

# AN EMPIRICAL LOOK AT A (FALSE) BELIEF IN AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

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## Setting the scene

Audiovisual translation is a recent field of research within Translation Studies. As a result, up till now there has been no theory which can provide a comprehensive framework of analysis that accounts for all specificities imposed by the medium as well as for the many intricacies or variables involved in its translating activity. Thus, researchers on the audiovisual medium have generally relied on translation theories which were originally developed for the study of literary translations.

Another consequence of the tradition and supremacy of the literary system has been its influence on researchers in the new field to focus mainly on the fictional genre, and mostly on the feature film. Moreover, due to a more or less generalized belief that “presenting reality would automatically lead to the direct, literal, faithful, trustful translation of this reality”, it is taken for granted that translated foreign material within non-fictional output (e.g. interviews in news and documentaries) will constitute unproblematic or uninteresting data for the purposes of research.

This paper attempts to demonstrate, above all, how mistaken such a belief may be. Precisely because non-fiction deals with the notion of *assumed reality*, there are many more variables to take

into account than the researcher can dream of; some of them uncovered only during the actual study and only if one is attentive and lucky enough to trace and access them. Through the chronological reconstruction of the steps I have undergone in the analysis of the translation of two interview extracts of a Belgo-Dutch production about Brazil, I intend to illustrate the complexity involved in this type of research - one which transcends theoretical and linguistic boundaries - as a way of justifying my claim against the trend that dominates research in audiovisual translation.

### **Searching for a framework**

As mentioned above, translation theory could not keep up with the increasing development of audiovisual translation research, and many studies in this area have made use of more traditional theories to investigate their objects. It is a well-known fact that these theories applied a prescriptive, normative approach to the study of translations, that is, from the one-sided viewpoint of what the translated text *should be* or *had failed to achieve* in relation to its source. More recent theories, however, have tried to change such a perspective. Among them, Gideon Toury's *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (1995) seems to have completed the *search* he started in 1980. The new approach suggests that we look at translations "the way they are done" (see Toury 1995, p.65 and Lambert & van Gorp 1985, p.47), that is, starting from the description of the target text alone and just then comparing it to its source. Roughly, the procedure consists in the observation of patterns of translational behaviour which, Toury claims, can throw light on the processes of decision-making as well as on the norms which may have regulated such decisions. These norms are basically defined as: adequacy norms, those originating in the source system, and acceptability norms, those originating in the target system (Toury 1995, pp.56-57).

Notwithstanding the innovation that the target-oriented perspective brought to Translation Studies, Toury's approach also presents limitations which were already attested in a previous issue of *Cadernos de Tradução* (see Mailce B. Mota 1996, n°1, pp. 247-256), and which may be summarized here as "a purely linguistic approach" that fails "to take into consideration the sociological variables involved in the construction of a text - participants, purposes, settings -, the features of the text as discourse [...] and the function of the discourse built in the text" (Bell, 1991<sup>1</sup> as quoted by Mota 1996, pp. 255). In the light of such criticisms I decided to adopt an interdisciplinary approach for the analysis. Norman Fairclough's framework (1995) seemed to constitute the most adequate background since it provided the sociological and discursive tools lacking in the descriptive approach.

According to this framework, factual programs such as TV documentaries do not *present* but *represent* reality. Thus, the central concern of discourse analysis is not *whether* the truth is presented to the viewer, but *in which perspective* it is presented. The term *discourse* adopted by Fairclough is defined by Foucault as "a social construction of reality" (Foucault quoted in Fairclough 1995, p.18), and by Thompson as "particular ways of using language and other symbolic forms such as visual images" (Thompson quoted in Fairclough 1992, p. 3).

The applicability of an interdisciplinary approach became more evident when I realized that the task of the discourse analyst parallels that of the descriptive translation researcher. While the latter looks at *how translations are done* through the detection of recurrent *translational (textual) choices*, the former looks at *how the world is represented* through the observation of *rhetorical (textual) choices* which may reveal *discursive practices, social motivations and ideologies*. So, the ultimate objective of an investigation in this approach would be to situate translation within the documentary discourse.

### Defining the case

The TV documentary is a co-production entitled *De meisjes van Papa Adolfo* (*The girls of Papa Adolfo*) which discusses child prostitution in the northeast of Brazil, more precisely in Fortaleza. It was broadcast on February 26, 1997 by one of the cable channels available in Belgium, the Dutch NED2 (*Nederland 2*), also known as the EO (*Evangelische Omroep*) channel due to its religious (evangelical) profile. The credits strongly suggested that the EO was the main producer of the documentary since its name scrolled first over the screen and was followed by two other Belgian institutions: the (humanist) Lichtpunt and Night & Day Productions. Contrary to production, no reference was made in the credits to the translator and/or subtitler.

The content of this documentary consists of Dutch commentaries delivered by an off-screen narrator and *in loco* interviews with Brazilian participants, among them the two girl-prostitutes whose interviews were selected for the present analysis<sup>2</sup>. These local interviews were translated and subtitled from Brazilian Portuguese into Dutch.

### Reconstructing the material

One of the consequences of investigating audiovisual translation is the difficulty in gathering original scripts. It demands a lot of time, luck and persistence (sometimes money too) to find *the* person in charge of this or that particular programme, and if so, it does not guarantee that archives are available or even kept.

In the case of this documentary I contacted channel NED2 and the manager of the institution which is in charge of most of the Dutch translations broadcast in Belgium and the Netherlands. Despite positive reactions, no real help was provided.

Since I have learned from previous conversations with documentary producers that most TV documentaries, unlike feature films, do not possess a “prior to shooting script”, I assumed that the videotaped version was the point of departure for most documentary translations. Thus, the alternative was to resort to my own transcription of the original.

### **Analyzing the material**

In order to better understand translation behavior, the first step of the analysis was to contextualize the interview extracts using the tools offered by Fairclough’s framework. In general terms, this means that I looked for textual and extra-textual clues which could reveal whether this documentary consisted of a social practice directed either towards the well-known script of the Third World<sup>3</sup> or to more innovative scripts, and to which extent this practice would reveal the traditions, values and ideologies of organizations, institutions and groups “behind” the documentary.

*Theme and focus.* In a conventional documentary format like this, the presenter of the opening sequence generally tells what the more specific focus will be. Here, it is made clear from the beginning that the aspect to be examined is child prostitution in Fortaleza *as a result of sex tourism*. According to the presenter, Fortaleza has been the hot spot for European sex tourists since the opening of its international airport. Before the *in loco* documentary starts, one last question is put to the audience: Has Brazil become a spot of sex tourism comparable to Thailand and the Philippines ?

*Participants and their roles.* The makers rely on many testimonies presented in the form of monologues and interviews, alternating with short interruptions by the voice-over presenter whose triple role is to provide additional information, to make the link between shots and to introduce new participants. Among the participants, three members of the Church (priest Adolfo, sister Elizabeth and

Patricia) are presented as “authorities” on the subject, sketching an accurate picture of the problem. The fact that the main producers have a religious profile and that the “voices of expertise” — those who have the right to speak about *others* — are *all* members of the Church is at least striking. Moreover, the most important character — Papa Adolfo — is European (from Italy) and responsible for the development of “great” social work in Brazil. Other participants such as the transvestite Cristina, the girls Rosângela, Diana, Maria Cristiana and Maria Helena are in turn representatives of the problem, the “victims” of sex tourism. They are supposed to tell their story, not to give their opinion. These “voices of experience” generally function as a confirmation of the experts’ view<sup>4</sup>. Finally, there are the off-screen interviewers. Although they never appear to the audience, their voice, intonation and style made possible the identification of two female interviewers. One is in charge of most of the interviews in the text and is characterized by a high-pitched voice, a strong Northeastern accent, quite emphatic intonation, a very informal way of addressing the interviewees and a direct and aggressive way of formulating questions. The other woman interviews only one girl (Maria Helena). This interviewer has a less strong Northeastern accent, a soft voice, a melancholic, compassionate intonation.

*The discourse.* As the theme is developed, the focus is displaced from sex tourism to family disintegration as the reason for child prostitution. This can be observed in the leading discourse of the clerical voices, who abandon the sex tourism perspective announced in the start for a more traditional and conservative testimony about parents who invariably do not care about their children, who allow prostitution and who finally contribute to family disintegration. No matter how true this assumption may be, the important point is to realize that it is (re)presented to the viewer as *the only* truth, as if all child prostitutes in Fortaleza were above all victims of a sort of contempt from their parents. Interestingly enough, foreign tourists seem to be absolved of what they are accused of at the opening of

the programme. Silencing the role of foreigners and other people and organizations involved (e.g. travel agencies), and even of the country's (un)employment policies, helps to maintain a distorted image of parents as irresponsible. It prevents even the critical viewer from seeing other perspectives on the issue other than the one desired and imposed by the producers: the traditional family perspective. This seems related to what Fairclough says about "lacks" in the text: not only the said but also the *unsaid* is extremely important for uncovering ideological practices (1995: 108).

To summarize, the documentary's discourse on Brazil as a whole is quite paternalistic, since it relies on the acknowledged script of the Developing World to approach the problem of child prostitution: the problem is intrinsically viewed as originating and developing within the country with no substantial contribution from foreigners whatsoever, so that its solution is logically to be found inside the country's family environment, too. Such a simplistic view addresses the narratives of poverty, child abuse and social injustice accepted as typical of a developing country while it favours Europe by exalting the work of the Italian priest Adolfo and by remaining silent on Europeans who have sex with children.

As one of the features which contribute to the discourse imposed by the documentary, interviewers will focus on two main points during the programme: (1) prostitution is not a profitable activity at all, and (2) the family accepts and exacerbates child prostitution. This is also the case in the extracts transcribed in the following format:

<p><b>original in Portuguese</b> Dutch subtitles</p>	<p>n°</p>	<p><b><i>English translation of the original</i></b> <i>English translation of the subtitles</i></p>
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The numbers in the middle column facilitate references in my description, dots stand for pauses or hesitations, capital letters stand for STRESSED SEGMENTS, capital letters between brackets stand for (VISUAL INFORMATION), and finally, normal text in brackets

constitutes (questions, instructions or comments by the interviewer which are made in low voice, almost inaudible to the audience).

### Rosângela

Rosângela is introduced by the presenter as a 15-year-old girl who has been working in the Passeio Público park (the centre of prostitution in Fortaleza) for 2 years. The interview takes place in the park and the shot is always on the girl. R stands for Rosângela, IR for Interviewer.

Eu trabalho aqui. Ik werk hier.	1	R	<b><i>I work here.</i></b> <i>I work here.</i>
(Você consegue quanto por dia?) Hoeveel vrouwen werken hier?	2	IR	<b><i>(How much/many do you get a day?)</i></b> <i>How many women work here?</i>
Só c'uns dez. We zijn hier ongeveer met z'n tien.	2a	R	<b><i>Only (with) some ten.</i></b> <i>There are ten of us here, more or less.</i>
<b>(Isso por dia)</b>	3	IR	<b><i>(This a day)</i></b>
<b>(Você ganha por hora...)</b> Hoeveel verdien je ongeveer?	3a	IR	<b><i>(You earn per hour...)</i></b> <i>How much do you earn roughly?</i>
<b>Por dia eu ganho...cem reais.</b> verdien tien real.	3b	R	<b><i>Per day I earn...a hundred</i></b> <b><i>reais.</i></b> <i>I earn ten real.</i>
<b>Dez reais...(por homem?)</b> Per avond?	3c	IR	<b><i>Ten reais...(per man?)</i></b> <i>Per evening?</i>
<b>(THE GIRL NODS)</b>	3d		<b><i>(THE GIRL NODS)</i></b>
<b>À noite cê vem também?</b>	4	IR	<b><i>Do you come in the evening too?</i></b>
<b>Não, eu saio cinco horas.</b>	4a	R	<b><i>No, I leave at five.</i></b>
<b>Cê vai pra onde?</b>	4b	IR	<b><i>Where do you go?</i></b>



<b>Pra casa.</b> Nee, ik werk maar vijf uur per dag en dan ga ik naar huis.	<b>4c</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>Home.</b> <i>No, I work five hours a day and then I go home.</i>
<b>Sua família sabe?</b> Weet je familie 't?	<b>5</b>	<b>IR</b>	<b>Does your family know?</b> <i>Does your family know it?</i>
<b>Sabe.</b> Ja.	<b>5a</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>Yes.</b> <i>Yes.</i>
<b>Cê dá dinheiro pra eles?</b> Geef je ze geld?	<b>6</b>	<b>IR</b>	<b>Do you give them money?</b> <i>Do you give them money?</i>
<b>Eu dô uma ajudinha.</b> Ik help ze 'n beetje.	<b>6a</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>I give a little help.</b> <i>I help them a little.</i>

If we concentrate on *the English translation of the subtitles*, the information delivered to the viewer is that Rosângela works in the Passeio Público with ten other girls, that she earns ten reais per evening of five hours, that her family knows about her job and even accepts money from her. The *translation of the original*, on the other hand, tells us that she has sexual intercourse with ten men a day, that she earns a hundred reais a day (ten reais per man), that she works until five in the afternoon and then goes home, and finally that her family knows she is a prostitute and accepts financial help from her. In which points do the two versions diverge and why?

The interview starts with Angela's answer (1) to a question that was probably edited out.

Question (2), "Você consegue quanto por dia?", can be interpreted in two ways due to the ambiguous meaning of the elliptical "quanto": either "How much (money) do you get a day?" or "How many (men) do you get a day?" The translation, however, provides the viewer with a totally different question: "How many girls work here?"

According to the girl's answer in (2a), "Só c'uns dez" (Only (with) some ten), it is clear that she chose the second meaning in which "quanto" refers to the number of *men*. But the Dutch version

aims to be coherent and therefore answers the invented/translated question in (2) as “We zijn hier ongeveer met z’n tien” (There are ten of us here, more or less) (2a). This apparently strange modification nevertheless seems to have a clear goal: it completely overcomes the contradiction between the documentary’s general suggestion that all girls from Passeio Público have small earnings and no more than six clients a day on the one hand, and Rosângela’s promiscuous and “rich” profile on the other. The next part of the interview supports my assumption even more.

The girl’s answer is followed by the comment in (3), “Isso por dia” (This a day), which, together with the intonation, implies a negative evaluation by the interviewer about the girl having sex with ten men a day. Since this does not cohere with the translated version and is not very audible to the viewer, it is simply dropped in the translation. Question (3a) “Você ganha por hora...”, directly asking about her earnings *per hour*, is also less audible. It is translated into “Hoeveel verdien je *ongeveer*?” (How much do you earn *roughly*?) - my emphasis. Literally, the answer is “Por dia eu ganho...cem reais” (Per day I earn ...a hundred reais) (3b). The Dutch translation makes “*tien* real” (ten real) of it.

Rosângela earns the equivalent of a little less than a hundred dollars a day, but a joint effort by interviewer and translator fits the girl into the general scheme: the former somehow tricks the girl with the very audible comment (3c) “Dez reais” (Ten reais) followed by the nearly inaudible “por homem?” (per man?), as if making sure she had understood that a hundred reais a day meant ten reais a man; and the girl confirms with a nod (3d). The translator in turn not only complies with the intended message of the documentary by reducing “a hundred reais” into “ten real” in (3b), s/he also translates “per man” (3c) into “per evening”, thus implying that Rosângela earns in fact ten reais per working day. Further, the Brazilian “real” is not converted into any known currency to the European viewer, thus completely misinforming the average watcher.

The next question (4) “À noite cê vem também?” (Do you come

in the evenings too?), would not cohere with the previous translation of “per man” into “per evening” (3c) if it was translated literally, since the translation of (3c) already implies that the girl works in the evenings. But the translator again drops this question and reconstructs the message in segments (4a), (4b) and (4c) as if the girl worked five hours every day and then went home, while the girl actually meant that she works until five in the afternoon and then goes home. The remaining segments (5), (5a), (6) and (6a) go straight to the point the documentary discourse wants to make about the complicity of the family - they are translated literally. All of this strongly suggests that the parts of the original interview which are not in accordance with the intended documentary discourse are the ones in which the translator has a more active role.

### Maria Helena

Maria Helena is the last interviewee of the programme. She is 14 years old and pregnant. She has left prostitution and lives with her mother. The focus is once more on the parents. The shot is on Maria Helena. The interviewer now is the other woman, the motherly type, but her sweetness also works well as a strategy to make the girl conform to the documentary discourse. Again, the translator plays a role in this process.

<p><b>E por quê que você tinha que fazê heim Maria Helena, explica um pouco a história.</b>          Leg dan 's uit waarom je 't deed.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>IR</p>	<p><i>And why did you have to do it ha Maria Helena, tell us a little bout this story          Tell us why you did it.</i></p>
<p><b>Pra mim...comprá minhas coisa...comê...dava pra mãe.</b>          Om dingem te kunnen kopen.</p>	<p>1a</p>	<p>MH</p>	<p><i>For me...to buy my things...to eat...I gave to my mother</i></p>

Voor m'n moeder.			<i>To afford things. For my mother.</i>
<b>O quê que você comprava pra tua mãe?</b> Wat kocht je dan voor je moeder?	<b>2</b>	<b>IR</b>	<b><i>What did you buy for your mother?</i></b> <i>What did you buy for your mother?</i>
<b>As coisa...comida...</b> Van alles. Eten.	<b>2a</b>	<b>MH</b>	<b><i>Things...food...</i></b> <i>A bit of everything. Food</i>
<b>Hum hum ...</b>	<b>2b</b>	<b>IR</b>	<b><i>Humhum...</i></b>
<b>E o seu padrasto num trabalha Maria Helena?</b> En je vader werkt niet?	<b>3</b>	<b>E</b>	<b><i>And your stepfather does not work Maria Helena?</i></b> <i>And your father does not work?</i>
	<b>3a</b>		(LONG PAUSE)
<b>DIGA isso DIGA que o seu padrasto não trabalha.</b>	<b>3b</b>	<b>IR</b>	<b><i>SAY it SAY that your stepfather does not work...</i></b>
<b>Não trabalha não.</b>	<b>3c</b>	<b>MH</b>	<b><i>No, he doesn't.</i></b>
Ãh? Nee, die werkt niet.	<b>3d</b>	<b>IR</b>	<b><i>Ãh?</i></b> <i>No, he doesn't work.</i>
<b>E sua mãe trabalha?</b> En je moeder werkt ook niet?	<b>4</b>	<b>IR</b>	<b><i>And your mother works?</i></b> <i>And your mother does not work either?</i>
<b>Também não.</b> Nee.	<b>4a</b>	<b>MH</b>	<b><i>She doesn't either.</i></b> <i>No.</i>

Segments (1), (1a), (2) and (2a) make it clear that Maria Helena worked as a prostitute in order to provide for her mother. The “expected” discourse runs its course and the interviewer has no reason to act. But this time it is the translator who takes the initiative to make points even stronger. While the original in (1a) states “pra mim” (for me) as the girl’s immediate reason to meet men, the subtitle favours “dava pra mãe” (for my mother). Question (3) is then adequately translated except for one important detail: “padrasto” (stepfather) is rendered as “father” - perhaps to com-

ply with the overall assumption that “*real* parents” are lazy, that the closest relatives of these children are the ones who contribute most to the drama. Indeed, everybody is aware of the stereotypes attributed to step-parents, which could “explain” the stepfather’s lack of responsibility towards Maria Helena and weaken the documentary’s causal claims. Almost logically, the translator avoids this interpretation.

In (3a) there is a long pause which indicates that the girl is either thinking about an answer in function of the instructions she has received, or hesitating because of shame or any other feeling. In view of the long silence, the interviewer becomes impatient and almost begs Maria Helena for the right answer in (3b) - “*diga*” (say it). The girl starts crying, and the dramatic effect is once more achieved. This time the translator leaves the utterance meaningless to the viewer, opting to omit the interviewer’s intervention, although it is rather clear in the original.

It is also interesting to observe at sentence level that in (3) the interviewer asks a negative question concerning the stepfather’s work, a possible strategy either to give the girl a hint about how to answer the question or to induce her psychologically to give the right answer. The first possibility seems to be refuted when we look at (4) and see that the interviewer formulates an affirmative question about Maria Helena’s mother’s work; however, this question becomes negative when translated. It may be suggested that the translator reinforces the negative view of parents by the use of repeated negation to the subtitling reader’s eye. Finally, concerning what Fairclough says about “lacks in the text” (see *analysing the material*), it should be observed that, in comparison with the other interview, a similar repertoire of questions is asked, except for questions about the father of her baby (a foreigner). Similarly, Maria Helena’s mother is not asked a single question, despite the fact that her daughter is living with her.

The partiality of the programme seemed then obvious and the

analysis above seems to support what Theo Hermans (1996) says about the discursive position of translations:

Rather than occurring in a self-contained universe, translations are inserted into - or sometimes between, or alongside - existing discursive forms and practices. In catering for the needs of the target system translation cannot but defer to the prevailing discourses of that system. It is this aspect of translation which Tejaswini Niranjana (1992) calls the *overdetermination* of translation. As she puts it, "translation comes into being overdetermined by religious, racial, sexual and economic discourses" [...] (Niranjana<sup>5</sup> quoted in Hermans 1996, pp.11-12; the emphasis is Niranjana's).

### Filling gaps

Notwithstanding the apparent coherence between translational choices and the discursive position of the documentary, the fact that this documentary was a co-production between a humanist institution (Lichtpunt) and an evangelical institution (EO) appeared paradoxical. After a successful contact<sup>6</sup> with the former, the course of the analysis changed drastically.

It was found out that neither E.O. nor Lichtpunt were directly responsible for shooting and/or translating the documentary, but merely for paying a third producer which, going by the credits, had to be the marginally mentioned Night & Day Productions. Only after the contact with this institution<sup>7</sup> did it emerge that Martin Coenen, who was credited as the "director", was in fact both the actual documentary filmmaker and the man in charge of the production company that took the initiative. Thus, the hierarchy established in the credits was basically financial, not authorial: first came the two institutions which financed the production and last the one which

actually produced it, all under the same heading “production”. In this sense the credits proved misleading, and interpreting them at the textual level resulted in an overhasty attribution of the religious/ideological character of the final product to the evangelical institution as its main producer.

Lichtpunt also stressed their “open attitude” toward the documentary’s interesting theme: even though it focused on a priest, they did not perceive any religious ideology in it. Although their acceptance and compliance with the translated material is certainly relevant, all the responsibility for the manipulations discussed seemed to be with the filmmaker. But was the final product therefore not what it first seemed? Did Martin Coenen make a documentary opposed to his beliefs? Did Lichtpunt not see the conservative nature of the film? Or was the previous analysis biased by the credits?

### **The interview**

During our interview on April 10, 1998), Martin Coenen affirmed one basic point - that there was no ideological intentions in his coproduction with EO. He spontaneously supplied data which facilitated a reconstruction of the stages through which the documentary film went before being broadcast.

*The idea.* The idea of the documentary film originated at an international congress about child prostitution in Stockholm in 1996, where Martin Coenen first met the Italian priest Adolfo Serripiero (“Papa Adolfo”). After a successful contact with the priest in Brazil, the latter’s collaboration was agreed upon, but the participation of the young prostitutes had to be worked out by Martin Coenen himself.

*Shooting time and film length.* The technical staff flew to Brazil in 1997 and filmed for eight to nine days, which resulted in more

than two hours of tape, later edited and reduced to a documentary of twenty six minutes.

*The script.* As mentioned earlier, this documentary had no script written prior to the shooting. The filming was done more or less freely and according to the material/testimonies available at the time. Although Martin Coenen had a guideline of questions he wanted to be asked, the interviewers were free to act spontaneously throughout the conversation with the interviewees and to pose unforeseen questions that they believed relevant. As for members of the church being asked few or no questions and the prostitutes being asked many, Martin Coenen confirmed one point - there was a need for more questions in the interviews with the girls due to their inexperience with the media, but rejected another point entirely - that there was a controlling/manipulating intention behind the questions.

*The interviewers.* The interviewers were also the interpreters and the translators of this documentary. There were two of them, one interviewed Rosângela and the other Maria Helena. Both are Brazilian and live in Fortaleza. The contact was made with the second, whose experience with this multifunctional task had already been demonstrated in two previous documentaries about Brazil produced by Martin Coenen, and who was also supposed to do the job for the present documentary. However, the interviewing/interpreting task was taken over throughout almost the whole programme by a friend, the first interviewer, whose professional background and experience was not known to the producer.

*The interpreting / translation process.* As mentioned above, the translators also functioned as interviewers, interpreting Martin Coenen's questions to the girls (from French into Brazilian Portuguese) and their answers back to him (from Brazilian Portuguese into French). This mediating position is viewed with some suspicion by the producer ("you can never know whether interviewers are 100% correct"), and described as "powerful" by some theorists because "the mediator's role determines the criteria for what



constitutes an adequate interpretation” (Knapp-Pothoff and Knapp 1987, quoted in Basil Hatim 1998, p. 69).

From a linguistic point-of-view the translation process was a complex undertaking. Not only were the interviews constantly interpreted into French to Martin Coenen, but the final Dutch subtitles also relied on an intermediate French version into which the Portuguese original was translated by the interviewers. And it was Martin Coenen himself who used the French texts to write the subtitles. Martin Coenen seemed completely unaware of the translational distortions.

So, on the one hand there were no ideological intentions, the priest was European for practical reasons, the interviewers were given freedom, the translators were Brazilian; on the other hand, the editing effort was considerable, the producer’s ideas about documentaries seemed important, and the location of the translational distortions needed to be sought more carefully. These facts add a layer to the analysis of the documentary translation as a discursive practice and imply a multiplication of authorship. The manipulations discussed in the two interview extracts are thus not directly ascribable to what the credits textually presented as the main producer. The postproduction script - which consists of the documentary commentaries written by Martin Coenen, the Brazilian Portuguese original transcribed directly from the videotape by the interviewers/translators, and their French version from which Dutch subtitles were derived - gave access to the mediating process. A re-examination of the interpretive assumptions drawn in the analysis can now be made.

### **The post-production script**

Below, the two original interview extracts are reproduced again, this time in the way they appear in the postproduction script. Next to the transcription of the Brazilian interviewers is the correspond-

ing French version. Though not in the script, the Dutch subtitled version will be included again on the right. P stands for “pergunta” (question) and R for “resposta” (answer).

### Rosângela:

<b>R: Trabalho aqui.</b>	1 <i>Je travaille ici.</i>	1 Ik werk hier.
<b>P: Quanto mulheres aqui ?</b>	2 <i>Vous êtes combien ici ?</i>	2 Hoeveel vrouwen werken hier ?
<b>R: Só com uns dez.</b>	3 <i>Juste avec plus ou moins dix.</i>	3 We zijn hier ongeveer met z'n tien.
<b>R: E.</b>	4 <i>Oui.</i>	
<b>P: Você ganha quanto?</b>	5 <i>Tu gagnes combien ?</i>	5 Hoeveel verdien je ongeveer ?
<b>R: De dia eu ganho dez reais.</b>	6 <i>Pendant la journée je gagne dix reais.</i>	6 Ik verdien tien real.
<b>P: Dez reais? A noite?</b>	7 <i>Dix reais ? Le soir ?</i>	7 Per avond ?
<b>R: Não, eu saio cinco horas.</b>	8 <i>Non, je pars à dix heures.</i>	8 Nee, ik werk maar vijf uur per dag.
<b>P: Pra ir pra onde?</b>	9 <i>Pour aller où ?</i>	
<b>R: ...pra casa. E.</b>	10 <i>...à la maison.</i>	10 en dan ga ik naar huis.
<b>P: Sua familia sabe?</b>	11 <i>Ta famille le sait?</i>	11 Weet je familie't ?
<b>R: Sabe.</b>	12 <i>Oui.</i>	12 Ja.
<b>P: Você da o dinheiro pra eles ?</b>	13 <i>Tu leur donnes de l'argent.</i>	13 Geef je ze geld ?
<b>R: Dou uma ajudinha.</b>	14 <i>Je les aide un peu.</i>	14 Ik help ze'n beetje.

Comparing the translators' transcription with my own transcription of the original in the first part of this article, it is clear that their text presents a much less faithful and careful version. This

can be observed in different levels and can be justified differently: first, they do not reproduce exactly the way the interviewers/interviewees speak, but always adapt colloquial register into standard Portuguese, as an example my version of (3) above *So comuns dez* is *Só c'uns dez*, reproducing the contraction commonly used in informal Portuguese. Nevertheless, this standardization procedure used by the translators may be explained by the assumption that the transcription of the original represents one step to subtitling, which in turn usually displays standard language.

Second, it is also observed that in the transcription many Portuguese words miss their accents. Taking the same example (3), *So* is actually written *Só*, and the same holds for (4-10) *E/É*, (7) *A noite/À noite*, (11) *familia/família*. Moreover, the transcription presents some grammatical mistakes, as in (2) *Quanto mulheres aqui ?*

As far as manipulations are concerned, some important observations have to be made. Reading the postproduction script from right to left we find that subtitles tend to reproduce the French text almost entirely, and the French version, in turn, appears to be an almost faithful reproduction of the Portuguese transcription. The changes did not originate in the translated versions *stricto sensu*, but in the transcription from oral to written Portuguese.

I directed Martin Coenen's attention especially to the distortions in (2), (5) and (7). He talked about the background street noise and the very limited conditions the translators had to work in: transcribing the original and translating it into French had to be done in a few days. It seems that what was previously interpreted as ideological translation may now be explained by a time-constrained, careless original transcription, in which translators simply tried to make some sense of the gaps caused by background noise.

Nevertheless, an explanation could not be found for the transcription of segment (6), where Rosângela clearly states that she earns a *hundred* reais a day ("cem") instead of ten ("dez"). For Martin Coenen, who seemed to know nothing about the actual de-

tails, this constituted a most worrying example.

### Maria Helena:

<b>P: E por que você tinha que fazer, Maria Helena? Explica um pouco a historia.</b>	<i>1 Et pourquoi est-ce que tu devais le faire, Maria Helena ? Explique un peu l'histoire.</i>	1 Leg dan's uit waarom je't deed.
<b>R: As coisas, ...dava pra mãe.</b>	<i>2 Pour acheter des choses...je le donnais à ma mère.</i>	2 Om dingen te kunnen kopen. Voor m'n moeder.
<b>P: O que é que você comprava pra tua mãe ?</b>	<i>3 Qu'est-ce que tu achetais pour ta mère ?</i>	3 Wat kocht je dan voor je moeder?
<b>R: As coisas, comida.</b>	<i>4 Des choses, de la nourriture.</i>	4 Van alles. Eten.
<b>P: E o seu padastro, não trabalha, Maria Helena ?</b>	<i>5 Ton père ne travaille pas ?</i>	5 En je vader werkt niet ?
<b>R: Não.</b>	<i>6 Non.</i>	6 Nee, die werkt niet.
<b>P: E a sua mãe, também não trabalha ?</b>	<i>7 Et ta mère, elle ne travaille non plus ?</i>	7 En je moeder werkt ook niet ?
<b>R: Não.</b>	<i>8 Non.</i>	8 Nee.

Once again we see how closely the Dutch subtitled version sticks to the French source text, except for segment (1), whose condensation is justified by the subtitling rule of leaving out redundant material. All the assumed instances of manipulation by the Dutch translator appear to be related to the Brazilian translator's transcription of the Portuguese original, which reads more like a simplification of its audiovisual source. In (2), for example, the Portuguese tran-

scription hides the fact that Maria Helena also wanted the money for her own needs and not just for her mother's; and Maria Helena's negative response to enquiries about her mother's professional life is further grammatically emphasized in the transcription (7). The instance of a clear attempt to instruct the interviewee discussed in the previous analysis (in 3b *DIGA isso DIGA que o seu padrasto não trabalha / SAY it SAY that your stepfather does not work*) left no traces in the Portuguese transcription.

Concerning the ideological translation of the Portuguese *padrasto* (*stepfather*) into the Dutch *vader* (*father*) in (5), it appears from the extracts that this was a feature of the mediating translation. An explanation for this procedure based on a preoccupation by the translators with the number of characters on screen will not suffice.

Finally, as far as the ideological load of "absences in the text" is concerned, Martin Coenen claims (less convincingly) that an interview with the girls' parents would require more time and research since in most cases they did not live together - although this was not true of Maria Helena. Interviews with tourists, in turn, would always be a difficult task as they would rarely be willing to be identified. He added that he made documentary films to show the audience the stories he found interesting, and that concentrating on the girls' stories was just a reflection of that.

### **Final remarks: case closed ?**

The producer's last remark reinforces the idea within discourse analysis that every *reality* will be discussed from a point-of-view which in turn will represent the values and interests of those who discuss it. However, the ideological interpretation of linguistic/discursive representations is not a straightforward activity. It is not possible to deconstruct meanings through purely textual analyses alone. The interview with the producer of the documentary film in question proved how indispensable it is for accurate analysis to take

into account all social agents and steps of the collective production process. Although Fairclough acknowledges this need, his framework seldom puts it into practice. As for translated discourse, the descriptive model seems to undervalue the difficulties of fieldwork, mainly in relation to the study of subtitles and the establishment of their source texts (see Toury 1995, p. 77).

An interpretative comparison that remained internal to the final product led to a false picture if not of manipulative behaviour, then at least of the real actors involved in the game. In the present case, fieldwork taught us that the subtitler did adhere to adequacy norms - probably because "he is not in a position to challenge the image of the unknown as constructed by the [original] translator" (Hermans 1996, p. 10). If one thing could not be explained in the analysis and is still to be discovered is the active role played by the transcribers/translators or, in Hermans' words (*ibid*), "which side the translator is on". Since the Brazilian transcribers knew they were working for a European producer, why should they not have constructed meaning in accordance with what they perceived the required ideology to be (i.e. what they thought the European wanted to know)? It is here that Brazilian perceptions of European producers or evangelical interests might be playing a role. As for the possibility of interviewing the translators, Martin Coenen was not really willing to help, and questions about the translator's intentions remain open.

Finally, the analysis presented here provides a brief example of how tricky (but no less exciting) research on the translation of "TV realities" may be, making a move away from the old and false belief which has dominated the audiovisual field.

## Notes

1. BELL, R.T. 1991. *Translation and Translating*. London: Longman.
2. A brief analysis of these interviews was presented at the *Multimedia Translation Research Seminar* at the Misano Adriático (Italy), September 26-27.
3. Recurrent text scripts confirm and sustain stereotypes so that the audience is led to recognize and accept them as reality within time. In this case, a script of a developing country like Brazil would typically involve poverty, the killing of children and lack of punishment as usual practices, without caring much about contextualization. About the Third World script Fairclough says that “the text takes the script as universally given for its audience, and so positions audience members that they are induced to draw upon it to arrive at a coherent interpretation” (1995, pp.123).
4. For a more detailed view on these concepts, see Fairclough (1995).
5. Tejaswini Niranjana (1992) *Siting Translation. History, Post-Structuralism and the Colonial Context*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
6. The contact was made by phone on 19/03/98.
7. The person in charge at Lichtpunt gave me the phone number of Night and Day Productions and the contact was made on 27/03/98.

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