translation in dubbed and subtitled text. This chapter also lays the foundations for the empirical, data-driven methodological approach followed throughout the book and introduces the object of study at hand: an ad-hoc parallel corpus featuring the original dialogues and subtitled versions in Castilian Spanish of different episodes from television series *Castle* (2009), *Dexter* (2006) and *The Mentalist* (2008).

Chapter 2 is devoted to the notion of *norms* and their descriptive and prescriptive nature within the three main disciplines mentioned above. In Film and Television Studies, an explicit link is made apparent between norms and genre conventions. Meanwhile, norms in Linguistics research largely allude to the identification of patterns in language use. Within Descriptive Translation Studies, «norms effectively take over the focus of interest that in TS had previously been occupied by the notion of equivalence» (p. 18). Indeed, TS scholars have continuously applied the Corpus Linguistics methodology so as to find regularities in translation. Arias-Badia's book follows this tradition and adopts a corpus-driven

approach to find patterns of morphosyntactic and lexical solutions in the subtitling of police procedurals on screen.

Chapter 3 underpins the theoretical framework of the study. The author thus assesses the semiotic components of an audiovisual text and the relative importance that is attributed to the verbal component in particular. This is followed by a summary of the syntactic and lexical features of subtitled text or, as Díaz-Cintas (2003, p. 280) puts it, «subtitlese». Fictive orality in television dialogue and subtitles is characterised by a number of features that are often opposed: lexical repetition and redundancy vs. none, or parataxis vs. hypotaxis, as explained in this Chapter.

The Corpus of Police Procedurals is introduced in Chapter 4, which discusses the semi-automatic building of said corpus, i.e. the compilation of spoken dialogues and subtitles, the alignment of source and target texts, the lemmatisation (the identification of a word's stem) and the part-of-speech tagging or assignment of word classes. At this stage, the author offers a first glimpse at some linguistic characteristics shared by the original dialogue and its subtitles (a preponderance of crime-related dialogue and jargon, a mixture of formal and colloquial language, etc.). Moreover, Arias-Badia ascertains that the analysed subtitles mostly adhere to professional standards, e.g. positioning, maximum characters per line, subtitle duration, punctuation, etc.

Chapters 5 and 6 deal with the morphosyntactic results of the corpus. Chapter 5 showcases the quantitative morphosyntactic analysis of the corpus, for which the author conducted an extensive number of statistical tests to compare the source and the target texts. This comparative analysis first delves into the occurrence of the different parts of speech. Most notably, lexical words (verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs) are less frequent in the original script than in the subtitles. Secondly, syntax complexity is assessed in both the source and target texts. In this regard, although the number of sentences in each version is similar, the differences lie in sentence length and nominal clause occurrences, both being lower in the target texts. In terms of subordination occurrence, Arias-Badia finds that subordinate clauses are more frequent in the subtitles than in the original dialogue. This is one of the results that challenges the preconception of «structural simplicity in subtitling» (p. 121). Chapter 6 adopts a qualitative approach for the morphosyntactic analysis of a number of manually annotated samples from the corpus. The inquiry is placed, firstly, on fictive orality markers on both the target and source texts, and secondly, on subtitle segmentation. Features of fictive orality (e.g., altered constituent order, ellipsis, and some instances of number disagreement) are found to be more salient in the original dialogue. As for subtitle segmentation, the source text generally

adheres to the standards of professional practice. That is, both one-line and two-line subtitles are used, and line breaks do not generally disrupt syntactic-semantic units.

Chapters 7 and 8 focus on the lexical aspects of the corpus. Chapter 7 adopts a quantitative approach to assess the corpus aboutness («the word types that typify the corpus as a whole», p. 134), lexical density, vocabulary richness, information load and terminological density. Perhaps surprisingly, more lexical similarities than differences were found between the source and the target text. Some exceptions – which are to be taken with caution because of the intrinsic differences between the English and Spanish languages (Corpas-Pastor, 2008) – were the information load (number of lexical words/number of tokens) and the vocabulary richness (calculated by dividing the number of unique words or types by the number of running words or tokens). The information load is lower in the subtitles, which goes against the «principle that written discourse has a heavier information load than spoken dialogue» (p. 150), and the vocabulary richness is higher in the subtitles of *Dexter* than in the original dialogue. This latter result is yet again conflicting: Even though vocabulary richness is often associated with written language (as in subtitles), the assumed subtitles' simplicity would lead us to believe that vocabulary richness should be higher in the original spoken dialogue. Chapter 8 explores the lexicon of the corpus qualitatively. Lexical neutralisation in the subtitles is assessed through the study of three particular aspects: offensive, affective and creative language. Arias-Badia's results, which are in line with existing literature in our field, point to the fact that offensive language is found to be more frequently neutralised than affective language in subtitles. Creative lexicon (metaphor, anomalous collocates, semantic-type coercion, euphemism, hyperbole and expressive neologism) is assessed through a Corpus Pattern Analysis. This analysis concludes that lexical exploitation – the departure from patterns in ordinary language use for creative purposes – is rare in both the source and target texts, although anomalous collocation and metaphor prove to be the most frequent creative devices in both the original dialogue and the subtitles. Overall, the neutralisation effect is not as prevalent in these subtitled texts as we might have expected.

Lastly, the author offers a concise yet complete overview of the corpus results in Chapter 9. Arias-Badia highlights that the alleged neutralisation effect in subtitled text does not pass the test in the Corpus of Police Procedurals. Indeed, she finds that the series' subtitles are «as similar to one another as their source counterparts» (p. 214). This is an argument not only against the existence of neutralisation in subtitling, but also against the more general notion of *translationese* or *subtitlese*. On a

final note, Arias-Badia calls for future research with the aim to expand on the linguistic features covered in her corpus analysis as well as to apply the very same methodology to other genres and language pairs.

Apart from the above-mentioned research avenues, I would suggest another one that is specifically relevant to the methodology of the reviewed book: the application of mixed methods within the field of Corpus Linguistics. (Quantitative) Corpus Linguistics may, for instance, be combined with other methods such as qualitative content analysis, or the quantitative corpus results may be framed as a starting point for a reception study to be conducted at a later stage. More generally, Meister (2018) argues that studies combining (quantitative and qualitative) mixed methods in the broader context of TS deserve lengthier discussions on the integration of results. This is arguably also true for studies deploying corpus analyses.

In conclusion, this book is an invaluable piece of scholarly work in terms of novelty, methodological soundness and comprehensive coverage. The book is certainly to be recommended to Corpus Linguistics researchers working in the field of TS, but also to AVT scholars, practitioners and students, who will surely benefit from the manual-like segments discussing the conventions of scripted dialogue and subtitles in Chapters 3 and 4. Moreover, the clear and easy-to-follow structure of the book facilitates the replication of similar studies that might look at other television genres or language pairs. Lastly, if I were to add some minor criticism, the study dealt with the multimodal nature of the subject of study rather marginally. This is understandable as the focus was placed on the linguistic features of the original dialogue and the subtitles. Nevertheless, a more in-depth exploration of the effect of the image and camera work on both texts, for instance, would have enriched the study even more. I also consider that the book would have benefitted from the author's deeper reflection on the unexpectedness of certain results and perhaps from the advancement of some hypotheses on why such results came to be.

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