



## Subjectivity and materiality in audiovisual translation and media accessibility

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### I. Introduction

When we drafted the first version of the call for papers for this special issue, we were interested in exploring the relationship between audiovisual translation and the embodied experiences of individuals. Specifically, we sought to investigate whether audiovisual translation and media accessibility modalities could have tangible effects on the bodies of audiences. While this relationship might initially appear linear—for instance, representation shaping consumption, which in turn affects bodies—we aimed for a more nuanced approach. We recognised a significant gap concerning the ontological distance between representation and materiality: between the symbolic and the tangible, between discourse and the body. Our envisioned critique was grounded in the technological dimension of audiovisual translation—understood not merely as a medium of representation, but as a technology that has evolved from early sound-image systems to contemporary forms of digital entertainment. Acknowledging the virtuality of audiovisual technologies—the ephemeral nature of moving images and sound—we believed there was potential to grasp how these sensory elements might materially affect subjects. We were also interested in whether such effects extended to the translators themselves or to those involved in media accessibility work. The proposals we received truly surpassed our expectations—both in terms of the sheer number of submissions and the conceptual depth they offered. The quality of the contributions exceeded our initial goals in a way that was not just positive, but transformative. This allowed us to see new possibilities for our original vision of the special issue, and now we can set a higher benchmark for what we hope to achieve moving forward.

This experience has led us to reflect on how serving as guest editors constitutes a form of academic citizenship—what Albia and Cheng (2023) refer to as the “citizenship of engagement”. This mode of engagement fosters a collective, global community around a specific topic or theme



within a journal's scope. Understanding academic citizenship as a “practice of enactment” (Albia & Cheng, 2023) —rather than a fixed ideal of “being a good citizen”—highlights how both editing and contributing to a special issue involve varying degrees of personal (though not necessarily individualistic) and collective disciplinary commitment. Participants in this process may assert certain entitlements—such as the gatekeeping role of editors—or exercise rights and claims, such as being recognised as part of a scholarly community or as a specialist in a given field. This framing also reminds us of the pressures scholars face under current academic systems, particularly the imperative to publish in order to remain visible or “productive”. It invites us to recognise our status as “knowledge workers” or *cognitariat*, shaped by diverse contexts and forms of precarity that place us at a disadvantage within neoliberal academic structures (Voulvouli, 2019). For this reason, rather than framing this special issue through the binary of gatekeeping versus disciplinary development, we came to see it as a mixed, in-between, and fluctuating endeavour. Its aim has been to promote sustainable academic work—both in terms of advancing the discipline and supporting the people behind it. Editors and authors, in this view, engage in mutual support, working together to move the field forward (Acker et al., 2022).

Building on this reflection and experience, we also aim to contribute to the work of the authors whose research shapes this special issue. What follows is a set of concepts that were part of the original call for papers—ideas we initially had in mind but which were questioned, expanded, or transformed through the editorial process and our engagement with the authors' contributions. By revisiting these concepts, we hope to further the development of audiovisual translation and media accessibility studies, particularly from the niche yet generative tension between subjectivity and materiality.

## 2. Audiovisual

In the field of audiovisual translation, the “audiovisual” has traditionally been approached through an operational and applied lens. Early theoretical efforts focused on integrating the concept into translation studies by emphasising the “audiovisual text” as a unit of analysis—an operational approach that treated the audiovisual artefact as possessing textual and even linguistic properties such as coherence, cohesion, and grammar, making it suitable for translational analysis (Chaume, 2004; Zabalbeascoa, 2008). This framing allowed scholars to examine how meaning emerges from the semiotic interaction between auditory and visual codes—interactions often governed by principles of synchrony. Key notions such as constraint or strategy enabled researchers to conceptualise audiovisual translation as a professional and pedagogical field, where translation is analysed in terms of shifts that can be observed, categorised, and taught (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007; Chaume, 2012; Zabalbeascoa, 2024). This perspective has offered valuable insights into how translations happen, and how they might ideally happen when questions of quality are at stake.

However, as this special issue suggests, the audiovisual also demands a broader critical reflection that acknowledges it as a techno-cultural form shaped by the conditions of modernity and mediation (Deleuze, 1986, 2009). These conditions have historically integrated conventional audiovisual translation modalities such as dubbing and subtitling into the very narratives, concepts,



and structures that shape screen-based sound and visual imagery (Pérez-González, 2014). In this context, when individuals engage with audiovisual artefacts—whether a film, a television episode, or YouTube or TikTok videos—they do so within a perceptual, situated and always embodied space mediated by image and sound, but also by translation. This raises questions not only about how linguistic material is rendered across languages—a central concern in audiovisual translation studies—but also about how translation itself shapes the viewer’s experience. What elements of a translated artefact generate affect? And how does linguistic material contribute to that affective response? While these questions may appear to fall mainly within the realm of reception studies, close readings and interpretive analysis remain equally valuable—especially when the researcher’s own subject position is acknowledged as part of the inquiry.

The methodological and theoretical premise behind this kind of approach is that audiovisual artefacts presuppose a viewer whose memories, aesthetics, ethics, and ideological perspectives are activated in the act of watching. In this encounter, viewer and audiovisual material—sound, image, translation—interact within an expanded field of perception. The researcher, in turn, must navigate their own position while attending to the non-determined subjectivity set in motion by these images and sounds.

For example, the contribution by Miguel Ángel Oliva-Zamora and Carme Mangiron addresses these concerns through the lens of cognitive accessibility in video games, an area where audiovisual interaction is multisensory, immersive, and deeply material. Focusing on players with dyslexia, their study examines how certain textual and visual features of gameplay—such as excessive reading demands, memory load, or complex controls—disrupt the player’s embodied relation to the game and fracture the tangibility of the audiovisual experience. Using thematic analysis of focus group discussions, the authors explore how the affective dimension of gaming is interrupted by inaccessibility, and how these barriers manifest not only as usability issues but also as disruptions to immersive engagement. By foregrounding the testimonies of users and the sensorial challenges they encounter, Oliva-Zamora and Mangiron (2025) reframes audiovisual accessibility as a relational and affective practice—one that shapes, and is shaped by, the corporeal and perceptual modes of interaction between subjects and artefacts.

This article—and others in the issue—illustrate how the notion of the “audiovisual” in translation and accessibility can no longer be constrained by a purely textual or operational understanding. Instead, they invite us to consider translation as a generative, embodied, and affectively charged encounter, shaped by cultural codes, viewer subjectivities, and the material conditions of media production and reception.

### 3 Affect

When drafting the call for papers, affect was conceived as a potential force—something that turns possibilities into actual experiences, the virtual into a form of expression or emotion, an embodied sensation, or a shift in perception (Massumi, 2022; Lima et al., 2023). In any case, affect resists fixed states and is always in motion. As Koskinen (2020, p. 21) argues, “Affect is (also) embodied”. All languages have evolved numerous strategies for handling, adjusting, and



manipulating affects. In translation, these strategies are compared within the involved languages and against the contexts of the texts in question (Koskinen, 2020).

When watching audiovisual artefacts, affect builds gradually or can be recognised by a cumulative process. In audiovisual translation, affect may first emerge through patterns of sound, image, language, and rhythm. But it also surfaces when something fails—when synchrony breaks down, and a gap opens between image and sound. These moments of lack of cohesion question the act of conscious recognition, of following narratives. Affect sparks in these gaps between what is on screen and what is sensed. This notion is informed by the Deleuzian concept of the “affect-image” and the tensive model developed by Fontanille (2008). At the same time, we draw on Ahmed’s (2014) conception of emotion—particularly her insight into how words and linguistic material circulate between bodies, attaching themselves to embodied surfaces and shaping lived experience. Through the contributions we received, we came to realise that in audiovisual translation and media accessibility studies, affect is often understood as operating between two poles: sensation and perception.

In the case of sensation, as shown in the paper of Puri Meseguer Cutillas and Marina Ramos Caro, affect is shaped through visceral responses to disturbing imagery and language. Their study explores how translation ideology may influence the way violence against women is represented in audio description. Meseguer Cutillas and Ramos Caro (2025) asked translation students to audio describe the wedding night scene between Khal Drogo and Daenerys Targaryen in the series *Game of Thrones*—a scene widely recognised for its depiction of sexual violence. Although the participants formed a relatively homogeneous group (women, left-wing, and feminist), the findings revealed a consistent tendency to soft or omit references to rape. Rather than making the violence visible through direct language, many participants employed mitigation strategies that toned down the scene’s affective charge. This contrast between anticipated and actual choices underscores how affect—anchored in ideological positioning—intervenes in processes of perception and sensation of the audio described scene. Audio description, as an embodied and affective practice, raises critical questions about how audiovisual artefacts materialise power relations and sensations for trainee audio describers. It engages the body and language to expose or obscure violence, becoming a site where silences are either reinforced or resisted—highlighting the ethical responsibilities of media accessibility professionals when dealing with gender-based violence.

In the case of perception, affect and affective relations are framed more explicitly in emotional terms. One example is the study carried out by Saeed Ameri on the Persian YouTube channel @Kouman, which examines the role of subtitlers’ notes as forms of affective self-mediation. Grounded in affect theory, Ameri (2025) investigates how these embedded captions function not merely as linguistic supplements but as emotional and performative cues that allow subtitlers to insert their voice, humour, and personal reflections. These translation notes materialise a form of affective labour reshaping viewer engagement and fostering a more intimate connection with the content. Rather than treating subtitles as neutral containers of dialogue, the study reframes them as affective artefacts that participate actively in the construction of mood and meaning. This approach highlights how perception is not solely determined by what is visible or audible, but also by how textual interventions elicit affective responses in the audience.



Altogether, the articles gathered here suggest that affect is not a secondary by-product of audiovisual translation and media accessibility, but a structuring principle that can shed light on how meaning, embodiment, and ideology circulate across language and media. Affect destabilises static categories, operating instead through intensities and discontinuities that foreground the lived, situated dimensions of translation. As these studies show, affect can be traced both in how viewers engage with media and in how translators and audio describers navigate the tensions between fidelity, ideology, and emotional resonance.

#### **4. Body, materiality, and tangibility**

Critical disability theory advances an important intersection between embodiment, identity, and agency. On the one hand, in the context of media accessibility, this approach to theorising and inquiring into disabled bodies creates a productive tension with institutional frameworks—for example, the critique by Greco and Jankowska (2020) of framing accessibility as a human right, which tends to rely on normative, legalistic, or overly institutional discourse. This understanding of the body in critical disability studies goes beyond the idea that the anomalous body stems from pure biology, focusing instead on normative forms of embodiment—and inviting everyone to interrogate their own ways of being embodied (Shildrick, 2019). This interrogation rests on the understanding that the body is not merely a thing, but a site—a morphology—through which knowledge, affect, and social norms are inscribed.

On the other hand, in the context of audiovisual translation, the body can be seen as a porous surface: a form we inhabit, use, and experience through, and through which we interact with media and technology. Bodies become the material interface that enables reading (subtitles), hearing (dubbing), and forming connections—relationalities—with media artefacts. The materiality of the body and the tangibility of objects open up the possibility of grasping reality not only through representation, but also through touch, sensation, and affect—“the forces that affect the self quite apart from subjective consciousness and intentionality” (Newell, 2018, p. 2). Materiality also reminds us that objects exist and exert force—they act upon individuals, shape experiences, and participate in meaning-making. In this sense, the division between the human and the material is deconstructed, allowing us to see both as part of a shared reality. Materiality becomes a way to understand how bodies and objects are co-constitutive, entangled in the production of audiovisual experience (Tiainen et al., 2015).

This understanding of the body, materiality, and tangibility in audiovisual translation and media accessibility reminds us that audiovisual culture has always been embodied—embedded in physical artefacts such as DVDs, VHS tapes, and CDs. The technological and medial realisation of audiovisual translation has historically been produced, circulated, and consumed through these material forms. In this sense, translated audiovisual artefacts have also shaped how the social and the cultural permeate bodies and subjectivities—often in ways that escape conscious awareness.

Some contributions in this special issue, like Sanchez (2025) and Vidal Claramonte (2025), exemplify how translation and media accessibility can be reconceptualised as materially grounded, corporeal, and affective practices. In her theoretical article, África Vidal Claramonte explores what she terms “tangible translation”—a form of translation that exceeds verbal language and engages



the senses, gestures, and emotional registers of the body. Inspired by the anthropology of the senses, she positions translation as a somatic and parasomatic process, suggesting that meaning is not only interpreted intellectually, but also experienced through the body's full sensorial apparatus. Through examples from the work of artist Cecilia Vicuña and Doctors Without Borders, the study shows how translation can take place through tactile objects, affective gestures, and multisensory engagement—foregrounding the body not only as a mediator of meaning, but as a site where meaning is generated and transformed. Translation, in this light, becomes not only interlingual, but also intersensory and intermaterial (Vidal Claramonte, 2025).

Alexandra Sanchez's article similarly advances a material and embodied understanding of translation through her analysis of audio description as a sensory and co-creative act. Building on the concepts of "blindness gain" and the "spectrum of materiality", she frames audio description as a relational and interpretive practice that resists the industry's traditional demands for neutrality. Through a comparative analysis of two audio description versions of *Rough Diamonds*—one produced by Netflix and the other by Flanders' public broadcaster (VRT)—Sanchez (2025) demonstrates how different approaches to material engagement shape the narrative experience. While Netflix's audio description reflects determinate materialities and a preference for spatial clarity, VRT's version embraces ambiguity and abstraction, fostering symbolic resonance and emotional texture. The study reimagines audio description as a narrative interface where bodies, voices, and media artefacts co-construct meaning in a multisensory continuum. Audio description thus emerges not as a neutral supplement to vision, but as a tangible and ideological act, inscribed with the cultural and material conditions of its production (Sanchez, 2025).

Together, these contributions invite us to rethink translation, audiovisual translation, and media accessibility as processes in which media, affect, and materiality converge—where bodies are not passive receivers of meaning, but active participants in the production of sensory and cultural experience. The artefact, in this context, is never detached from the body—it is *through* the body that audiovisual and artistic media gain texture, resistance, and life.

## 5. Methods and relationality

Some of the contributions gathered in this special issue can be understood as case studies, given their focus on specific phenomena, the criteria guiding their selection (such as degree of typicality), their sampling strategies (purposive or theoretical), and the fact that their findings are intended primarily for analytical or theoretical generalisation. Case studies can articulate a range of specific methods—such as focus groups, interviews, content analysis and coding, textual and contrastive analysis—to generate sufficient data for understanding the phenomenon in relation to the research object or problem and objectives (Yin, 2018). In these last two sentences, we have deliberately used terminology drawn from qualitative inquiry—such as findings, data generation, and theoretical generalisation. That said, our broader aim with this special issue was to extend beyond conventional qualitative inquiry by proposing alternative conceptual tools—such as relationality, affect, and materiality—inspired by post-qualitative approaches (Jules & Salajan, 2024; St. Pierre, 2025).





While we recognise that we are not fully there yet, the contributions gathered here demonstrate a clear openness to following this path. In particular, the notion of relationality offers a shift away from traditional criteria like typicality or formal sampling strategies, which often pose challenges when attempting to justify why a particular film, TV series, or other audiovisual artefact needs to be analysed from an audiovisual translation or media accessibility perspective. Relationalities refer to how an object, artefact, or case is selected not for its representativeness, but because it unfolds connections or intensities that emerge between bodies, texts, media, and technologies. Mobilising relationalities means recognising pastness—the contacts researchers, as individuals, have experienced, the connective openness of objects, of intensive materials. In this respect, Massumi (1995) speaks of the trace of past actions conserved in the brain and in the flesh—relationalities that do not always appear in complete form, but rather as incipient impressions that tend towards completion in new contexts. This is how research objects take shape: what once felt appealing, striking, or unresolved in the past becomes, over time, part of a study.

An example of this approach can be found in the contribution by Gonzalo Iturregui-Gallardo, which explores how queerness is represented in the audio description of *Sex Education*. This series, especially in its final season, has been noted for its inclusive portrayal of queer and intersectional characters. Through a multimodal analytical framework, the study examines how non-normative sexualities and identities are constructed in the audio-described version of the series. Grounded in feminist and queer translation theories, Iturregui-Gallardo (2025) situates audio description within the broader field of media accessibility and highlights the audio descriptor's subjectivity and ideological positioning as central to the construction of meaning. The analysis addresses how audio description can either reproduce or resist dominant norms, and foregrounds the agency of accessibility professionals in shaping diverse representations. Ultimately, the study reveals how audio description can serve as a site for queer visibility and self-representation, especially for visually impaired audiences, affirming the importance of inclusive practices within media accessibility.

The study carried out by Marina Pujadas-Farreras explores how individuals with intellectual disabilities perceive different speech rates in easy language audio recordings. Using an intralingual design with native Catalan-speaking participants, Pujadas-Farreras (2025) examines how speech rates—ranging from 130 to 190 words per minute—are experienced and evaluated. What emerges is not a search for a universal parameter, but rather an engagement with the materiality of voice, tempo, and comprehension as they unfold across different bodies and cognitive rhythms. The perceptual variation between subgroups, despite equivalent cognitive scores, points to the complexity of affective and embodied responses to linguistic artefacts in this (new) mode of media accessibility. In her paper, speech rate can be understood not merely as a technical setting, but as a relational and affective dimension—one that challenges normative assumptions about media accessibility and foregrounds how subjectivity and identity intersect with the temporal aesthetics of easy language.

Taken together, these studies suggest a growing willingness within audiovisual translation and media accessibility research to engage with less linear, more relational forms of knowledge production. While traditional case study frameworks remain useful, the contributions in this issue



show that concepts such as relationality and affect can enrich our understanding of how research questions emerge, evolve, and take shape through lived experience, embodied interpretation, and ideological positioning.

## 6. Palpability and interpretation

As mentioned earlier, most of the contributions to this special issue fall within the realm of qualitative research and case studies. When we read the manuscripts and reviewer reports, it became clear that the authors placed significant emphasis not only on clarifying their methods but also on guiding readers through the process by which they selected specific examples or quotes. These selections—drawn from larger samples or corpora—were chosen for their richness and their ability to serve as meaningful evidence of the authors' broader findings. In this context, interpretation is not merely an act of representation, but one of tactile engagement: to cite, to quote, to analyse, is also to touch and be touched by the material. For example, the study developed by José Javier Ávila-Cabrera and Pilar Rodríguez-Arancón engages with questions of taboo and censorship through a descriptive analysis of how sexual references are subtitled in the Spanish version of all four seasons of the TV series *Succession*. Building on Descriptive Translation Studies and using a taxonomy of translation techniques, the study evaluates how sexual expressions are transferred from US English into European Spanish, as broadcast on the streaming platform Max. While the methodology follows an established framework, the analysis goes beyond formal categorisation: it attends closely to the cultural and affective weight of sexual language, the pressures of normative regulation, and the politics of textual visibility. The examples selected—some explicit, some tactfully veiled—invite readers to engage with the material and affective dimensions of language, where words are not just carriers of meaning, but socially and sensorially charged artefacts. In this sense, the study exemplifies how interpretation in audiovisual translation research is always embodied and situated, shaped by the translator's subjectivity and by broader discourses around censorship, propriety, and genre conventions.

The findings challenge prevailing assumptions about the erasure or mitigation of sex-related language in interlingual subtitling, demonstrating that explicit sexual content is often preserved and even rearticulated through culturally resonant substitutions. By mapping the most frequent techniques used and assessing the retention of taboo intensity, the study contributes to ongoing debates about linguistic normativity, viewer reception, and the politics of screen translation (Ávila-Cabrera; Rodríguez-Arancón, 2025). This way of sharing one's research process contributes to traditional criteria for evaluating research, such as validity and reliability, but also moves towards more sensuous and responsive models of analysis. It sustains the notion of method as a still-relevant tool for producing knowledge. Through this lens, subtitled artefacts are not neutral renderings but sites of discursive negotiation, where interpretation unfolds as both an analytical and ethical act, grounded in the textures of language, embodiment, and cultural expectation.

The papers in this special issue also demonstrate sophisticated ways of blurring the boundaries between emic and etic forms of analysis—that is, between approaches grounded in participants' perspectives and experiences (*emic*) and those that draw on the researcher's interpretive framework and theoretical positioning (*etic*). In their book on qualitative literacy, Small





and Calarco (2022) propose “palpability” as a criterion for assessing and building research quality. They argue that selecting the most compelling elements of the data to support an argument depends not only on close reading of transcripts or corpora, but also on carefully structuring the research design and methodology. Overall, their approach remains grounded in post positivist assumptions—such as the idea of data as something to be “collected”, and the aim of achieving “concreteness” (as if referring to a fixed element of reality) through representational means. Not because it promises access to some ultimate truth through key data points, but because the term itself suggests the researcher’s ability to approaching something tangible through representational systems like language and writing as acts of touching and elaborating something although just momentarily. In this way, the process and outcome of interpreting data is always provisional and incomplete—an ongoing act of theorising in progress that does not abandon responsibility for what emerges (Brinkmann, 2014).

Such an understanding of interpretation as a tactile, incomplete, and ethically charged process finds resonance in Núria Molines-Galarza’s theoretical contribution to this issue. Building on deconstructive translation studies and working through a mode of conceptual elaboration rather than empirical demonstration, her article explores the “politics of vulnerability” as an ethical lens for engaging with audiovisual translation and media accessibility. In a media landscape marked by accelerated production, technological automation, and industry-driven fragmentation, the paper interrogates how the creative and embodied dimensions of translation are being eroded. The work positions audiovisual artefacts not simply as products to be processed, but as “multimodal surfaces” shaped by the material and symbolic labour of translating bodies—bodies that are themselves vulnerable, situated, and responsible. Molines-Galarza (2025) proposes that contemporary practices in audiovisual translation and media accessibility often displace this bodily presence through mechanisms such as automated workflows, rapid turnarounds, and the invisibilisation of authorship. These dynamics, she argues, obscure the relational and interpretive nature of translation, severing it from the ethical encounter with the “other”. By theorising “trembling” and the “fall of the body” in translation, the paper reframes translation not as a seamless operation, but as a space of corporeal negotiation—where meaning is never guaranteed, but emerges through hesitation, relational tension, and the act of taking responsibility. Vulnerability, in this framework, becomes not a weakness to be managed, but a condition of possibility for creative and ethical engagement with audiovisual texts.

This emphasis on the material tangibility of interpretation—both linguistic and bodily—adds a critical layer to the notion of palpability introduced by Small and Calarco (2022). It reminds us that interpretation is not only about constructing arguments, but about feeling through the object, acknowledging the weight of representation, and allowing oneself to be moved, implicated, and transformed by it. In this sense, the politics of vulnerability proposed by Molines-Galarza (2025) does not reject interpretation; rather, it asks us to hold it lightly, to feel its outlines, and to interpret as one touches—with care, with pressure, with attention to what resists being grasped.

## 7. Representation

Representation is a foundational aspect of audiovisual translation and media accessibility. In all modalities, what is translated—whether intra- or intermodally—passes through one representational system into another. Beyond this applied fact, research approaches also tend to begin with representational assumptions about the artefacts they analyse: by comparing translation strategies in translated products, examining how these artefacts are received, used, or valued by audiences, or assessing their quality according to formal criteria. In all these cases, the linguistic system of representation is treated as a reflexive means for interpreting reality. In addition to early concepts such as constrained translation (Mayoral et al., 1988; Titford, 1982) and the audiovisual text (as previously mentioned), multimodal theory has helped revive and expand the core assumption of semiotic and modal interaction in audiovisual translation and media accessibility (Kaindl, 2012, 2020; Pérez-González, 2020).

The representational dimension of audiovisual translation and media accessibility has also been examined through more critical approaches that engage with questions of ideology, power, and performativity—often drawing on frameworks from critical discourse analysis and cultural studies (Fairclough, 2015; Hall, 1997, 2013), and even from descriptive translation studies (Díaz-Cintas, 2012). In this issue, most of the contributions grounded in qualitative approaches engage directly with the representational dimension of audiovisual translation and media accessibility.

Rita Menezes's contribution exemplifies this engagement by examining how representation operates not only in the translated artefact, but also within the workflow ecologies that shape it. Focusing on subtitling revision, her study highlights how revisers' interventions—often perceived as technical adjustments—are in fact deeply interpretive and situated. Through a case study with nine Portuguese professional revisers, the research reveals how decisions are influenced by emotional responses, personal experiences, and situated expertise. These interventions navigate the tensions between formal accuracy and interpretive agency, mediating between multiple stakeholders (translators, clients, platforms, audiences). As revisers rework subtitled content, they simultaneously reshape the semiotic artefact, redirect its affective tone, and participate in a broader politics of visibility. Revision thus emerges not only as a phase of textual control, but as a site of subjectivity, where linguistic, material, and ideological dimensions intersect in tangible ways (Menezes, 2025).

This relational view of representation is further expanded in the study by Irene Hermosa-Ramírez and Mouloud Boukala, which maps the practices and epistemologies of insider research in media accessibility. Based on semi-structured interviews with eleven researchers who themselves identify as insiders to the accessibility communities they study, the article examines how representation is not only constructed but also inhabited—through lived experience, embodied perspective, and reflexive engagement. Rather than reproducing the insider-outsider binary, the study proposes positionality as a dynamic and affectively charged continuum, shaped by visibility, self-reflection, stigma, and performative identity work. By articulating the experiences of researchers who simultaneously occupy the roles of investigator, participant, and community member, Hermosa-Ramírez and Boukala (2025) call attention to the material and emotional dimensions of knowledge production. The authors argue that positionality matters not only in how



knowledge is interpreted, but in how it is authorised, legitimised, and circulated—particularly in fields like media accessibility, where the researcher’s body, identity, and experience often serve as a point of access to the research object itself. Representation, here, is not simply a matter of depicting others, but of co-creating meaning through relational entanglements—with participants, institutions, and research infrastructures.

Hermosa-Ramírez and Boukala’s (2025) study offers several key takeaways. First, it urges scholars in media accessibility and user-centred research to approach insider knowledge with epistemological care—recognising its value not only as data but as an interpretive stance informed by affect, vulnerability, and agency. Second, it reveals how traditional accessibility services may fail to resonate with the lived experiences or worldviews of some users, suggesting the need for more diverse, culturally situated, and even radically transformative approaches to access provision. Third, it critiques the systemic barriers to participation in academic publishing, reframing these as manifestations of institutional ableism (Hermosa-Ramírez & Boukala, 2025). Through these reflections, the article makes a compelling case for representation as both a political and material act, embedded in bodies, systems, and histories. Insider research, when approached reflexively, offers not only empirical insights but also new ways of imagining what it means to be accountable, visible, and situated in accessibility research.

## 8. Subjectivity

This is a concept used in diverse ways within audiovisual translation and media accessibility research. However, one of these uses is misleading: subjectivity is not synonymous with a lack of reflexivity or methodological rigor. The dismissive use of the term subjective—as if it referred to a flaw or bias in research—does not engage with its theoretical grounding in the social sciences. Instead, it often reflects lay understandings of the subject, the individual, and society. There are several approaches to understanding the subject and subjectivity. One of them is the Foucauldian perspective, which frames subject formation as a process shaped by the productive dimensions of power. In this view, individuals become subjects through power, but also become subjected to power (Foucault, 1991). At first glance, this account may seem to strip the subject of any agency. However, it is part of a broader theory in which the discourses and forms of knowledge available within a society also shape what the subject can do, say, and think—and how they can interpret the world around them. Translation Studies has long incorporated a notion of the translator as a subject with agency. This is particularly evident in hermeneutic approaches, from Romanticism to late 20th-century theories, where the translator is seen as a privileged subject—whose intellectual capacities enable them to interpret the source text and rearticulate it in the target language (Hermans, 2020).

The translator has also been explored as a site of inquiry in relation to their social and subjective dimensions, as well as their contribution to or involvement in broader translation phenomena. This perspective is present in what Chesterman (2009) refers to as “translator studies”, in the emerging field of translators’ auto/biographical studies (Kaindl, 2025), and also in gender and feminist translation studies—for instance, in the work of Spolunsky (2019, 2022) and Spolunsky and Zucchi (2022) on the notion of ethos in translated discourse.



This embodied and affective dimension of subjectivity is central to Érica Lima's contribution to this special issue. Based on interviews and open-ended survey responses from professional women translators working in dubbing and subtitling across various genres, her study investigates the emotional, perceptual, and corporeal dimensions of the translation process. She argues that as it is widely studied in audiovisual translation, meaning is not constructed by verbal language alone, but emerges from a multimodal ensemble—image, sound, gesture, rhythm, lighting, facial expression, body language, intonation. These sensorial and material elements make audiovisual translation a privileged site for understanding translation as a fully embodied act—where the translator not only *acts upon* the text, but is *acted upon* by it (Lima, 2025). Anchored in the idea that interpretation is never purely linguistic, the study draws on affect theory to foreground how emotions experienced in the act of translation give shape to meaning-making. The personal experiences, memories, and values of the translators analysed are not presented as idiosyncratic noise, but as constitutive of the translational act. The data reveal that the translators' subjectivity—expressed through emotional responses, ethical discomfort, or intuitive strategies—often collides with ideossomatic constraints (Robinson, 2003), including dominant industry narratives that idealise objectivity or neutrality. Rather than treating emotion as a threat to rigour, Lima's (2025) article reframes it as a form of epistemic access: a way to interpret texts through the body, in relation to specific social, cultural, and political contexts. Subjectivity here is neither reduced to personal bias nor elevated to universal insight, but understood as a situated and relational interface—a condition through which translators interpret, intervene, and are themselves transformed.

In audiovisual translation and media accessibility, the notion of subjectivity is often linked to unconventional or creative approaches to translation and the production of accessible texts. This understanding tends to rely on a representational assumption—that words carry subjective meaning beyond their systemic function—and is largely grounded in the initial intention of the author or translator. It also reinforces the idea of the human as the central agent in the production of translation and knowledge (Romero Fresco & Chaume, 2022). The creative dimension of audiovisual translation and media accessibility, as discussed by Romero-Fresco and Chaume (2022), offers a crucial perspective for rethinking the role of subjectivity—not as a flaw to be eliminated, but as an enabling force for meaning-making. It is precisely within this framework that Alejandro Romero-Muñoz's contribution is situated.

In an experimental pilot study, Romero-Muñoz (2025) explores the subjective and objective components of audio description through a physiological lens. Using an audio-described clip from Netflix's series *Money Heist*, the study manipulated the audio description script to create two versions: the original and a creative one, in which objective components were turned subjective (and vice versa). These versions were then tested with partially sighted participants using a combination of heart rate monitoring, questionnaires, comprehension tests, and interviews. What emerges is not merely a comparison of styles, but an investigation into how creative subjectivity in audio description enhances user immersion and emotional engagement. The study offers empirical evidence that subjective, interpretive choices—often associated with creativity—are not incompatible with clarity or accessibility. On the contrary, they may foster stronger perceptual and affective responses. In this sense, subjectivity is not only a matter of translator

intention, but also something that materialises in the viewer's embodied experience. By treating subjectivity as both a textual and physiological phenomenon, Romero-Muñoz's (2025) study expands current debates on audio description and challenges rigid notions of neutrality. His experiment invites us to reconsider creativity not as excess, but as a calibrated and responsive strategy—rooted in the translator's interpretive stance and directly linked to the user's cognitive and emotional reception.

Some contributions to this special issue (Ameri, 2025; Oliva-Zamora & Mangiron, 2025; Romero-Muñoz, 2025) consider subjectivity mainly as an ethical lens for using qualitative methods—such as interviews, focus groups, or analysing comments on social media. This approach aims to open a space of intersubjectivity, allowing researchers to engage ethically and critically with the ways participants make sense of themselves. Looking ahead, subjectivity can remain a key concept in audiovisual translation and media accessibility research. However, we argue that it should not be treated as a totalising notion of the individual. Assuming that individuals are omniscient or fully capable of understanding every aspect of themselves and their surroundings risks reinforcing neohumanist or neopositivist approaches. Subjectivity isn't something that defines the whole person or ties everything together. It's just one part of what makes up an individual — a kind of temporary coherence that stands out for a moment in the middle of all the flows, forces, and changes a person goes through (Deleuze & Guattari, 2020). In fact, that sense of being a “subject” is more of an exception than the rule. Most of what we are escapes that coherent image we usually associate with subjectivity.

## 9. Some final thoughts

The special issue “Subjectivity and Materiality in Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility” opens with a theoretical and critical reflection on audiovisual translation and concludes with another conceptual proposal on how to translate both the audiovisual and the tangible. The articles in between provide an empirical foundation for sustaining—and further developing—complex reflections on how the translation of audiovisual materials transforms individuals, subject positions, and embodied experiences.

What we had hoped for with this issue was to gather a selection of contributions that could interrogate audiovisual translation and media accessibility beyond functionalist paradigms. What we obtained, however, surpassed this expectation. The authors not only examine how audiovisual artefacts are translated, accessed, or received, but also show how these practices are inseparable from questions of representation, subjectivity, tangibility, and affect. The volume as a whole evidences that audiovisual translation and media accessibility are not merely tools for transferring content between languages or modalities; they are also epistemological sites where language, identity, and power converge.

By foregrounding relational, material, and interpretive dimensions of audiovisual translation, this issue contributes to ongoing efforts to reimagine the field—not as a stable set of techniques, but as a dynamic and reflexive practice embedded in contemporary media ecologies. We hope these contributions will not only foster further interdisciplinary dialogue, but also inspire future research to keep questioning how we translate, who translates, and for whom.



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