

AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION IN SERBIA: HISTORY AND PROFESSIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

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Abstract

This article focuses on the inception and development of audiovisual translation in Serbia, as well as the working conditions of subtitlers and dubbing translators in this country. Serbia has developed a subtitling tradition, although dubbing is used for animated films and television series, and the combination of voice-over and off-screen dubbing, or subtitling and off-screen dubbing for documentaries. The article is based on the research conducted for the author's PhD thesis on audiovisual translation in Serbia, which deals with the description of the linguistic, translation, historical, cultural and technical dimensions of audiovisual translation in this country, as well as its professional environment. Despite the increasing demand for translations of foreign films or television series, this area of research has not been studied in detail by researchers in Serbia. Because of this, the job performed by subtitlers and dubbing translators, and everything their profession involves, are a rather unknown field of study.

1. Introduction

Traditionally, Serbia is a subtitling country. This audiovisual translation (AVT) mode is used in almost all audiovisual genres and various audiovisual media (film, TV, DVD, video on demand, cable TV). According to Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007:8) subtitling is:

a translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image (...), and the information that is contained on the soundtrack (songs, voices off).



In Serbia, it applies to the translation of feature films, TV programmes and series, as well as to some documentaries, although voice-over and dubbing are commonly used for the latter genre as well as for reality shows. Chaume (2004: 32, 2007: 203-206) refers to dubbing as a whole process that consists of the translation and synchronization of a script based on an audiovisual text, and includes voice talents, a dubbing director and other figures, depending on the country. As for voice-over and off-screen dubbing, the following definition embraces both modes:

In a translated documentary we may have a narration/commentary that undergoes off-screen dubbing, that is, an adaptation process that defines a certain degree of closeness to the original (from extremely close to a created narration / commentary) and that is delivered exclusively in the target language, and, at the same time, a series of interviews that undergo voicing-over, or the revoicing of the translated voice by the translating voice with the original soundtrack remaining slightly audible and the degree of closeness to the original also varying (Franco et al., 2010: 42).

On some TV networks, such as the Serbian Public Broadcaster RTS (*Radio-televizija Srbije* [Radio Television of Serbia]), off-screen narration is dubbed and original voices cannot be heard, whereas voice-over is used for the speech of people on screen. The Serbian narrator starts reading the text one to two and a half seconds after the original utterances. These translation modes are quite similar to the ones used, for instance, on Spanish TV (see Lukić 2013 and 2014). On the other hand, TV network B92 uses subtitling for the speech and off-screen dubbing for the narration.

The subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing of foreign films has not been developed yet. Some domestic films and series are subtitled for this part of the population, though there is no use of colours to mark the difference between the speakers, and their format is not particular to this type of subtitles¹. The RTS has offered audio-described films once a month since July 2011, as well as TV programmes and series which are subtitled for the deaf and hard of hearing (Lukić 2015: 36-37). Cartoon series as well

¹ See video at <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/drustvo/2088377/titlovane-serije.html>. Accessed on: 7/5/2015.



as animated films are normally dubbed, although the latter used to be subtitled slightly more than a decade ago. Therefore, dubbing of feature animated films is a relatively young translation mode, and there are not many studios that are technically equipped to perform it according to international professional standards (Lukić 2015: 109).

Based on the research conducted for my Ph.D. (Lukić 2015) and MA theses (Lukić 2007), supervised by Professor Frederic Chaume and Professor Marcos Rodríguez Espinosa, which deal with history, conventions and professional questions of audiovisual translation in Serbia, the aim of this article is to highlight some of its most important features, including AVT history in Serbia and some of the most prominent professional issues and conventions. According to my research, there is a lack of in-depth research dedicated to varied aspects of audiovisual translation in Serbia, in spite of the growing popularity of AVT research in Europe in general. AVT in Serbia, in particular, has been given little attention by researchers in other European countries, although there do exist some articles (Lukić 2009 and 2010, Miloševski 2013) and some research conducted at Spanish universities, such as the aforementioned Ph.D. dissertation and MA thesis (Lukić 2015, 2007), the Ph.D. dissertation conducted by Lazić 2013, which just mentions AVT modes in Serbia, or the MA thesis carried out by Miloševski 2011, which examines the translation of colloquial speech in the translation of a TV series into Serbian. Moreover, audiovisual translators' task and everything that subtitling and dubbing involve are rather unknown to other translators, TV viewers, or researchers in the field of translation in Serbia (Lukić 2015). On the other hand, subtitling and dubbing activities are increasing due to a high percentage of foreign films or series shown on numerous TV channels (around 40% on private TV networks, such as PINK and B92 in January 2015, and 26% on RTS) and an increasing supply of videos and more varied options of watching films on cable TV thanks to the recent digital switchover² (Lukić 2015: 33-34, 76).

² See http://www.b92.net/eng/news/society.php?yyyy=2013&mm=11&dd=15&nav_id=88354. Accessed on: 5th May 2016.



Consequently, there is a need for detailed studies of various features of the common practice of audiovisual translation in Serbia, which will help emphasize the importance of good practice, and enrich translation studies in this region. The research conducted for my Ph.D. thesis was a descriptive, exploratory and empirical study, carried out from 2007 to 2015, and it was partly based on a series of interviews with Serbian professionals in the field of AVT, including translators for two of the broadcasters with the highest viewer ratings (the Serbian public broadcaster RTS, and a private TV Station B92), translators who work for distributors or subtitling companies, dubbing translators and actors, and other professionals in charge of subtitling or dubbing processes, such as dubbing studio directors or heads of TV departments, as well as university professors who provided me with the information about the academic background of AVT. The interviews were based on long conversations during which nine Serbian professionals from the AVT sector (four of them senior translators with more than 10 or 30 years of experience who will be mentioned further on in this paper, and two close to 10 years of experience) gave their answers to the questions regarding the translation process, technical and formal features of translated texts, working conditions and the changes the subtitling and dubbing went through in the last thirty years. The testimony of Zora Čavić Ilić, one of the first audiovisual translators at the Serbian public broadcaster, was crucial for understanding the early stage of the profession on this TV station. On the other hand, the above thesis included results of the analysis of technical, linguistics and translation features, performed on the corpus made of audiovisual texts translated for the Serbian TV broadcasters or DVD editions.

This article contains some of the results of the above research, exposed in two main sections which deal with the history of audiovisual translation in Serbia, and working conditions and professional issues. The first part of the paper contains historical data related to the initial stages of dubbing and subtitling at the beginning of 20th century. The second part conveys the results of my research regarding professional considerations (translator's

task and job requirements, copyright, rates, training, quality standards) and, very briefly, some of the prominent technical and translation conventions.

2. History of audiovisual translation in Serbia

2.1 *Silent film translation*

The history of AVT starts with the title cards that were introduced into silent films in order to explain the plot. These were usually some comments written on a dark background, which soon needed to be translated in countries where people did not speak the language they were written in. Similarly to other European countries, AVT in Serbia has its origins in silent film *intertitles*, which were used to translate title cards, and which gave birth to modern subtitles (1982: 63-66). On the other hand, the *narrators* or the *interpreters* who would explain a foreign film content or its title cards, or used to translate or convey the title cards or *intertitles* in target language to the audience, are considered to be the ancestors of dubbing (see Díaz Cintas 2001: 53-62, Ávila 2005: 43-45, Chaume 2004: 41-60). These are normally called *silent film narrators, mediators* or *photo-interpreters* (Standish, 2005) in English, *explicadores* or *charlatanes* in Spanish, *Benshi* in Japanese, and *tumači* or *recitatori* in Serbian (1982: 63-66). According to Ávila (2005: 43), some of the *silent film interpreters* got to be famous and even earned good money thanks to their profession. They also used to interpret or imitate sounds from a film, that is to say, to reproduce the film soundtrack.

Scholars normally refer to two kinds of silent film *narrators*. The first group are called *intra-linguistic* narrators, who used to explain the content of a silent film and title cards in the target language so that films could be followed by the mostly illiterate general public. The other kind would translate and explain the content of the film and title cards in a foreign language, and they are called *inter-linguistic narrators* or *interpreters* (Díaz Cintas 2001a: 58). As the second group's task included the transfer of



information from one language to another and not only the interpretation of the images and the target language text, in this paper I will refer to them as *silent film interpreters*, aware of the incompleteness of the term and the fact that it is not equal to the word interpreter in modern language. In fact, these narrators used to be in charge not only of translation but also of creating a show, bringing a film closer to the audience, amusing them and re-creating the atmosphere, sounds included, of the film.

2.2 *Serbian silent film interpreters and the first laboratories*

In one of the rare volumes dedicated to the early Serbian film industry, the author Slijepčević (1982: 63-66) provides information about the first Serbian interpreters of silent films that were shown in this country at the beginning of the 20th century. *Tumači* are defined as “people who knew a foreign language and could render the content of the films’ title cards by closely conveying the source text or translating more freely in order to make the show more interesting for the audience”. They were not professional translators, but just people who were good at languages and formed part of local or travelling cinema crews.

Press from that time includes news about such shows, depicts the atmosphere, and describes what translators used to do. Some newspaper articles mention interpreters, such as Todor Najdanović, who was in charge of explaining the *intertitles* at Franz Prohaska’s travelling cinema in the Serbian town of Niš in 1904 and 1905. Najdanović was severely criticised by the well-educated audience, but was rather popular among the general public. Another amateur the press was interested in was Colonel Tioslav Blagojević from Negotin, who used to translate films from German and French. The papers from Kragujevac, a city in southern Serbia, used to inform the cinema-goers about the programmes in Serbian with the film summary. The newspapers also mention that the images were explained by silent film interpreters. One excerpt that Slijepčević (1982: 64) quotes points out that in the Koloseum Cinema in Belgrade, there was “a man next to the pianist” who read the translation of the title card content. These are



only some of the testimonies that prove the existence and relevance of the figure of silent films interpreters who made it possible for the public, very often unable to read or write, to enjoy and understand foreign films shown in Serbia.

The first film shown in Serbia dates from 1896. This was an event at *Zlatni Krst Tavern* at Terazije Square in Belgrade, when André Carré, a photographer from Lyon, and mechanic Jules Grin brought the first film projector, invented by the Lumière brothers, and projected the images that had been presented in *Grand Café* in Paris. The Belgrade establishment was a meeting point for young poets, painters, intellectuals and various other guests, who together made a promising audience in the mind of the show organizers. After this event, most travelling cinemas that visited Belgrade were from Germany, Austria, Hungary and Italy. For instance, Alejandro Lifka's cinema showed films made by Lumière, Méliès, Pathé, Gaumont and other producers. One of the most attractive and popular shows, though, was the programme presented by Franz Prohaska's circus, which projected Pathé's controversial film called *La Massacre de la Dynastie Royale Serbe* [*The Massacre of the Serbian Royal Dynasty*]. Nevertheless, critics were very harsh as they considered the film to be very subjective (Volk 1986: 15-16).

One of the most praised shows was George Narten's cinema, which came to Belgrade in 1905 and 1906. It was much better equipped, and some of the first silent film interpreters worked there. This event was followed by the one presented by the Gran Electro of Bachmayer in 1908, which was also highly successful thanks to the usage of up-to-date technology. For a short period of time, the huge popularity of travelling cinema groups and their programmes created the need for more film interpreters. However, distributors soon started to send the translations of title cards together with the films, so that the demand for mediators decreased. This is when the first laboratories for Serbian subtitles were founded. Written sources, such as newspapers and different printed

material from the time, started to mention them around 1911 (Slijepčević 1982: 64-66).

The first cinema in Serbia opened in the *Paris Hotel* in 1908. Its owner was Svetozar Botorić, a famous businessman at the time, who soon became a distributor of Pathé. The cinema hired silent film interpreters who translated films from French, German and Hungarian. Shortly after that, more cinemas were opened as well as film laboratories, where the first *intertitles* and subtitles were produced in order to translate films that were mostly coming from France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Denmark, the USA or Russia (Volk 1986: 13-14). The countries that later formed the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were also becoming rather active in the field of film industry as many cinemas, some of which still exist, and laboratories or studios for creating subtitles in target languages were opened between 1906 and 1918. Posters, film programmes, and other advertising material were translated or produced. Moreover, this is when the first local films were made as well, and production companies from all over the world filmed documentaries about various periods of local history and the Balkan Wars. More than 260 such pictures were made between 1897 and 1918 (1986: 17).

These cinemas were places where people could admire films, get informed about the world news and watch documentaries from that time, but they were also often criticised for allegedly being highly influenced by the above mentioned foreign cultures (1986: 14). Books, newspapers, theatre shows and circuses also used to visit Serbian and other former Yugoslav republics' cities, and all together brought cultural, but also some political, trade, educational, and lifestyle kinds of influences. The travelling and permanent cinemas also gave an impulse to the creation of the Yugoslav and Serbian film industry (1986: 6-14).

2.3 Introduction of sound and the first subtitles

At the international level, the use of sound was followed by the first subtitles that were made in French, German and Spanish by large American



companies. The first sound film, more precisely the first feature-length film with synchronized dialogues was *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland 1927). More developed countries, such as the Netherlands or Sweden, soon decided to introduce subtitles as the mode of audiovisual translation transfer. This was also the choice of some other countries which, in spite of having high levels of illiterate population, selected subtitles as the cheaper AVT option. *The Jazz Singer*, which contained dialogue and silent fragments with title cards, was the first to be translated, and it was into French two years after its release. The title cards in English were changed into title cards in French, and the subtitles in French, which contained the translation of dialogue, were projected on a side screen (Izard 1992: 92). However, the first film with subtitles in the modern sense was *The Singing Fool* (Lloyd Bacon, 1929) with subtitles in Danish (Chaume 2004a: 46-52).

The first Serbian film with sound was a bit later in coming. This was *Nevinost bez zaštite* [*Unprotected Innocence*], filmed and directed in 1941 by the famous acrobat Dragoljub Aleksić, and shown in 1943. After it had been forgotten for a long time, it was rediscovered in 1968 by the Serbian film director Dušan Makavejev, who made his own version of the picture. However, the first proper Serbian sound feature film is considered to be *Slavica*³ (Vjekoslav Afrić, 1947) (Volk 1986: 118-119).

Owing to the first laboratories and the fact that the making of *intertitles* and titles in the Serbian language had been common in the Serbian film industry since the beginning of the 20th century, gradually, subtitling became the main mode of language transfer in AVT in this country. This is probably due to the fact that subtitling was cheaper than dubbing, and that was an advantage for Serbian film companies, which often had financial difficulties, mostly due to the wars the country was involved in during the first half of the 20th century. According to some professionals interviewed for my Ph.D. thesis, foreign language learning has always been important in Serbia since Serbian is a minority language. This might be one of the reasons subtitling has persisted in this country (Lukić 2015: 53-54).

³ Female proper name.



On the other hand, according to Volk (1986: 101), dubbing of foreign films also existed, at least up to the late 1930s. A film company that was funded by German capital, *Tesla Film*, dubbed all foreign films in an attempt to penetrate the Serbian market and prepare it for the occupation by the German army that followed shortly. However, this practice was not continued by the majority of companies.

Later, in the 1960s, Serbian public broadcaster, Television Belgrade (RTB), formed the first group of professional translators for TV subtitles. In the former Yugoslavia, this radio and TV broadcaster was part of a national radio and TV centre called Jugoslovenska Radio Televizija [Yugoslav Radio Television] or JRT, which consisted of the radio and TV broadcasters from the capital cities of the six republics and the two autonomous provinces that used to make up the former Yugoslavia. After the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, Television Belgrade changed its name into RTS, the current public broadcaster in Serbia. The in-house translators at Television Belgrade created conventions for TV subtitling, which are different from today's standards mostly in the stricter text reduction and in the layout, which is due to the changes in technology. According to Zora Čavić Ilić, one of the first audiovisual translators at Television Belgrade, who worked for this broadcaster until the late 1990s (when it was no longer RTB but RTS), translators used to insert subtitles manually at appropriate places in the film at the studio, using subtitling equipment. In the beginning, it was common to spot simultaneously with the broadcast. Thanks to subtitling software and the Internet, the whole subtitling process is different today (Lukić 2015: 58). Moreover, audiovisual translators used to be employed in-house, whereas today they are mostly freelancers.

3. Working Conditions and Other Professional Issues

3.1 The translator's task and job requirements

As mentioned above, the subtitling process has been almost completely digitalized as both translators or subtitlers and technicians perform their



part of work using subtitling software. Its cost is much lower than in the case of dubbing due to the small number of participants (Díaz Cintas 2001: 77-86). The subtitling process in Serbia, which largely depends on the new technological development, starts when a TV station, a production or distribution company contacts the subtitler, who translates the source text or subtitles, produces the subtitles and conducts the spotting (Lukić 2015: 80). Here I refer to a *subtitler* as a professional who performs both the translation and spotting, in the same way as Díaz Cintas and Remael explain (2007: 35). According to most Serbian professionals I have interviewed, the fact that one person translates texts, produces subtitles and usually conducts the spotting should ensure a better quality of subtitles than if several people carried out these tasks. This is also in line with the opinion of some scholars, such as Chaume (2004: 84) and Díaz Cintas (2001: 106).

In the case of *voice-over*, translators are advised to keep in mind that Serbian narrators start to read the text one or two seconds after the original utterances and finish before these end, so that some quantitative reduction in the target text content might be necessary. In the dubbing of cartoons or animated films, the duration of original utterances must be taken into consideration as well, while lip-synch is not as strict as in the dubbing of other genres. As mentioned at the beginning of the article, some TV broadcasters, such as B92, and DVD editions, use off-screen dubbing for narrative parts of a documentary text and subtitles for the speech of the participants (talking heads) or experts who appear on screen (Lukić 2013: 192, 2015: 15). Translators therefore need to master the use of subtitling software and also know how to produce proper translation for off-screen dubbing. All these parts of the translator's job take time and effort, as well as adequate preparation (Lukić 2009: 238, 2015: 91-93).

Translators usually obtain dialogue or spotting lists by e-mail or through File Transfer Protocols, together with video files. If the video file is not available, this makes the translation job more difficult, even though in most cases the fees remain the same. Translators are usually provided with the



script or dialogue list or they try to download them from the Internet themselves. On rare occasions, they must translate without a dialogue or spotting lists and rely on the sound, which makes the process much longer and it may influence the quality of the target text. The interviewed professionals highlight that it is important for translators to familiarize themselves with each stage of the process and take into consideration all the constraints that these translation modes involve in order to achieve the best possible results (see Lukić 2015: 81-85). Additional issues might arise during the spotting of subtitles or the dialogue synchronization in dubbing if translators are asked to translate from English films which are originally in another language that they have no command of. This is why some TV channels, such as the public broadcaster RTS or B92, use translators who are proficient in the source language in question and can help the English subtitlers during the spotting (Lukić 2015: 84).

The working conditions and subtitling conventions at RTS and other main TV stations on the one hand, and at subtitling companies or distributors on the other, are quite different. According to the interviewed professionals, the payments tend to be lower in the case of distributors, and conventions such as reading speed, the position for subtitles (centred and left-aligned subtitles) and punctuation conventions (for instance the use of capital letters and italics) are not uniformed in the case of film translations created for the same or different distributors according to the text analysis preformed in the research (Lukić 2015: 203-448). Nevertheless, the subtitling process is rather similar in all cases, except for the fact that subtitling companies or distributors that produce Serbian subtitles for DVD, Blue-ray editions that can be purchased on the Internet, or in shops, or videos on demand offered by cable TV providers, usually have their translators use templates in English (Lukić 2015: 70). After the subtitles have been created by translators in subtitling programs, some of which were specially made for TV broadcasters such as RTS and B92, they are sent back to their clients, checked by proof-readers and introduced by technicians on the master copy. They can move subtitles few seconds back

or forward if necessary, after which the copy is revised once again before creating the final version of the film (Lukić 2015: 63-69).

Other factors that can influence the quality of translations and result in more demanding working conditions are short deadlines. Although some broadcasters offer a possibility of a moderate translation pace of seven to ten days, in the case of documentary films (60 to 100 minutes), which can have specific terminology and require subtitling and synchronization of off-screen narration, the interviewed professionals state that they are normally allowed from two to five days, depending on the company, for subtitling a feature film. Nebojša Cvetković, a translator who works for the public broadcaster RTS, claims that he usually needs three days to translate a standard-length film⁴, while some dubbing translators, such as Predrag Kovačević, report that they require a day to translate a cartoon series episode (round twenty-three minutes) (Lukić 2015: 91-92).

3.2 Copyright

At the beginning of the 1990s, there was a lack of adequate legislation in the film industry and translation copyright laws in Serbia. As several of the interviewed experts, translators or professionals who manage the translation process in dubbing studios or TV networks report, it was not unusual to broadcast films, series, cartoons, or animated films without necessary licenses, and subtitling and dubbing were often performed unprofessionally or disregarded even the minimum standards. However, at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, there was a series of changes in the matter of copyright in the film and media industry, which brought about certain regulations for translators' work, such as the compulsory signing of the copyright contract. Even though there are still many irregularities in the sector of AVT, and older translations or those that were done in former Yugoslav republics are often used without permission or necessary authorization, the situation is improving (Lukić 2015:39).

⁴ 90 to 100 minutes.



Translators sign a contract with the broadcaster or distributor, in which they give up their copyright on translations for a particular period of time⁵. For instance, the public broadcaster buys the copyright for five years, according to Nikola Popović, Head of the Film Unit at RTS, and Nikola Cvetković, their in-house translator. Translators can also sell their translations to other countries with similar languages, which used to be part of the former Yugoslavia, such as Montenegro (Lukić 2015: 87-87). Some broadcasters sell the translations to other countries and share the profit with the translators (Lukić 2009: 236). On the other hand, some distributors require translators to completely and permanently hand over their translation copyright to the company. A point in favour of AVT translators in Serbia, above all in the case of larger TV stations, is the fact that their name is credited at the end of a film, cartoon or series, whereas this is not the case in some European countries, such as Spain (Chaume 2004a: 111). Moreover, the authors of all translated texts that were quoted in subtitles, as well as the title and the edition of the book that contains these texts must be listed together with the subtitler's name at the end of a film or series.

As for broadcasting copyright, Miroslav Živanović, Head of Programme Acquisition at B92, explains that this TV network buys the rights for broadcasting a film twice and repeats the transmission up to 24 hours after the initial one. According to this type of contracts with distributors, neither this company, nor its translators are allowed to resell the translation, or broadcast the subtitled version of the film in the future. In the contract with a distributing company, the broadcaster specifies whether a TV programme is going to be subtitled, dubbed or re-voiced, and gives back or destroys the material once the copyright has expired. This means that the distributing company can use or resell the translated programme in the future. Regarding translation copyright, B92 usually purchases translation rights from the translator for six months or a year (Lukić 2015: 88).

⁵ These contracts are concluded by the Serbian Authors Agency, which has been providing its services since 1955. For more information see www.autorskaagencija.com.

3.3 Rates

It was difficult to establish what rates apply to translation in the dubbing, subtitling or voice-over process, as this is often seen as an improper question which should not be disclosed. Nevertheless, some professionals were greatly cooperative and this enabled me to gather some relevant information. Firstly, the difference among the rates is considerable and depends on the translation mode (subtitling or dubbing), and whether the client is a broadcaster, distributor or an international subtitling agency. According to the correspondence with translators between 2007 and 2015, the rates for subtitling a 90- or 120-minute film could be as low as €40 or reach as much as €200. In well-established TV networks the rates are similar: they pay around €100 for a film which is up to 100 minutes long, and €1 for every additional minute. The price for a dubbed animated film is around €100 (Lukić 2009: 236, Lukić 2015: 88).

The rates are different in the case of international subtitling studios and agencies which work with translators from Serbia. According to these translators, their rates range from €150 to €300 per film (Lukić 2015: 89-90). In all cases, the rates are lower than in Spain, for instance, where the average rate for TV subtitling is between €300 and €450 for a 90-minute film, or around €70 for dubbing (translation and synchronization) of 10 minutes of the animated film (Chaume 2004a: 108-109). More recently, the rates in Spain have dropped, and in 2012, in the case of documentaries, they ranged between €30 and €60 per 10 minutes of the movie (Lukić 2015: 89).

Not all Serbian translators receive enough commissions to live on that work alone, given the above rates (in the case of TV translators this is round six or more films a month in order to obtain some minimum earnings of 600€, slightly more than the translators' average salary in Serbia

according to the data base InfoPlate.rs⁶), and they do not have any professional associations to protect their rights (Lukić 2015: 91-97).

The above rates in Serbia are just illustrative and provide an idea of the amount of work that Serbian translators may have, but cannot be considered definite findings as more research is necessary to accurately establish the average rates.

3.4 Training

Since English is a lingua franca in Serbia and it is taught at all levels of education, there are TV technicians who, thanks to their ability to work with subtitling software and their good command of this language, have started to subtitle American or British films for different distributors. In many companies which used to translate films on VHS and, and later on the DVD, as well as on some TV channels, these professionals became the first self-taught subtitlers, who then trained new translators in spotting and producing subtitles (Lukić 2015: 96-98).

Miroslav Živanović, Head of Programme Acquisition at B92, Nikola Popović, Head of the Films Division at RTS, and Nikola Cvetković, in-house translator at RTS, claim that, even though more and more audiovisual translators today hold a degree in modern languages, this is not an essential requirement (Lukić 2015: 93-94). Previous experience is highly appreciated, as well as their command of English and Serbian. What is more, according to the interviewed Serbian professionals, including a dubbing translator Predrag Kovačević, the translator of animated films such as *The Ice Age* or *Horton Hears a Who!*, and coordinators of translation teams at B92 and RTS, translators do not necessarily hold a university degree in the language from which they translate, but they do need to have an excellent command of the source and target languages and should possess general knowledge about the source culture, customs and history.

⁶ See <http://www.infoplate.rs/plata/prevodilacki-poslovi/prevodilac>. Accessed on: 29th October 2016.

It should be mentioned that undergraduate university students in Serbia do not have the opportunity to take a degree in translation and interpreting, and that translation practice is studied as part of curricula in philology or modern languages. For this reason, generally speaking, not enough or no time is dedicated to teaching AVT (Lukić 2015: 93, 94). The situation has recently slightly improved at the postgraduate level, as a Master's programme that includes AVT was launched at the University of Novi Sad in the academic year 2015/2016.

In most cases, it is experienced translators who train new colleagues or these are given guides or style books that need to be used as reference points in subtitling and translation for dubbing and voice-over. Translators who work for RTS have established a set of rules that form a part of their style sheet, and their experienced translators are in charge of training new subtitlers (Lukić 2015: 92-98, 434).

Translators from languages other than English are mostly graduates of the modern language they translate from. Television stations sometimes also count on translators from minority languages who master the language in question and do not have to use subtitling software, as technicians perform spotting later on in the AVT process. Moreover, Miroslav Živanović from B92 channel claims that this broadcaster tries to offer working opportunity to novice translators as well. Some networks, such as the public broadcaster RTS, have other translators from their team proofread the translations from other languages. On the other hand, there are companies, normally those in charge of DVD editions, which seem to try to make the translation more economical by excluding proofreading from the process (Lukić 2009: 231, 2015: 67-71). Generally speaking, it seems that some employers still prefer fast and cheap translations to those performed by experienced and trained professionals, which significantly affects the quality of the final product.

According to the interviewed professionals from the RTS, B92 as well as the translators who work for various distributors, such as *Tuck Video*, plenty of untrained and unqualified audiovisual translators have entered the



profession since the number of cable TV channels rapidly increased starting from 2000 (Lukić 2015: 92-93).

3.5 Quality standards and conventions

Subtitling is considered to be a *vulnerable translation* (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007: 56), as both source and target text are displayed. Nevertheless, the constraints related to the medium and the subtitling conventions seem to be relatively unknown to the Serbian public and critics according to most interviewed professionals (Lukić 2015: 91-92). Therefore, translators complain that they are targets of unfounded criticism about the translation content and the way it is transferred, normally due to text reduction or reformulation (Lukić 2015: 92). In the following example, we can see how translated text in the subtitle is rather shorter than the original version due to the text reduction, which allows the viewer to read the text more quickly although some of them might question the faithfulness of the rendered translation.

Example 1	
Subtitling Film: <i>The Shawshank Redemption</i> TCR: 00:04:26	
(Source Text)	THE PROSECUTOR (OFF) Ladies and gentlemen, you've heard all the evidence. You know all the facts.
(Serbian Subtitles)	<i>Dame i gospodo,</i> <i>čuli ste sve dokaze.</i>
(author's backtranslation of Serbian subtitles)	<i>Ladies and gentlemen,</i> <i>you've heard all the evidence.</i>
Problem: Text reduction	

Moreover, translators are criticized for the use of profanities to translate swearwords. In that respect, the public television translation team avoid rendering swearwords when these are not important for the plot, when they are repeated or simply used for emphasis (Lukić 2010: 216, 2015: 329-336). This is also the case at the Croatian public TV, where offensive

language is forbidden and translators must be rather imaginative in their attempt to replace it (Nikolić 2005: 34-35). The Serbian public broadcaster has a five-page long style sheet, which includes these and other important rules concerning spotting, translation and the use of language, and which must be followed by the translators (Lukić 2015: 92). TV critics and working professionals in the television sector, and above all, AVT sector, consider subtitles and other translated audiovisual texts to be of great educational significance, and believe that they should be an example of the proper use of standard language.

Most interviewed experts give subtitles on RTS and a few other large broadcasters, such as B92, as an example of high quality subtitles due to the quality of the target language, and well spotted and segmented subtitles. What the interviewed TV translators in principle believe is that information should be divided into subtitles according to syntactic and grammatical considerations (Lukić 2010: 93, 106-109). According to them, the same should be considered in the case of line breaks. This is one of the golden rules in subtitling according to Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 172), who specify that subtitles should be structured and organized “in such a way that they are semantically and syntactically self-contained” when possible. Therefore, it can be said that Serbian subtitling for TV mainly follows this as well as many other conventions regarding subtitles layout, such as, the reading speed or the fact that subtitles never remain on screen more than six seconds.

Subtitling in Serbia differs, although infrequently, in the use of explanatory notes in brackets (Lukić 2009: 234, 2015: 306-307), which has always been anathema to subtitling as Díaz Cintas and Remael note (2007: 57). Sometimes, when the dialogue speed is high, texts that belong to two different characters, separated by a dash, can appear on the same line, which is also considered incorrect (Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007: 111-112). According to our analysis carried out on the corpus consisting of several DVD samples produced by renowned distributors, their subtitles show great diversity in the strategies and conventions applied, such as the

duration of subtitles or the text reduction and layout, even though segmentation is mostly performed in agreement with grammatical considerations (Lukić 2015: 435-437).

A common point of subtitling and dubbing texts in Serbian is a great number of literal translations in the case of film titles, but also dialogues, and a tendency to apply foreignization, as defined by Venuti (2004: 483), rather than domestication (Lukić 2015: 438-445). Nonetheless, translation for dubbing is less conventionalized and generally does not follow the standards that exist in dubbing countries, such as Spain, Italy or Germany, as translators hardly ever use takes or write time codes or symbols. Nevertheless, the use of brackets to write paralinguistic or kinetic information is present, as well as the use of foot-notes or comments on translated dialogue lists. Moreover, films dubbed in studios such as *Loudworks*, or *Tuck Vision*, which follow modern standards in dubbing and voice-over, are considered to be of high quality, as pointed out by interviewed translators and other TV professionals (Lukić 2015: 369, 434).

4. Conclusion

This article shows that audiovisual translation in Serbia is an unexplored field of research in general and a rather disregarded profession in comparison with other translating activities in the country, such as literary or technical translation. I have attempted to give some preliminary observations regarding its state and history, as well as to describe some of its basic features, by using findings achieved during the research conducted for my Ph.D. thesis on Audiovisual Translation in Serbia and the series of interviews with working professionals from Serbia.

According to the interviewed Serbian translators, the conclusion is that their work is often not appreciated enough by their employers in spite of the importance that subtitles have for the use of language and their great presence on TV screens. Furthermore, the rates are low, and translator's copyright, although much better than in the 1990s, has not been fully regulated yet. On the other hand, translators' responsibility is high, as they



render the source text and perform the spotting, or even synchronize dialogue in the case of re-voicing. The situation is slightly different in the dubbing industry, as the number of translators established in this profession is small and their conditions are considered to be better compared to subtitlers.

Translators' backgrounds vary, even though the most established broadcasters hire experienced professionals who follow conventions that are in most cases similar to the standards included in Ivarsson and Carroll (1998: 157-159) or those presented by Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 69-183).

Hopefully, this article will encourage more research on AVT in Serbia and in the broader region. As the above Ph.D. thesis included diverse aspects of subtitling, dubbing and voice-over in order to offer a panoramic view of the AVT in Serbia, further and thorough research about varied translation questions (translation of humour or multilingual films, for instance) based on a coherent corpus selected for that purpose is required. Moreover, the comparison of conventions followed by senior and novice translators; ideological interference in subtitling; fansubs; the historical aspects and changes that influenced the AVT in Serbia in the early 1990s; a systematic study of legal aspects related to AVT and the use of up-to-date technology in its process, are only some of many interesting topics which can be examined.

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