Investigating subtitlers' and trainers' beliefs about pivot templates in the Netherlands and Belgium - an exploratory survey study

Susana Valdez, Hanna Pieta, Esther Torres-Simón, Rita Menezes

Pivot templates are increasingly used in streaming media distribution (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2021, 54) and have started to attract attention from AVT researchers (e.g., Oziemblewska and Szarkowska 2020). Yet there is very little published research on the profile of the professionals behind pivot templates and their current practices: who translates from pivot templates and who creates pivot templates, from and into which languages and for which audiovisual products and channels, what challenges are involved in translating from pivot templates and creating pivot templates, and whether there is training available. Survey data was gathered from 391 European subtitlers and subtitler trainers (in both academia and industry) to address this topic. The data was subject to a qualitative and quantitative analysis. This paper zooms in on the perspectives of 56 subtitlers, 17 template creators and 12 trainers based in the Netherlands and Belgium.

Results suggest that this pivot practice is indeed common, even if challenging. Unsurprisingly, English seems to be the most common pivot language. English continues to be the primary source language even when content is originally created in other languages. This Anglocentric lens through which content is translated poses its own constraints for translators.

We have also observed that trust seems to be a key issue not only when translating from pivot templates but also when creating these templates. Current practices also involve particular ethical, linguistic and technological challenges, for which there are currently few guidelines and training opportunities.

References:
Díaz-Cintas, J., & Remael, A. (2021). Subtitling: Concepts and practices. Routledge.
Oziemblewska, M., & Szarkowska, A. (2020). The quality of templates in subtitling. A survey on current market practices and changing subtitler competences. Perspectives, 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2020.1791919