

Read my lips: Re-evaluating subtitling and dubbing in Europe

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Abstract

Language transfer in European film and television is dominated by two techniques; subtitling and dubbing, and most countries tend to harbour a marked preference and prejudice in which method they use. These preferences are largely historical and self-perpetuating, because over-exposure to one or other technique affirms its acceptability and continued use. However, there is little understanding of the way in which these two language transfer methods actually affect the meaning and reception of foreign language material. Therefore, this paper examines the artistic and aesthetic merits and weaknesses of each technique, through a number of practical examples, which will help to clarify how language reception is altered. Taking this step back enables us to re-evaluate current industry practice which will not only be beneficial but necessary in future digital European markets.

Key words: Subtitling, Dubbing, Language transfer.

There is a wonderful scene in *Annie Hall* (Allen, 1977, English) where Alvy Singer (Woody Allen) and Annie Hall (Diane Keaton) have just met. They are clearly attracted to each other, but are struggling to find a thread for their awkward conversation. Suddenly, English subtitles appear despite the fact that both characters are already speaking in English. «Photography is interesting “cause, you know, it’s a new art form and, er... a set of aesthetic criteria have not emerged yet», the over-intellectual Alvy Singer enthuses in an attempt to impress. «I wonder what she looks like naked», reads the subtitle. This witty use of the language transfer method is more than just a comic effect; behind the joke there is a serious point. Allen highlights the fact that there is often a significant difference between what people say and what they really mean. There could not be a more appropriate emblem for language transfer methods where what people truly say and what we are led to believe they say are two totally different things. Consequently, what is witnessed in *Annie Hall* in the name of comedy is not too

far removed from the translations we experience in our everyday film and television viewing.¹

There are two main forms of language transfer in common usage today; subtitling and dubbing.² Across Europe, opinions vary greatly as to their relative values and effectiveness. Countries such as France, Germany, Italy and Spain all have a long history of re-voicing foreign language material, whereas countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece and the United Kingdom prefer to use subtitles. These marked preferences mean that each nation's audience expects foreign film to be presented in the nationally dominant mode to which they have become accustomed. However, in 1987 the United Kingdom's Channel 4 questioned the idea of a single dominant form by broadcasting twenty-six episodes of the French soap opera *Châteauvallon* twice weekly, once with subtitles and once in a dubbed version. This was the first time in the history of British television that such a long foreign language series had been shown and that a programme was transmitted with a choice of the language transfer method.³ The audience response to this experiment was gauged and the results were fascinating and completely unexpected. In a country that generally looks down on dubbing as being inferior, a significant preference was shown in all age groups for the re-voiced version.⁴ This may, of course, have been a «one-off» that was affected by the type of programme chosen, the channel on which it was broadcast, the audience dynamic and numerous other factors. However, the *Châteauvallon* experiment should, at the very least, have opened the door to more research on this issue and this does not appear to have been the case. The prediction that it would «affect the way future foreign series are presented on British television», (Brown, 1987: 13) has simply not come true. More than ten years on, British broadcasting policy remains unchanged as almost all foreign language material is still subtitled. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the relative aesthetic merits of each of the two language transfer methods. How is audience reception affected and altered by the two translation techniques? Is one technique better than the other or do they both have relative strengths and weaknesses depending on the situation in which they are used? Does the *Châteauvallon* experiment suggest that a better balance between the use of the two methods would improve the general understanding of foreign language material?

1. Allen also uses subtitles for comic effect in *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex (But Were Afraid to Ask)*, 1972. In this film, the flowing and melodic sound of the Italian language is humorously juxtaposed with deliberately crude translations in the English subtitles.
2. Other forms of language transfer include voice-over and narration.
3. This series helped British broadcasters become more confident about using foreign material and has directly led to the screening of *Das Boot* and the more recent *The Kingdom*.
4. See Luyken, Georg-Michael *Overcoming language barriers in television* for a detailed analysis of the findings of the experiment.

Examples from a number of films including *Braveheart* (Gibson, 1995, English), *Tacones Lejanos* (Almodóvar, 1991, Spanish) and *El Angel Exterminador* (Buñuel, 1962, Spanish) will serve to illuminate these general questions and aims. It should be noted here that dubbing is considerably more expensive than subtitling. Whilst this clearly affects the decision as to which method to use, this paper is concerned only with the artistic merits of each technique.

The most common argument in favour of subtitling is that, by retaining the original soundtrack, the integrity of a holistic performance is maintained. The audience can pick up the ebb and flow of the language and, with a guarantee of authenticity, gain insights into the characters through the inflections of their voices. Despite a lack of complete linguistic comprehension, the flavour of the language, the mood and the sense of a different culture come across clearly. Therefore, the juxtaposition of original dialogue and subtitles creates a different form of communication that can convey much more information than a literal translation alone. These points are clearly demonstrated in the opening three scenes of Buñuel's 1962 film *El Angel Exterminador* (*The Exterminating Angel*) where the domestic staff of a wealthy household are making preparations for a dinner party which will take place that evening (see Fig. 1). This film is a surreal allegory about a party of upper-class dinner guests who discover they are unable to leave the room they are in. Days go by and their superficially polite exteriors are destroyed by the savage qualities they conceal deep within themselves. The film's moral point, therefore, is to propound the notion of dystopian enslavement, through social conventions and traditions of our own creation. This is a theme that Buñuel later developed in *Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie* (1972, French). In the opening scene of *El Angel Exterminador*, the character Lucas (a member of the domestic staff) is differentiated from this bourgeois superficiality by the fact that he tries to leave the house in which the dinner guests will be trapped. Lucas' voice has a high, whiny, apologetic quality and the speed at which he speaks enhances his urgency and desperation to leave. The peaks and troughs of his voice are extended so that a greater sense of emotional intensity is conveyed. The Butler, who catches Lucas trying to leave, has a deeper, more direct and forceful voice which conveys his disbelief and annoyance. The constancy and deep resonance of his voice also enhances a sense of his authority. Hearing the real voices of the characters not only increases meaning in terms of specific dialogue or plot structure, but gives vital clues as to status, class and relationship. Furthermore, hearing the Spanish language gives the English speaking audience clear signals about Mediterranean sensibilities that defy literal translation; hearing the different soundworld paints a picture of «spanishry». However, despite a great deal of extra information from the original soundtrack, much is lost in the transfer to subtitles.

The following diagram (Table 1) shows the original Spanish dialogue, a literal English translation and the actual subtitles for the opening of the above-mentioned film.

Table 1.

Spanish Dialogue	Literal English Translation	Actual Subtitle
S C E N E 1		
Butler: ¡Eh!, ¿a dónde va usted?	Butler: Hey, where are you going?	
Lucas: Es solo un ratito, voy a dar una vuelta.	Lucas: I'm going for a walk, I won't be long.	Lucas: I'm just going for a stroll.
Butler: Tenemos veinte personas para la cena. Sólo a usted se le podría ocurrir dar una vuelta ahora.	Butler: We have twenty people for the dinner party. Only you could think of going for a stroll now.	Butler: Now? We have twenty guests for dinner.
Lucas: No había pensado en eso, quizá tenga usted la razón, pero le aseguro que vuelvo lo antes posible.	Lucas: I hadn't thought of that, perhaps you are right, but I assure you I'll return as soon as possible.	Lucas: I forgot that, but I promise I'll be back soon
Butler: ¡Desde aquí no se va!	Butler: You will not leave here!	
Lucas: Por favor, se lo ruego, permítame ir.	Lucas: Please, I beg you, let me go.	Lucas: Please let me go.
Butler: Esta bien, váyase, pero no vuelva a poner los pies en esta casa.	Butler: Very well, go, but don't ever show your face in this house again.	Butler: All right, but don't bother to come back.
S C E N E 2		
Butler: Lucas acaba de largarse. ¿Qué mosca le ha picado? ¿Un disgusto con alguno de ustedes?	Butler: Lucas has just quit. Who upset him? Did he quarrel with one of you?	Butler: Lucas has just quit, has he quarrelled with you?
1st Servant: Con nosotros no, y el caso es que ni siquiera nos había dicho que se iba.	1st servant: Not with us, and the fact is that he didn't even tell us he was leaving.	1st servant: No, he didn't tell us he was leaving.
2nd Servant: Nos entendíamos muy bien, es un buen muchacho.	2nd Servant: We got on very well together, he is a good man.	2nd Servant: We got on well together.
Butler: Pues si no estaba a gusto aquí es mejor que se haya ido. Hay muchos Lucas en el mundo.	Butler: Well, if he wasn't happy here it is for the best that he has gone. There are lots of Lucas' in the world.	Butler: Well, there are plenty more like Lucas about.
2nd Servant: Cuestión de faldas, ¿quién sabe?	2nd Servant: Maybe, there's a woman involved, who knows?	2nd Servant: Maybe, there's a woman involved.

Table 1. (*Continuation*)

Spanish Dialogue	Literal English Translation	Actual Subtitle
S C E N E 3		
Server: ¿Camila?	Server: Camila?	Server: What shall we do?
Camila: ¿Qué?	Camila: What?	
Server: Por fin, ¿qué hacemos?	Server: Well, what shall we do?	
Camila: Lo que tú quieras, pero en seguida, ya no aguanto las ganas que tengo de salir.	Camila: Whatever you want, but quickly, I simply must get out of here.	Camila: Please yourself, but I simply must go out.
Server: Igual me pasa a mí, ahora que... ¿a dónde va a ir una a estas horas?	Server: The same thing is happening to me, now then... where could one go at this time of the night?	Server: That's how I feel, but where can we go at this hour?
Camila: Sí, es tarde y hace mala noche.	Camila: Yes, it's late and it's a bad night.	Camila: And the weather is so awful.
Server: Yo tengo una amiga que nos dejaría dormir en su casa.	Server: I have a friend who would let us sleep at her house.	Server: One of my friends will put us up.
Chef 1: Si quieren, yo los acompaño. Yo mismo voy un poco lejos de manera que puedo llevarlos en taxi a donde vayan.	Chef 1: If you want, I will accompany you. I'm going quite far away so I could take you in a taxi to wherever you are going.	Chef 1: I'm taking a taxi, I could drop you off.
Chef 2: Tú te quedas y me esperas a mí.	Chef 2: You are staying and waiting for me.	Chef 2: You'll wait for me.

It is important to note that almost half of the «literal» dialogue is lost through subtitling. This is inevitable in all subtitled films because it takes longer for an audience to read text than to hear dialogue spoken. Consequently, subtitles must be concise and precise and contain as much information and meaning in as little space as possible. Unfortunately, this need to condense the translation means that important statements are often left out. Where this is the case, the subtitler must decide which information is most relevant to the audience. For example, when the butler says «Pues si no estaba a gusto aquí es mejor que se haya ido. Hay muchos Lucas en el mundo» the literal translation is «Well, if he wasn't happy here it is for the best that he has gone. There are lots of Lucas' in the world». However, the subtitle reads «Well, there are plenty more like Lucas about». The omitted first part of the phrase is important because it shows the Butler has, at least,

some sympathy for Lucas and that he is not as callous and bourgeois as the subtitle would have us believe. In a satirical film where Buñuel subtly criticises the upper classes, this kind of distinction is of vital importance in establishing a character's personality, goals and ideals. The minor subtractions that litter these scenes may not seem significant in terms of the general understanding, but during the course of a whole film they add up to a large number of drastically altered meanings.

The issue at question here is whether the full content of the dialogue is more important than the central meaning and whether hearing the original aural source compensates for what is lost. These are difficult questions to answer, because the situation is different in each and every film. Michael Radford's *Il Postino* (1995, Italian), for example, could be cited as a film which supersedes the problems of subtitle subtractions through the intensely rich performances of its central characters. Here, facial expressions, tight editing and the lilting, melodious voices flesh-out the lack of understanding of the language. However, Mike Leigh's *Naked* (1993, English), which also has very rich performances, would lose a great deal if the subtlety of the full content of its dialogue as well as the above-mentioned features were not completely understood. Perhaps this is because of Leigh's background in play writing which gives his films a more literary approach. There are clearly no specific rules about how this should work; the requirements are different for each film in different parts of the world.

The debate is complicated even further by the fact that it is almost impossible to judge the correct level at which to pitch the subtitles. Numerous factors need to be taken into consideration; for example, the extent to which the prospective audience knows the foreign language, the general exposure to foreign languages in that particular country, and the likely audience dynamic. A number of these factors were clearly considered in Claude Berri's *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources* (1986, French) where many readily understandable French phrases were deliberately left un-subtitled. An assumption of the level of comprehension of the film's, mostly intellectual, television audience improved the effectiveness of the language transfer. However, all too often, subtitlers are guilty of patronising the majority of their audience. For example, subtitles for the words «Oui» or «Non» are often seen in French film which, to my mind, is totally unnecessary. Even more inexcusable than this is a point in Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso* (1989, Italian) where the young boy Toto imagines a gargoyle turning into a roaring lion and the subtitler informs us of this by writing the words «Grrr! Grrr!». Presumably, the subtitler believes that lions in Italy sound different from those in English speaking nations. This is far too prescriptive and completely misjudges the audience it was intended for.⁵

5. For an insightful explanation of the difficulties encountered by subtitlers and a discussion of how their work might be improved see John Minchinton «Fitting Titles».

Pedro Almodóvar is arguably Spain's greatest living director and, because of his global marketability, great care is taken in the subtitling of his films which is usually excellent. In *Tacones Lejanos* (High Heels) the original meaning is beautifully condensed into efficient English. However, there are still numerous problems. In a scene where the judge (Miguel Bosé) is interrogating three murder suspects, he is heard dismissing one of them, «Muy bien, puede irse». This translates as «Very well, you may go». However, his subtitle reads «All right, that...» and Isabel's subtitle answers «...will be all», finishing his sentence for him. Her actual spoken dialogue at this point is «ya me voy» (I'm going now). The subtitling here plays contrary to the flow of the conversation of the scene and even though it is ingenious and creative it does not give a fair representation of the mood or of what is being said. Furthermore, at various points during this film, it becomes extremely difficult to read the white subtitles because they merge into the whiteness of the background and it is here that we are reminded of another important issue. Subtitles change film from an audio-visual medium to a more literary medium which requires a greater level of attention from the viewer than a dubbed film. Time spent reading subtitles is time spent away from the screen action and this is clearly a problem when there is both a great deal of visual information as well as dialogue. For example, an action film might not be as effective when subtitled. Since subtitles require a greater effort from the viewer, the belief that foreign film is «arty» has arisen. To my mind, this is a particularly unhealthy opinion, because it marginalises foreign film and means that only an «intellectual» minority will watch.⁶ This marginalisation, then, compounds the belief that those foreign films that are seen in the United Kingdom must all be «good» or worthy. Subsequently, those «foreign» film-makers who produce «entertainment» films can only achieve success in their home countries. It could be argued that subtitles help to bring foreign film to an audience that would not otherwise see it. However, this method of language transfer has also partly contributed to the unfair distancing of «foreign» material. Subtitling affirms the «otherness» of foreign language film and this differentiation is seen as a hindrance to the potential enjoyment of a film or television programme by the narrow-mindedness of the English speaking nations. This view is exemplified by the fact that every year at the Academy Awards (a supposedly global celebration) an «Oscar» is awarded to the best «foreign» film, where «foreign» means anything that is not in English. In most European countries there is a broader spectrum of film and television viewing than in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and language is not considered an insuperable barrier to understanding or enjoyment. Surely, a general adoption of this kind of attitude is the first step towards overcoming the problems of subtitling.

Having discussed some of the issues relating to subtitling it is now time to turn to dubbing. Bordwell and Thompson sum up the general opinion

6. For the purposes of this paper, «foreign» film means anything that is not in English.

of this much-maligned technique in their seminal book *Film art: An introduction*:

Dubbed voices usually have a bland «studio» sound. Elimination of the original actors' voices wipes out an important component of their performance. (Partisans of dubbing ought to look at dubbed versions of English-language films to see how a performance by Katherine Hepburn, Orson Welles, or John Wayne can be hurt by a voice that does not fit the body.) With dubbing, all of the usual problems of translation are multiplied by the need to synchronise specific words with specific lip-movements. Most important, with subtitles viewers still have access to the original sound-track. By eliminating the original voice track, dubbing simply destroys part of the film. (Bordwell, Thompson, 1979: 353-354)

This seems to me to be an unfortunately negative view that has little basis in actual fact. Dubbing is often perceived to be less «authentic» than subtitling, because the original performance is altered by the addition of a different voice. However, it could be argued that re-voiced film and television comes closer to the usual viewing process where only decoding of the moving images and sound is required and that this is, in fact, more «authentic». Therefore, rather than considering the loss of the original sound a detriment, I would argue that the creation of a new soundtrack is just as valid in terms of characterisation as the original, because the intention is to remain faithful to the filmic medium. Furthermore, the issue of fidelity to the original source and the potential «blandness» of the sound world seems dubious when one considers that the dialogue and sound effects for most films are added, tweaked, sharpened and sweetened at the post-production stage. All film-making is artifice, and it is foolish to believe that the dialogue heard for a particular scene was recorded synchronously during shooting. There are usually numerous visual and aural «takes» for editors to experiment with and dialogue can be «chopped and changed» according to the specific dictates of the narrative. With present digital technology the sound quality of a re-voiced film and the original does not vary greatly. The assertion that performances by John Wayne or Katherine Hepburn are «hurt» by dubbing surely arises because of an acute awareness of the actors' actual voices which clouds any potential appreciation of the merits of the dubbed voices. Most foreign audiences are not encumbered by this understandable prejudice, because they are only used to hearing and associating specific dubbing artists' voices with specific actors. This means that the voice is not divorced from the whole performance. It is also true that when an English speaker watches a re-voiced English film, the inconsistencies of the dubbing are more noticeable than if they were to watch a foreign film dubbed into English. This is because, significant aural comprehension of a spoken language requires less confirmation of understanding from the observation of lip movements. This is why it is easier to understand a foreign language when speaking face to face than on the telephone, for example. Despite this fact,

the issue of lip-synchronisation is a considerable problem with dubbing and will be discussed in due course.

Mel Gibson's 1995 film *Braveheart* will serve to illustrate in more detail some of the issues already raised by Bordwell and Thompson. This film tells the epic tale of the rebel warrior William Wallace and his battle against the tyrannical English leader King Edward II, in pursuit of «freedom». There are significant similarities and differences between the original voices and the dubbed Spanish version and these clearly affect our appreciation and understanding of the film. One of the most important factors in making *Braveheart* credible is the use of Scottish accents. This gives an English speaking audience a clear geographical setting for the film, but when dubbed into another language, this kind of signification is often lost. In the Spanish version all the characters speak with a central Castilian Spanish accent, so the idea of a specific dialect signifying a certain place is not expressed. The problem is a difficult one to overcome, because a Scottish accent implies a certain area to an English speaking audience but there is no accurate equivalent in Spanish. Attempting to portray a Scottish accent through Spanish language would be so confusing and bizarre that it would seem farcical. Even exploiting Spain's own regional dialects would not be effective, because they carry their own geographical, cultural and social signification. To avoid these problems, each dubbing country tends to use a uniform «national» accent.⁷ This means that an important element of the original film is often lost. However, using a uniform accent does allow opportunities for exploiting national stereotypes. For example, the character Hamish has a deep resonant voice in the Spanish version of *Braveheart* which is associated with strength and masculinity and mirrors his physical stature, whereas in the original he has a high-pitched, softer voice. Similarly, the female character Murron has a dubbed voice that is forceful, yet delicately feminine. This kind of voice taps into the confidence of Spain's «new» women who are combating the stifling history of a repressive patriarchal society with their femininity proudly intact. Consequently, the sexual relationship between Murron and Wallace has a slightly different perspective in the re-voiced Spanish version than in the original. Therefore, national characteristics give credence of status, relationship and manner which are instantly, though subconsciously, recognisable to the Spanish audience. It should also be noted that the dubbed voice for Mel Gibson has a remarkably similar quality to that of Gibson's own voice. This has clearly been a conscious decision and the dubbing performer will probably be used in all the films where Gibson appears. The congruent and consistent use of a particular dubbing artist with a particular actor is a standard practice in the dubbing industry and means that the audience learns to associate a specific voice with a specific actor, just as the English speaking audience builds up associations with an actor's real voice. However, there have been occasions

7. For example, a programme dubbed into Brazilian Portuguese would be totally unacceptable in Portugal.

where using the same dubbing artist for particular actors has been known to cause problems. In Italy, one famous re-voicing artist (Ferruccio Amendolo) has dubbed the voices of both Robert De Niro and Al Pacino for many years and is a star in his own right. However, in the 1995 film *Heat* (Mann, English), De Niro and Pacino played alongside each other for the first time in their careers. Another dubbing artist was engaged to speak Pacino's dialogue, but Italian audiences felt uncomfortable because it was not the voice they were used to hearing. There was, of course, no other suitable solution to this problem. If Amendolo had dubbed both voices, the dynamic between good and evil would have failed and there would have been general confusion about which actor was actually speaking at various points in the film. It is clear from all this that, despite some failures, a great deal of thought is given to the kind of voices used, how they match the characters and what signals they will give to the audience.

Unlike subtitling, dubbing also allows the audience to hear and understand incidental or background dialogue other than that of the main actors. For example, the opportunity to hear the crowd speak is exploited in a scene where the grown-up Wallace returns to his village in the midst of a wedding celebration. He soon finds himself embroiled in a «test of manhood» with his childhood friend Hamish. Some characters are seen to shout lines of encouragement such as «Hamish, ¡eres el mejor!» (Hamish, you are the best!) even though they cannot be heard above the din of the crowd in the original English version. This additional dialogue helps give the scene credibility and a sense of vitality. It is also true that hearing your own language serves to confirm its importance and reinforces a sense of national identity and autonomy. This is clearly significant in countries such as Spain which view large amounts of «foreign» material. Whether reinforcing nationalistic hegemony through dubbing is more desirable than subtitling which affirms the foreignness of a film, however, is a difficult issue. The very virtue of a foreign film could be seen to be its «otherness». Dubbing invariably decreases this sense, but perhaps this means that a wider audience will be prepared to watch the «foreign» material. This would heighten an awareness of foreign film which would certainly be beneficial in the acceptance of other customs and cultures.

In any re-voiced film, perfect lip-synchronisation is almost impossible to achieve and a minimum level of accuracy is required for the audience to suspend their disbelief. Of course, this is more difficult in certain types of scenes than others. After the above-mentioned wedding celebration, Wallace and Murron ride off into the forest in order to pursue their clear attraction to each other. The revered Hollywood technique of the facial close-up in intimate scenes is heavily employed here. However, facial close-ups are bound to make the inadequacies of re-voicing more apparent. The dubbing artists attempt to create the best possible match for the lip movements, but slight incongruencies are always unavoidable. However, these are soon forgotten as long as the dubbed voice is only heard congruously with the dynamic of the characters' lip movements. After a very short while only major inconsisten-

cies are noticeable and this confirms the fact that the greater the exposure to the technique the more acceptable it becomes. However, the question of how much lip-synchronisation incongruities affect an audience on a subconscious level throughout the course of a film is akin to the alteration of literal meaning through subtitles; both methods can readily change perceptions of a character, an intention or a mood. Recent developments in digital technology mean that the lip movements of actors can be altered to fit new dialogue. If this technology can be adopted cheaply and effectively over the next few years the quality of re-voicing will drastically improve.

It should be noted that the translation of the English in the dubbed Spanish version is almost exact (Table 2). The only differences are because of colloquialisms and spatio-temporal variations that do not translate well through any method. More accurate translation seems to be observed by re-voicing than subtitling because the literal language does not usually need to be as heavily condensed, even within the confines of lip-synchronisation. Another interesting point in this scene, is where Wallace speaks in French. The English version has subtitles, explaining exactly what he is saying to Murron, but the Spanish version does not. This could be because the language transfer artists believe that it is not necessary for the audience to understand the specifics of this dialogue, or they assume that most Spanish people have enough basic French to understand what is being said. This is certainly an overestimation. However, the more likely reason is that in Spain subtitling is perceived with the same amount of disgust as dubbing is in the United Kingdom. As Luyken states, «The strong polarisation in the use of method between the “dubbing” and “subtitling” countries is of significance, as audience research has shown that television viewers are very strongly conditioned by the respective predominant methods and, therefore, attitudes to, as well as acceptance of, different or new methods take a long time to mature». (Luyken, 1991: 38)

Therefore, the heart of the problem with subtitling and dubbing is that neither method is wholly successful, but opinions as to their relative values are so strong that most countries do not adopt an enlightened attitude with regards to the potential for their use.⁸ I would suggest that each technique has situations where it could be best applied. For example, news or documentary programs would generally be more credible if they were subtitled whereas programmes for the very young or very old, who may have more difficulty reading text, would be better re-voiced. «Art» film or film aimed at the intellectual minority would be better subtitled whereas entertainment or action films would be better re-voiced, and so on. There can be no hard and fast rules, but employing both methods in tandem according to the needs of specific films would not only provide better translation but would also prompt a change in attitude in how we view our European colleagues and

8. Richard Kilborn gives this issue detailed consideration in his article «Speak my Language».

Table 2.

English Version	Spanish Dialogue
Wallace: How did you know me after so long?	Wallace: ¿Cómo me has reconocido después de tanto tiempo?
Murron: Well, I didn't.	Murron: No te he reconocido.
Wallace: No?	Wallace: ¿No?
Murron: It's just, I saw you staring at me and I didn't know who you were.	Murron: He visto como me mirabas, pero no sabía quien eras.
Wallace: I'm sorry, I suppose I was. Are you in the habit of riding off in the rain with strangers?	Wallace: Perdona, sí que te miraba. ¿Sueles cabalgar debajo la lluvia con desconocidos?
Murron: It was the best way to make you leave.	Murron: Era la mejor forma de que te fueras.
(they laugh)	(se rien)
Wallace: Well, if I can ever work up the courage to ask you again, I'll send you written warning first.	Wallace: Si reuno el valor para poder pedirte-lo, antes te avisaré por escrito.
Murron: Well, it wouldn't do you much good, I can't read.	Murron: No te valdría de mucho, no sé leer.
Wallace: Can you not?	Wallace: ¿No sabes?
Murron: No.	Murron: No.
Wallace: Well, that's something we shall have to remedy isn't it?	Wallace: Pues entonces tenemos que remediarlo, ¿no crees?
Murron: You're going to teach me to read then?	Murron: ¿Vas enseñarme a leer?
Wallace: Ay, if you like.	Wallace: Si quieres.
Murron: Ay.	Murron: Sí.
Wallace: In what language?	Wallace: ¿En que idioma?
Murron: You're showing off now.	Murron: Quieres impresionarme.
Wallace: That's right, are you impressed yet?	Wallace: Exacto, ¿estás impresionada?
Murron: No, why? Should I be?	Murron: No, ¿debería estarlo?
Wallace: Oui, parce que chaque jour J'ai pensé a toi.	Wallace: Oui, parce que chaque jour J'ai pensé a toi.
SUBTITLES: Yes, because every single day, I thought about you.	NO SUBTITLES
Murron: Do that standing on your head and I'll be impressed.	Murron: Repite eso haciendo el pino y me impresionarás.
Wallace: My kilt'll fly up, but I'll try.	Wallace: Se me va levantar la falda, pero si tú quieres.
Murron: You certainly didn't learn any manners on your travels!	Murron: ¡No has aprendido nada de modales en tus viajes!
Wallace: The French and the Romans have far worse manners than I.	Wallace: Los Franceses y los Romanos tienen peores modales.
Murron: You've been to Rome?	Murron: ¿Estuviste en Roma?
Wallace: Ay, my uncle took me on a pilgrimage.	Wallace: Sí, mi tío me llevó de peregrinación.
Murron: What was it like?	Murron: ¿Y cómo es?
Wallace: Rien qui approchait ta beauté.	Wallace: Rien qui approchait ta beauté.
SUBTITLES: Not nearly as beautiful as you.	NO SUBTITLES
Murron: What does that mean?	Murron: ¿Eso que significa?
Wallace: Beautiful, but I belong here. Re-voiced Spanish Version	Wallace: Preciosa, pero esto es mi hogar.

how we view ourselves. In times of an increasing fear of a federalist Europe, a greater European consciousness will not only help us to understand and appreciate more of our cultural distinctiveness, but also bring us closer together. Technology for both methods is constantly improving and standards are raised year upon year. However, the tasks of language transfer could be made so much easier if there were a greater collaboration at an earlier stage between those responsible for the original and the subtitled or dubbed work. The days of audio-visual dominance being defined by language will not last long as new technologies will develop wider global economies. In the not too distant future we will be able to dial-up a film or television programme for viewing in the language transfer method of our choice at the time of our choice. With this increased choice the power will rest with the viewer. If film-makers do not begin to consider the problems of translation and adapt to these changes they will find themselves lost in the burgeoning market.⁹

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9. The new DVD format is the first to offer a wide choice of languages. The viewer may choose to see the film (hired or purchased, not broadcast) dubbed or subtitled into most European languages.