Bringing all the Senses into Play: the Dubbing of Animated Films for Children

Julio de los Reyes Lozano
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ABSTRACT

Sensory information plays an essential role when dubbing animated films for children, since the interaction of the different signifying codes is exploited at its best in this kind of movies, particularly through verbal, iconic and musical puns. Based on the classification of the main semiotic codes and specificities of this cinematographic genre, we present in this paper a framework of analysis that can help understand whether the sensory effects are reduced, maintained or reinforced in dubbed versions, or even whether these potential modifications are consciously operated in order to adapt the films' content to the children's comprehension abilities. The use of some illustrative examples taken from American animated movies dubbed into Spanish highlights strategies and techniques currently adopted in dubbed animated films for children.

Keywords: dubbing, animated films, children's films, dual audience, American English, Spanish.

RÉSUMÉ

L’aspect sensoriel joue un rôle essentiel dans le doublage de films d’animation pour enfants, où l’interaction des différents codes sémiotiques est exploitée au mieux à travers notamment des doubles sens verbaux, iconiques et musicaux. À partir de la classification des principaux codes de signification et des spécificités de ce genre cinématographique, cette contribution présente un modèle d’étude qui cherche à comprendre si les effets sensoriels sont réduits, maintenus ou renforcés dans les doublages, ou encore si ces éventuelles modifications ont pour but de s’adapter au niveau de compréhension des enfants. À l’aide de quelques exemples illustratifs tirés de films d’animation américains doublés en espagnol, nous pouvons observer les stratégies et techniques adoptées par les traducteurs des films d’animation pour enfants.

Mots-clés : doublage, cinéma d’animation, cinéma pour enfants, double destinataire, anglais américain, espagnol.
Audiovisual communication has experienced unprecedented growth during the last few decades, thanks in part to the development of new technologies and to the massive use of the Internet and social networks. Cultural and entertainment-related content, as well as most of the information received, is conveyed through screen devices such as cinema, television, computers, smartphones and tablets. Children are particularly attracted to the digital environment and a myriad of multimedia material (apps, TV series, films, etc.) is conceived for them (O’Sullivan, 2013: 459); as a result, books are no longer the only vehicle providing education and entertainment at the same time. This audiovisual exposure is closely linked to multilingualism, since audiovisual products are made in different languages and countries all over the world; therefore, a translation process is required to transfer their content to another culture.

The most popular types of audiovisual translation (AVT) in western societies are nowadays subtitling, voice-over and dubbing, the latter being the most often used in children’s films (Chaume, 2012: 2). Regardless of the type of AVT, translators are faced with the characteristics and restrictions of an audiovisual text, “a semiotic construct comprising several signifying codes that operate simultaneously in the production of meaning” (Chaume, 2004: 16). Although the audience mechanically receives and interprets the sensory impressions conveyed by the intersection of the different codes, the translator must decipher each code individually in order to understand the text better and adapt the translation to the audiovisual requirements, particularly when it comes to synchronisation.

In the case of dubbing, there are three main synchronies at play (ibid.): lip-synchrony, related to labials and vowels; kinetic synchrony, or the correlation between gestures and actions and the linguistic signs; and isochrony, the respect of the duration of the source text utterances in the target text. However, their perception in children’s animated films depends on various factors, such as broadcast media (cinema, television, tablet, etc.), animation technique (cartoon, stop-motion animation, 3D animation, etc.) and target audience (adults, children or both). Therefore, watching a 3D film in a cinema will be different from watching a cartoon on a smartphone; not only because of the screen size, but also because lip and character movements are usually much more detailed in 3D films than in cartoons, where they seem to be random and synchrony is only important in close shots and close-ups. With regard to the audience needs, kinetic synchrony is paramount to children since they are usually attracted to colours and shapes, as well as to characters’ gestures (Chaume, 2012: 78).

Aware of the importance of knowing the film components and functions to fully understand AVT mechanisms, we present in this paper a methodological framework for the analysis of dubbed animated films for children following a cinematographic approach. Based on Chaume (2004, 2012), Martí Ferriol (2007) and Barambones (2012), the model presented here can be used to describe translation trends in this kind of films and takes into account some of the cinematographic features and specific characteristics of children’s films that may affect the translation process at a micro-textual level. First, we will briefly review the latest research in this field and state the main characteristics of AVT for children; the following section will focus on the most relevant semiotic codes operating in animated texts for children; we will then present the specific features of these texts and demonstrate their impact on translations by giving some illustrative examples from an English-Spanish corpus of films; finally, we will explain how to elaborate a representative corpus and the methodology of analysis to be followed in order to describe translation trends in animated films for children.
**Audiovisual translation for a special audience**

Experts on mass communication claim that, to be successful, any audiovisual product must adapt or address its content to a specific—though unknown—audience (Bell, 1984: 159). Of course, this also applies to the cinema, where we can presume that, for instance, the (potential) target audiences for horror movies and historical dramas will differ considerably, as will their needs. As a result, audience characteristics and expectations will have a decisive impact on the creation of an audiovisual product. Likewise, when this is released internationally, AVT is also influenced by target audiences and therefore translators, consciously or unconsciously, design an optimal audience for each audiovisual product (Espasa, 2008: 72).

In the case of children’s films, there are at least two kinds of potential receivers, children and adults, even if only children are intended to be the main target of these films. In fact, some of the content included is clearly aimed at accompanying adults, thus resulting in texts with a dual addressee, where the translator needs to identify the adult content in order to fully transfer the intended effect (Zabalbeascoa, 2000: 21). Nonetheless, when translating for children it cannot be ignored that the child’s way of speaking, thinking and acting changes from one culture to another and that target texts need to be adapted to a special audience, the child, that can neither see, nor hear, nor understand the same things as adults (Lorenzo, 2014: 36).

To that end, O’Connell (2003: 223) believes that audiovisual translators can apply some of the strategies actually employed by translators of children’s books, since both kinds of texts share many distinctive characteristics: for example, in addition to satisfying the expectations of multiple addressees, both must enrich children’s cultural systems while taking into account their level of comprehension. This can lead translators to make decisions about vocabulary and to choose between formal and colloquial registers. They must also decide if cultural references will be naturalized or not, while attending to the intersection of images, words—and even sounds—which is distinctive to all children’s texts and represents a great challenge for translators. It is therefore obvious that even a trivial decision like the choice of the AVT mode (essentially dubbing, as stated before) has to be adopted considering children’s needs.

Despite the extent of this challenge, many researchers have often regretted the absence of studies exploring the specific characteristics of AVT for children, especially in view of the huge amount of multimedia material produced every year for younger audiences. Fortunately, Lathey (2009: 32) is now more optimistic and considers that video game localization and AVT are rapidly expanding areas in children’s translation research, even if such an increase is only perceived among young scholars and students, whose findings have little impact so far. As Di Giovanni states (2010: 259), a considerable number of PhD theses in related fields have been undertaken over the past years in Europe, presenting not only case descriptive studies but also detailed models of analysis that allow scholars to examine audiovisual translations for children in a closer, more systematic way.

Many of these research frameworks are based on the model proposed by Lambert and Van Gorp (1985: 43), whose four-level structure has been a great source of inspiration for authors like Hernández Bartolomé (2008) and Barambones (2012). Both authors analyse macro-level norms in translation of animated films and TV series, as well as some of the linguistic patterns of target texts, such as orality and discourse markers. From a socio-historical point of view, this model was also applied by Martín Fernández (2015) to compare two different Spanish versions (Latin America and Spain) of *Il était une fois... L’homme*, an educational French TV series from the late 1970s. Similarly, Repullés Sánchez (2016) carries out a diachronic study of Disney’s animated
classics in Spanish, which were, until the 1990s, dubbed in Latin America and then in Spain. In both cases, translation choices seem to be influenced by socio-historical factors, Latin American versions being more literal than those produced in Spain.

Ariza (2014) attempts to apply Chaume’s (2004) framework of analysis paying special attention to the influence of semiotic codes in the translation of children’s films. However, priority is given to the elements—that both external and internal—that imply a certain degree of interventionism over the translation process. These may be the simple correction of errors detected in the source text, but they can also modify the target text for educational or ideological reasons, as well as favor the entertainment of adults at the expense of the child’s comprehension (Ariza, 2014: 471). Since some scholars point out that any agent involved in the dubbing process—either in the translation or dubbing room—can freely intervene in the linguistic adaptation of audiovisual texts for children (Ruzicka, 2009: 8; Lorenzo, 2014: 46), the dialogic relationship between agents (dialogue writer, dubbing director and actors, etc.) has been explored in previous research from a genetic point of view (De los Reyes, 2015a), where the collaborative nature of the translator’s work has been highlighted.

Signifying codes: constructing meaning in children’s films

As noted in the introduction, an audiovisual text conveys information simultaneously through several signifying codes, including linguistic, paralinguistic, musical, iconographic, photographic, graphic and syntactic codes as well as planning, special effects, sound arrangement and mobility codes. Although the intersection of these codes may have a direct impact on translation, not all signifying codes are present in every film and their analysis would be “overambitious, since the original films may have little semiotic content, or dull, boring dialogues” (Chaume, 2012: 176).

In children’s films, for example, it has been previously established that there are three main semiotic codes from a translational point of view (De los Reyes, 2015b: 144): the linguistic code, because there would be no translation process without it (Chaume, 2004: 17); the iconographic code, which represents a link between children’s films and picture books and children’s own drawings and artworks (Wells, 2009: 118); and, finally, the musical code, which plays an essential role in animated films from its very conception, whether film music is diegetic or non-diegetic (Beauchamp, 2005: 43). In order to establish a coherent and systematic model of analysis, we will present in this section the nature of these codes and their impact on the receivers’ senses, as well as their influence in translation.

The linguistic code

Like any other kind of translation, “without the presence of a linguistic code in a text we would not be able to speak of a process of translation properly” (Chaume, 2004: 17), as noted above. However, the linguistic code in translated audiovisual texts has specific characteristics related to orality that require the scholar’s attention, given their influence on the audience’s acceptability. According to Izard (2004: 35), this comes from the definition of cinema—and dubbing—as “one big lie” that pretends to be true, although not true in the sense of realism, but in the sense of plausibility. It is for this reason that dialogues in dubbed films or TV series are also assumed to appear natural and reflect the spontaneous orality of the target language. However, what we finally hear on screen is a prefabricated language whose main characteristic is “to be written to be spoken as if not written” (Chaume, 2004: 17).
This situation leads to a language variety known as *dubbese*, which represents the kind of language that the target audience supposedly wants to hear and “has a rather limited range of vocabulary, recurrent syntactic and grammatical structures, regularly repeated, limited figures of speech, as well as syntactic and semantic Anglicisms” (Von Flotow, 2009: 91). In the interest of this authenticity, the language of young characters portrayed in children's films can also be reproduced via the use of pseudo-grammar peculiarities, as well as childlike expressions usually employed by adults when talking to children. On another level, Barambones (2012) proposes a list of specific elements related to the linguistic code that require special attention from audio-visual translators: exclamations and interjections, proper nouns, songs, rhymes, and stereotyped fairy-tale expressions. These elements will be classified and analysed in the list of specificities of children’s films presented in the next section.

**The iconographic code**

Animation is probably the best medium via which we can appreciate the interaction of the linguistic code with the other cinematographic codes. It appears that the only limit is the imagination, since characters can fly, disguise themselves or even be punched in the face without suffering physical damage. Likewise, animated films and TV series take full advantage of both channels of communication in order to iconographically represent verbal, acoustic and visual wordplays and puns. When it comes to translation, González Vera attempts to describe the relationship of complementarity between both iconographic and linguistic codes in animated films, where three main translation strategies can be outlined: the original meaning is modified, the translation is modified according to the visual component, or the complementary relationship is maintained (González Vera, 2011: 50).

For the purpose of analysis, in every example it is possible to examine whether, in the interest of complementarity, the translation necessarily modifies, totally or partially, the original meaning, the target text or both. For instance, the idiom “monkey business” is used in *Rio* (Saldanha, 2011) in reference to a group of monkeys that steal from tourists for a living. Sustained on the iconographic code, the English idiom describes the illegal action perpetrated by the monkeys, thus representing a bigger challenge for translators. In order to also appeal to the same senses, the Spanish dubbed version alters the original phraseological unit, and even if no illegal action is evoked, it manages to reproduce the relationship of complementarity, referring to the ape action as “*monerías*”, a term describing a childish attitude. Consequently, since the original or the target meaning are frequently modified in order to reproduce the intended effect, the image should not be seen as a restriction, but as an aid for the appropriate translation (Martínez Sierra, 2009: 195).

**The musical code**

The role of music is paramount to animated films. And not only in full-of-songs musical comedies following a Broadway-style production, such as many of Disney’s classics. As Beauchamp (2005: 43) tells us, due to the absence of direct sound in this cinematographic medium, the production of animated films begins by recording a temporary score—which includes music and sound effects—in order to provide animators with narrative development and visual timings. Consequently, the audience is familiar with the musical code and its ability to convey emotions; it would appear extremely rare to see an animated film without any kind of music (Brugué, 2013: 136).

Even if its function is mainly to complement the image, incidental music sometimes plays a crucial role by representing, for example, cultural or intertextual references. This implies a con-
considerable challenge for audiovisual translators and mediators, owing to the near impossibility of modifying the film soundtrack. In fact, dubbing studios usually work with the “international version” of the film that contains all the musical and sound effects of the original version, except for those dialogue lines and songs that will be dubbed (Le Nouvel, 2007: 14). Music is thus created according to the established film and to sequence and shot restrictions, leaving it to the translator to decide whether to adapt dialogues (or not) according to these elements.

**Specificities of children’s films and impact on translation**

As stated in the introduction, the present model also explores transversally the specific characteristics of children’s films (and their translations) that can belong to one or more signifying codes. These specificities are described and classified under the following categories, inspired by previous research in the translation of children’s literature and films (Barambones, 2012; Ariza, 2014): colloquial language, children’s language, figurative language, visual and verbal puns, multilingualism and geographical dialects, cultural and intertextual references, educational content, romantic content and songs.

This classification is not intended to be exhaustive; rather, it is meant to be open to any distinctive elements of children’s films or animated films. Nevertheless, the added value of this list lies in the fact that it is elaborated using a representative corpus of recent texts that reflects a snapshot of current practices in animation and AVT translation for children (De los Reyes, 2015b: 153). In broad terms, this model suggests the analysis of every variable according to whether it is maintained, reinforced or reduced in the target text. Any change in meaning is attributable to the notion that children will not readily understand the element concerned, so the text must be adapted to the child’s level of comprehension; therefore, the study of these modifications can lead scholars to find out the degree of mediator intervention in children’s films.

**Colloquial language**

Colloquial language is usually employed within a particular context where speakers are very close, either socially or functionally (Briz, 2002: 10). This implies a communicative aim based on interpersonal relationship and a less accurate degree of message planning, leading to more informal speech at all levels of language. As stated before, even if it is prefabricated and controlled, the proliferation of colloquial language in children’s films reflects the need of scriptwriters to imitate the audience’s way of speaking in their dialogues. This is especially the case at the lexical-semantic level, where the emulation of the oral register is better appreciated (Chaume, 2012).

According to Briz’s schema (2002), three forms of colloquial language are to be found in the lexical-semantic level of language: lexical frequencies applied to almost anything (e.g. “thing”, “stuff”, “really”, “very”, etc.), slang and jargon (e.g. the hippy sea turtles in *Finding Nemo* [Stanton & Unkrich, 2003] that frequently use terms and expressions such as “awesome” or “dude”), and neologisms, foreign words and everyday metaphors. If colloquial language is to be maintained in the dubbed version, as usually happens in the translation of children’s films in Spain (De los Reyes, 2015b: 230), the translator must find a similar register within the target language. For instance, the choice adopted for the sea turtles in the Spanish version of *Finding Nemo* was to recreate some of the features of urban speech: “¿qué flipe” (cool) or “tío” (mate).

As for the last category, it includes the so-called phraseological units, lexical combinations that can be fixed units always reproduced in the same way (e.g. “this is life”, “home, sweet home”, etc.) or idiomatic units at different levels, whose meaning does not correspond to the sum
of their parts, either taken individually or together (Ruiz Gurillo, 2000: 171). The lack of flexibility of these units represents a challenge in dubbing, especially when the iconographic code attempts to visually reproduce them, as seen in the “monkey business” example discussed before.

**Children’s language**

Characteristics of children’s speech are often those of a “grammar in process” and may include features such as elementary constructions based on imitation, genuine construction processes such as holophrases, one-word utterances often referring to an object or action that convey a communicative intention (e.g. “more”, “up”, “eat”, etc.) (Tomasello, 2006: 261), as well as enumerative and changing syntactic structures (Fernández Pérez, 2005: 33). In the interest of a film’s authenticity, young characters do use some of these pseudo-grammar peculiarities in children’s films and these may also be transferred to the target text, like little Nemo having trouble with the pronunciation of the word “anemone” in *Finding Nemo*.

Still, dubbed versions sometimes do not fully transfer these linguistic features. The next example from *Rise of the Guardians* (Ramsey, 2012) shows two-year-old Sophie running after the Christmas elves and the Tooth Fairies. While in the original English version, the girl uses one-word holophrases to address both the elves (“elf”) and the fairies (“pretty”), the Spanish dubbed version chooses to alter these childlike utterances, probably for fear of not getting the message across to the audience. In the first case, Sophie describes the cuteness of the elf instead of just calling him, while in the second case she formulates a more sophisticated expression by adding the exclamation “qué”. As a result, the choices adopted in the target text do not match the way a two-year-old child would speak and instead help design a more adult audience than the original.

OV¹, 49’04, Sophie: **Elf, elf, elf!**

[…] 

Tooth: Don’t worry, Bunny. I bet she’s a fairy fan. It’s okay **little one**.

Sophie: **Pretty!**

DV, Sophie: ¡Qué mono!

[…] 

Hada: No te preocupes, Bunny. Seguro que le gustan las hadas. Tranquila, **peque**.

Sophie: ¡Qué bonita!

[BT, Sophie: How cute!]

[...] 

Tooth: Don’t worry, Bunny. I’m sure she loves fairies. Easy, **little one**.

Sophie: **How pretty!**

On another level, direct references to the child’s world and to his or her inner circles (e.g. school, food, toys, children’s characters, etc.) are to be found in this category, as well as childlike expressions employed by adults when talking to children, usually in a high-pitched tone and stretching out the vowels. As is the case in the following example from *Rio*, dubbed versions tend to imitate the target language when translating these expressions (Barambones, 2012: 140;

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1. The following abbreviations refer to the different versions of the films (cf. Filmography). OV: original version, DV: dubbed version in Spanish, BT: back translation in English. Timecode is given for reference purposes.

2. Words in bold are used in the examples to highlight crucial points.
De los Reyes, 2015b: 230). In this scene, Silvio, a security guard in Rio de Janeiro’s Centre for Environmental Conservation, tries to comfort a frightened bird with some expressions commonly used in Spanish in this context, such as “anda” (come on) or “ya pasó” (it’s over) instead of translating the English expressions literally. In addition, the voice actor adopts a soothing tone and stretches out the vowels as if the bird was a human baby (“Oooh, Aaanda, pajariitto boniiito”), thus rendering the dialogue more plausible for the audience:

OV, 19’08, Sylvio: Aw, come here poor little birdie. Oh, it’s okay. I got you. I got you.
[BT, Sylvio: Aw, come on, pretty little bird. Oh, don’t be scared. It’s over.]

**Figurative language**

Linguistic playfulness in children’s films will include wordplays, homophonies or expressions specific to the source language, as well as humorous elements of a linguistic nature, such as word invention, redundancies, hyperboles, impossible metaphors, parodies, jokes, absurd situations and intentional changes in meaning and style (O’Connell 2003: 226). The adaptation of these elements depends on the translator’s experience and creative skills and, ideally, the target text will use a similar rhetorical figure which appeals to the same audience’s senses. For instance, the following example from *Rio* presents two alliterations of the sounds /nik/ (“nicked knick-knacks”) and /b/ (“burgle-bobbles bore”) which are completely transferred to the Spanish DV through the sounds /ch/ (“chucherías chorizadas”) and /b/ (“bisutería birlada aburre”):

OV, 42’49, Nigel: I’m not interested in your nicked knick-knacks. Your burgle-bobbles bore me.
DV, Nigel: No me interesan las chucherías chorizadas. Vuestra bisutería birlada me aburre.
[BT, Nigel: I’m not interested in nicked knick-knacks. Your swiped imitation jewellery bores me.]

**Verbal and visual puns**

Visual and linguistic elements are frequently used in animated films for children in order to create verbal and visual puns which appeal to the audience’s senses, thus representing an enormous challenge for AVT. As previously stated, there are three possible translation strategies according to the relationship of complementarity between text constituents: either the original meaning is modified, or the translation is modified according to the visual component, or the relationship of complementarity is maintained (González Vera, 2011: 50). Previous research (De los Reyes, 2015b: 232) has shown that the last strategy seems to be the main one adopted in Spanish dubbings of children’s films and the relationship of complementarity between codes is usually assured in target texts even if the meaning is modified, as happens in the following example from *Rio*:

OV, 31’40, Jewel: Oh, this is great! I’m chained to the only bird in the world who can’t fly!
Blu: Actually, there are forty species of flightless birds.
Jewel: Duck!
Blu: No, ducks can fly!
Jewel: No! Duck!
DV, Perla: ¡Aah! Estupendo, me han encadenado al único pájaro del mundo que no sabe volar.
Blu: Alto ahí, hay cuarenta especies de aves no voladoras.
Perla: ¡Al loro!
Blu: No, los loros vuelan.
Perla: ¡No! ¡Que cuidado!

In this scene, the film’s protagonists—two birds—are trying to escape from their captors by walking through the streets of Rio de Janeiro. Blu, a male, cannot fly and lectures the female Jewel about the existence of many birds with that problem. During their escape, Jewel suddenly sees a street fruit stall and warns Blu using the polysemic word “duck”, whose meaning may refer to either the animal or the action of lowering one’s head. Blu then replies that ducks do fly, resulting in humorous effect.

Obviously, the translation is not able to use the Spanish word for “duck” (“pato”), since there would be no such effect. In order to keep the joke, the Spanish translator decided to use the expression “al loro”, which means “watch out” and also refers to another kind of bird, the parrot. Also, Jewel’s reply in Spanish can be seen as an example of adaptation to the child’s level of comprehension, since instead of simply repeating the joke like the OV, she prefers to explain its meaning (“¡que cuidado!”). Consequently, as previously stated, every modification is to be identified and classified in order to understand the rationale for the intervention (e.g. untranslatability, adaptation to the child, etc.).

Multilingualism and geographical dialects

Foreign languages (real or invented) are increasingly used in animated films in order to make stories more international and believable. According to De Higes (2014: 222), there are two strategies available for translating these elements: choosing to mark multilingualism or not choosing to do so. Likewise, dubbing geographical dialects involves marking or not marking the origin of the characters if their accents differ from standard pronunciation. These strategies may influence film reception, since any variation from standard pronunciation may produce strangeness in a target audience very much used to the fake naturalness of dubbing. However, when the foreign and dubbing languages are the same, translated versions may use a different language (or a different variety of the same language) for these scenes in order to mark multilingualism or the character’s provenance in the DV.

One prototypical example is presented in Toy Story 3 (Unkrich, 2010), where space-toy Buzz Lightyear is mistakenly reset to his “Spanish mode” and spends half of the film speaking in Castilian Spanish much to the audience’s surprise. The DV released in Spain was then conditioned by both iconographic and musical codes, since Buzz’s gestures and expressions represent some of the international cliché about Spain (e.g. bullfighting, flamenco, etc.). Consequently, the target audience would not understand if a different variation from another Spanish-speaking country (or even a different language) was adopted. Eventually well-known flamenco singer Diego “el Cigala” gave voice to Spanish Buzz which became Flamenco Buzz, a decision that fits perfectly within the story and the pictures and manages to preserve the surprise effect in translation.
Cultural and intertextual references

Due to the impossibility of adding explanatory notes, when a real culture is represented in a children’s film, the two main translation strategies adopted are maintaining or altering the specific elements of that given culture, thus leading to a translation method based on foreignization or domestication. According to Pedersen (2011: 59-60), the following are among the most common cultural references in children’s films: weights and measures, proper names, food and drink, literature, art, music, history, education, leisure and sport. In our model, once the cultural references are identified, it can be determined whether the original references will be maintained, thus encouraging foreignization, or instead replaced by references closer to the target culture, thus reinforcing domestication. In this regard, it seems that the degree of domestication that children can accept varies according to different factors such as age, cultural knowledge and interest in the audiovisual product (De los Reyes, 2015b: 283).

One example of the preservation of cultural references can be found in the Spanish DV of Rise of the Guardians, a film that tells the story of the Guardians of Childhood, well-known characters associated with popular festivities such as Christmas or Easter. One of the Guardians is Sandman, a mythical character responsible for putting children to sleep in some cultures. His name in English refers to the sandy appearance of the matter that forms in the eyes when people sleep, something very appealing to the children’s senses. Since Sandman and his story are unknown to most Spanish children, the translator was obliged to invent a name fitting the character. Instead of imagining a new name with the word “arena” (sand), the Spanish DV chose to describe the main function of Sandman in the film, which is creating dreams, and call him “Crear de sueños” (“creator of dreams”). As in this case, most cultural references are actually transferred in Spanish dubbings of children’s films (ibid.: 232).

On another level, intertextual references in children’s films are almost exclusively focused on references and allusions to artworks (e.g. songs, TV characters, well-known film dialogues, etc.), as well as proverbs. The translation of these elements will lead to a strategy of maintaining (or not) the original reference by using (or not) the referential translation (Botella, 2009: online). In Spain, these references are usually transferred into the target text via the known translation (De los Reyes, 2015b: 232), as happens in Rio with a classic reference to Terminator 2: Judgement Day (Cameron, 1991): three men are in an airplane on the verge of crashing, when one of them picks up the only parachute in the plane and, before jumping, salutes the other two alluding to Schwarzenegger's famous sentence “Hasta la vista, baby” or “Sayonara, baby” in the Spanish DV.

OV, 80’07, Marcel: Ha, ha, ha... Hasta la vista, losers!
DV, Marcel: Ja, ja, ja... ¡Sayonara, pringaos!
[BT, Marcel: Ha, ha, ha... Sayonara losers!]

Educational content

Children’s texts tend to include content allowing children to acquire different knowledge of various kinds, about history, geography or nature for instance, related (or not) to academic curricula. These elements belong to the “world knowledge” concept coined by Puurtinen (1998: 525) and may appear explicitly or implicitly in the text. Sometimes the OV explains this content in order to make sure that children understand and appropriate this knowledge, which is not always the case in the translation. In fact, there is usually no additional information provided for educational content such as an animal’s scientific name or geographical and historical notions in target texts,
mainly because of the near impossibility of adding new information to the audio track (De los Reyes, 2015b: 231).

**Romantic content**

As Rodríguez and Melgarejo (2010: 174) point out, film audiences only become interested in the portrayal of romance on the screen from adolescence onwards; therefore, the inclusion of romantic content in children’s films (e.g. kissing on the mouth, hugs, love gestures, etc.) will only appeal to adults. Still, Zabalbeascoa (2000: 22) suggests that presenting this content in a mocking way via disgusted gestures or expressions leads to a particular kind of humour highly appreciated by young audiences. Once again, the reduction or reinforcement of these elements can help design a specific audience for the target text. In the Spanish DV of *Rio*, for instance, when the ornithologist and the bird’s owner first meet, they address each other formally using “usted” instead of the more informal “tú”. However, we later see them flirting with each other over a bottle of red wine while sharing dinner at a fancy restaurant, and from that moment on the translator decided that the characters would use “tú” in order to emphasize the romantic atmosphere.

**Songs**

Franzon (2008: 376) describes five main strategies in song translation. However, only three are employed when translating songs in children’s films: first, leaving the song untranslated is commonly used for incidental songs, for example international and well-known pop songs, even if it means losing essential information, such as Pharrell Williams’ hit *Happy* in *Despicable Me 2* (Coffin & Renaud, 2013); second, adapting the translation to the original music represents the main strategy for diegetic song translation in children’s films, especially in musical comedies, such as Disney’s *Frozen* (Buck & Lee, 2013); and finally, writing new lyrics to the original music with no overt relation to the original lyrics, where the target text fits the music but does not relate to the source lyrics. Note that this final strategy would appear to be comparatively rarer in children’s films (De los Reyes, 2015b: 226). In fact, songs are usually connected to the film plot and frequently illustrated on screen; consequently, using this strategy would endanger the sensory synchronization. On another level, since children are not able to read subtitles, dubbing is always the AVT mode adopted in lyrics translation and no evidence has been found of the strategy of translating the lyrics without taking the music into account, which is adopted in films for adults via subtitling.

**How to apply this model of analysis**

After presenting the many specificities that convey within the different signifying codes, we will focus in this last section on the practical application of this model for the analysis of dubbed films for children. We will first discuss the methodology for selecting a representative corpus of texts, which is essential if translation trends—and norms—are to be established (Martínez Sierra, 2011: 159); and then we will explain the working procedure for micro-textual analysis based on Martí Ferriol (2007) and his classification of translation techniques in AVT.

**Catalogue and corpus elaboration**

Selecting a corpus of relevant and representative texts begins by elaborating a catalogue of films based on textual, linguistic and temporal criteria, such as country of production, language, film technique and film genre, as well as dubbing language and country (Gutiérrez Lanza, 2007: 197-
By way of example, the catalogue developed in previous research included films that were suitable for any audience, 3D-animated, produced in the United States, dubbed in Spanish and distributed in Spain between 2002 and 2012 (De los Reyes, 2015b). A representative sample can then be selected via convenience sampling considering other specific criteria, such as translator, dubbing studio, dubbing director and the film’s success. The final list will be a coherent and consistent corpus reflecting different practices based on different animation studios, dubbing studios and translators over a specific period. Once the corpus has been selected, films can then be analysed following an AVT perspective.

Methodology of micro-textual analysis

In order to describe the nature and quantity of translation trends operating in children’s films, the external factors involved in the translation process of an audiovisual text are first identified “simply by observing the situation in which the text is used” (Chaume, 2012: 167). It is then possible to place the film in a specific social and historical context and describe professional, communicative and reception aspects that influence translation choices at a micro-textual level: following Martí Ferriol (2007), the suggested working procedure consists in examining DVD editions of the corpus with the objective of finding text segments that match AVT problems based on the sensory impressions conveyed by the linguistic, iconographic and musical codes. These segments are then classified in a database and compared to the OV. Each case is related to one or more specificities of children’s films and the different translation strategies and techniques are then quantified and described.

First, translation strategies are individual procedures—whether they are made consciously or not, verbal or not, internal (cognitive) and external—applied by translators in order to solve problems found during the translation process and to improve efficiency with a particular objective in mind (Hurtado, 2001: 249). In this model of analysis, translation strategies rely on signifying codes and specificities of children’s films and can be classified according to whether they choose to maintain, reinforce or reduce the sensory effects of every variable in the target text. Translation techniques on the other hand affect minor textual units, allowing the translator to classify translation equivalents (ibid.: 257). The following translation techniques have been found on previous research about AVT for children (Barambones, 2012), and can be divided into two categories: lexical (adaptation, description, equivalent, generalization, omission, particularization, loan) and syntactic (enlargement, compensation, compression, discursive creation, modulation, reduction, substitution, literal translation, transposition, variation).

Finally, the statistical analysis of translation techniques will help identify the translation method adopted in a dubbed film. In the case of AVT texts, this may be either interpretative-communicative or literal (Martí Ferriol, 2007: 177): on the one hand, a prominence of techniques such as loan, literal translation and equivalent may lead to a more literal method, based on verbal transfer and ignoring the information conveyed by other semiotic codes. On the other hand, the use of modulation, variation, substitution, adaptation and discursive creation tends to be closer to the interpretative-communicative method, which “aims to produce an effect in the target culture receiver that is comparable to that produced by the original text in the source culture receiver” (ibid.) via the analysis of verbal and non-verbal information present in audiovisual texts.

The model of analysis is summarised in the following diagram:
Dubbing an animated film for children is a process that goes beyond simple linguistic adaptation. More than any other audiovisual text, translators must take proper account of the information and sensory impact conveyed by different semiotic codes, not only the linguistic code. In addition to formal aspects, such as sound and image confluence and constraints due to the channel of communication, the translation of these texts is also influenced by the recipient’s characteristics. In this way, the target text must be able both to fit children’s reception skills and to appeal to a dual audience—adults and children—via the inclusion of content specifically addressed to an older audience. At the same time, certain elements frequently found in children’s films (e.g. colloquial language, children’s language, figurative language, etc.) may also appeal to senses and must be examined since they have a direct impact on translation.
Based on the most important codes present in animated films for children—the linguistic, iconographic and musical codes—, the framework of analysis presented in this paper focuses on the specificities of children’s texts and helps determine whether the sensory effects of every variable are reduced, maintained or reinforced in target texts. Sometimes, the use of a certain strategy implies the adaptation of content to the child’s level of comprehension, as is the case in the “duck” visual pun discussed above, while others tend to favour the adult audience (e.g. the maintenance of cultural and intertextual references). Ultimately, only a systematic study of a representative corpus of texts can tell us the reasons justifying the choice of one of these two paradigms over the other, as well as other choices in translated texts.

Finally, the application of the proposed methodology in future descriptive research will allow scholars to determine current practices in dubbed animated films for children and describe translation trends and patterns, which can later be used for teaching purposes. In fact, understanding how translators actually face and solve problems that are specific to this kind of “texts” is an essential task for future audiovisual translators in order to meet the audience’s needs; therefore, this model can help them identify and comprehend different strategies and mechanisms to solve translation problems with a sensory component that may appeal to both adults and children.

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