Making the inaccessible accessible: a panorama of audiovisual translation, accessibility and audio description in Japan

Introduction

After the 'cultural turn,' a term coined by Mary Snell-Hornby (1990) and used in Translation Studies (TS) to describe the move towards the analysis of translation from a cultural studies angle[1], and later taken up by Bassnett and Lefevere (1990) as an umbrella concept to hold together different case studies ranging from the power of the publishing industry, through translation as 'appropriation,' translation and colonization, or translation as rewriting, to feminist writing and translation, now the trend in TS is shifting in a different direction. The publishing of different books that target TS in Japan[2] only serves as a restatement of the awareness of a need to fill in a very specific theoretical gap, a de-Westernized point of view of the Other. The aim of this paper is to focus on the present situation of Audiovisual Translation Studies (AVT) in Japan, one of the many subdisciplines of TS, as well as to serve as the initial study to look into the state of accessibility in the Japanese context, focusing particularly on audio description (AD).

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1. Audiovisual Translation

This section begins with an overview of TS in Japan and with a general introduction of the subdisciplines of AVT within Western scholarship, followed by an analysis of the state of AVT in the Japanese context. It makes an effort to list most of the major translation academies offering

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1 See Snell-Hornby (2006) for a relatively updated critical assessment of the discipline of Translation Studies from a European viewpoint highlighting the different 'turns' or ground-breaking contributions that have led to new paradigms in this field.

2 See Sato-Rossberg & Wakabayashi (eds) (2012), Levy (ed.) (2011), Clements (2015) for studies in English concerning Japanese Translation Studies in the Japanese context.

AVT courses in Japan, and it brings into question what is the impact of AVT studies in the Japanese academia by looking into AVT-related articles published in the journal *Hon'yaku kenkyū e no shōtai* (Invitation to Translation Studies). Finally, this section moves on to analyse some of the new issues presented in the specific context of Japanese AVT studies (such as 'Telop' subtitles), and it offers new lines of research for further analysis (i.e., Japanese 'supra-subtitles').

1.1. A brief background of TS in Japan

After having been in the shadow of Western TS for the last few decades, now Japanese TS is starting to look back at its own linguistic and theoretical frameworks in order to establish itself as an independent discipline. It could be said that there is a de-Westernizing (or maybe Japanizing?) turn starting to take shape inside the field of Japanese TS. Nevertheless, Judy Wakabayashi also asks Japanese scholars not to turn their backs completely on the Western scholarship, which is more analytical, critical, and ideologically oriented (Wakabayashi in Sato-Rossberg & Wakabayashi 2012: 46).

It is not difficult to foresee that Japanese TS will experience a notable rise in the coming years, partly because of the increase in translation courses in private, work-oriented institutions, and partly as a result of the increase of translation and/or interpretation courses offered at universities at the BA and/or MA level, which had increased to over a hundred by 2005 (Someya 2010: 73-74). In 2002, Rikkyo University and Kobe University launched some graduate programs to foster the professional training of translators, as well as research programs in translation and interpreting (MA level only)[3], and Tokyo University of Foreign Studies started an interpreting program in 2003. Furthermore, some translation researchers led by Akira Mizuno established the ground for what in 2007 would be known as *Hon'yaku kenkyū e no shōtai*, a peer-reviewed journal dedicated to TS with a total of 14 volumes and 113 publications published up to September of 2015 (it could be said that TS gained popularity in 2011, since starting that year, the annual journal started to issue two volumes per year).

In 2008, one year after the first issue of *Hon'yaku kenkyū e no shōtai* came out, the name of the *Nihon Tsūyaku Gakkai* (Japan Association for Interpretation Studies) was changed to *Nihon Tsūyaku Hon'yaku Gakkai* (Japan Association for Interpreting and Translation Studies (JAITS)) to include TS. Also, two study groups were created in western Japan in 2010, the *Kansai Tsūyaku Hon'yaku Riron oyobi Kyōjuhō Kenkyūkai* (The Interpreting and Translation Studies Initiatives Kansai) led by Yasumasa Someya, and the *Kansai Translation Studies Kenkyūkai* (Kansai Translation Studies Research Group), led by Nana Sato-Rossberg[4].

The focus of Japanese TS is changing. By reviewing past literature in the field and creating new theories that suit the specific characteristics of its own language, Japanese TS is aiming to foster its own identity. This development, alongside the important contribution that public institutions and lecturers are making to foster future researchers and scholars, will keep on nurturing the field in Japan and overseas for years to come.

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3 Among scholarly papers on TS are: Ihara 2003, Sato-Rossberg 2007, Sato-Rossberg 2015 and Sato 2008.

4 For an institutional and social overview of the discipline of TS in Japan over the recent years up to 2011, see Kayoko Takeda in Sato-Rossberg & Wakabayashi (eds) (2012).

1.2. A brief introduction to AVT Studies

Globalization has emerged as one of the main components of the 21st Century. Translation is no longer handcuffed to static texts in a book or on a computer screen. In her well-known paper 'Issues in Audiovisual Translation' (2009), Delia Chiaro carries out a thorough review of the current state of Audiovisual Translation (AVT), which she defines as "one of the several overlapping umbrella terms that include 'media translation,' 'multimedia translation,' 'multimodal translation' and 'screen translation'" (qtd. in Munday (ed.) 2009: 141).

Audiovisual Translation (AVT) focuses on the study of audiovisual products and their translation (dubbing, subtitling) or adaptation[5] (audio description, subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing). Since the object of study is an audiovisual product itself, the channels of information through which the audience will get the information are not the same when compared to traditional translation. In AVT, every audiovisual product is built upon two main channels: the visual channel and the acoustic channel, from which the audience will receive the message. Furthermore, both visual and acoustic channels are shaped by signs –verbal or non-verbal– which belong to different semantic codes. This is what enables the recreation of the message later on[6]. In his study 'Translation and mass-communication: Film and TV Translation as Evidence of Cultural Dynamic,' Dirk Delabastita (1989) created one of the first serious academic studies of AVT and identified four basic elements inherent in the audiovisual product (or text): the acoustic-verbal element (dialogue, monologue, songs, voice-off); the acoustic-nonverbal element (musical score, sound effects, noises); the visual-nonverbal element (image, photography, gestures); and the visual-verbal (inserts, banners, letters, messages on computer screens, newspaper headlines) (Díaz Cintas 2008: 3).

Nowadays AVT is still expanding its horizons. New categories such as localization, video game translation, fansubs, transcreation and so on are gaining popularity. The interaction between translation and new technologies has unravelled a whole new world of possibilities for AVT scholars, and that is one of the main reasons for the increasing popularity of this TS discipline, which in its turn has its own subdisciplines: dubbing (where the source language voice-track is replaced by a target language voice track); voice-over (where the voice-track of the target language is reproduced over the voice-track of the source language, a technique frequently used in documentaries or interviews); interlingual subtitling (open, if they are an integrated part of the version of the film, or closed, if the viewer can choose, for example in a DVD menu, not to see them); bilingual subtitling (where subtitles are provided simultaneously in two languages); respeaking (speech recognition-based subtitling,); surtitling (subtitles which are projected above stages or on seatbacks of operas or theatres); intralingual subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (SDH) (also called closed captions since they are not integrated in the film itself), and audio description (AD) (a voice-track of the source language that comments on the action on the stage or film, aimed for the blind and visually impaired) (Gambier (ed.) 2003). Dubbing and subtitling enjoy a certain status amongst AVT scholars, whilst intralingual subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing and audio description are

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5 In general, the term adaptation is frowned upon in TS, since it implies 'a lesser form of translation' (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007: 9), whereas in terms of AVT in general, and localization in particular, it has a relatively neutral meaning. Leo Chan also remarks on the connection between adaptation and the Japanese term *hon'an* (翻案), which 'connotes transmutation' and includes the 'rewriting of source texts –even the extensive manipulation,' as opposed to 'proper' translation or *hon'yaku* (翻訳), which normally refers to literal translations (Chan 2009: 393).

6 For detailed overviews of AVT see Chiaro (2009), Delabastita (1989), Pym (2004) and Chaume (2004).

two categories in AVT hardly studied outside the context of European languages (and surtitling is barely referred to in most AVT-related texts)[7].

Audiovisual Translation (AVT), also known as Screen Translation or TV Translation, is one of the emerging and newest subgenres in the theorization and descriptive research of TS. Nevertheless, it is precisely because of this fact that it was not until the last twenty years (and more profusely in the last ten years) that a more independent, interdisciplinary scholarship appeared. Dirk Delabastita, Yves Gambier, Jorge Díaz Cintas and Delia Chiaro are some of the relevant names in AVT, but there is still a lack of scholarship for non-Western languages. In relation to this, and after admitting the lack of a complete study overview of the impact of screen translation on a global level, Delia Chiaro breaks down Europe into two categories depending on what major AVT techniques are used when translating films or TV programmes (Chiaro 2009). She points out that the UK, Benelux, Scandinavian countries, Greece and Portugal belong to the subtitling category, whereas central and southern European countries stretching from Germany down to Spain (France, Italy, Germany, and also Austria) belong to the dubbing category. She then goes beyond the European countries by listing other nations where subtitling is the preferred mode, like Israel, Hong Kong or Thailand, and areas where dubbing is strong, such as Québec, Latin America, mainland China and Japan.

In *Introducing translation Studies* (2012), Munday acknowledges that AVT is a 'potentially vast area' that is growing 'in both teaching and researching terms' (ibid.: 271), and advises against falling into the generalizations of prescriptivism when proposing guidelines, and also recommends to make an effort to not oversimplify the nature of language, in what could also be seen from the perspective of TS as a de-Westernization[8]. Even though Munday refers to the case of interlingual subtitling, one of the most analysed subgenres of AVT alongside dubbing[9], this can be extrapolated to the whole discipline within AVT itself. It is, for example, the case in research on subtitling. Jorge Díaz Cintas and Aline Remael (2007) proposed the creation of 'subtitling guidelines,' and Díaz Cintas's studies of subtitling in the Spanish context[10] have considered the use of humour and the difficulties of putting into subtitles different culture-bound references and have proven to be of great use. In Greece, another major scholar, Fotios Karamitroglou (2000), uses the polysystem theory and the concept of norms to 'discuss dubbing and subtitling preferences in Greece' (Munday 2012: 274). This study draws upon the specific case of Greece, where most TV programmes are dubbed, although it could be applied to other countries with strong dubbing traditions. These theories, of great use in order to bring into visibility subtitling studies, remain strongly connected to Western theories and Western languages.

Therefore, there arises the importance of pursuing specific research in each individual target language, or even in each language combination. Even though this tendency is bound to change in

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7 Munday (2012) only mentions them as a category and moves on to discuss dubbing, subtitling, transcriptions, and fansubs. Chiaro (2009) comments extensively on dubbing and subtitling, and explains fansubs, voice-over and localization for video games categories, as well as real-time subtitling and respeaking.

8 Munday (2012: 272) specifically refers to audiovisual subtitling and mentions Díaz Cintas and Remael's extensive study of subtitling where they propose a set of 'subtitling guidelines,' which in Toury's descriptive terms would be also called 'generalization'.

9 In Chiaro (2009: 141).

10 See Díaz Cintas (2003), Díaz Cintas & Muñoz (2006), and Díaz Cintas & Matamala & Neves (eds) (2010).

the next few years, the scarce scholarship in subtitling[11], as well as other areas of AVT in Japan, is still nowadays a reality.

Again, AVT studies is being defined by the geographical borders of the target language in use. A great amount of scholarship on AVT does not go beyond the descriptive and pragmatic analysis of a determinate audiovisual product. Being a recent subfield in contrast with other genres of TS, stimulating AVT scholarship in any language should by no means 'limit the scope' of AVT studies.

1.3. Audiovisual Translation in the Japanese context

The landscape of AVT research in Japan has been rather unexplored in comparison to Western countries. Even though there are studies of AVT in the Japanese context, mainly dealing with particular features of the disciplines of subtitling, to my knowledge, there is no comprehensive study that looks into the current state of AVT in Japan as a whole. Since AVT is still a relatively new subgenre inside TS and it is mostly approached in order to foster future professionals, there is still a lack of scholarship, even though studies related to dubbing and subtitling are not scarce. Also, AVT has been recently gaining more popularity in the professional world, as the increase of AVT academies shows, and some universities, like Kobe University, are also starting to introduce subtitling courses inside their translation programs. Thus, the prevalence of subtitling studies in the AVT scholarship by Chiaro (2009: 141) can be also applied to Japan. However, in Chiaro's study, Japan appears on the list of countries with strong dubbing tradition. And even though this might still be true, since when turning on the TV all the foreign movies or series appear automatically on their dubbed versions, there are other factors to take into account. The preference for dubbing over the subtitling mode when translating foreign movies into Japanese is not that clear. According to a survey undertaken in 2011 by Lifenet Insurance Company to 1000 Japanese individuals, when asked what mode they preferred (between dubbing or subtitling) when watching a foreign movie, the results varied according to genre:

Genre of the movie	Preferred Mode: Subtitling (in %)	Preferred Mode: Dubbing (in %)
3D	36.9	52.5
Musicals	56.7	26.7
Romance	59.1	33.4
Action	47.8	47.9
Comedy	44.2	50.5

Table 1. Preferred modes of AVT translation in relation to movie genres.

Drawing on the table, it is not so clear whether dubbing stands in fact as a preferred mode over subtitling. Only the genres of 3D and comedy show results in favour of dubbing, whereas the preferred mode to watch musical and romance movies is subtitling, with action standing between the two options. Also, another survey published in 2014 by Kenji Kinoshita in Lifedoor News in

11 Minako O'Hagan has done a lot of research regarding subtitling and revoicing techniques applied in game localization (Mangiron and O'Hagan 2006).

which 500 Japanese individuals where asked which mode (subtitling or dubbing) they preferred for watching foreign movies, shows that 61.0% of the surveyed respondents preferred subtitles, whereas 36.2% preferred dubbing (the remaining 2.8% answered 'Other options'). Even though these results must be treated with caution, I believe categorizing Japan as a country where dubbing is the primary translation technique may not be entirely appropriate anymore.

Going back to the state of AVT in Japan, it must be noted that there is no official under-/graduate program in AVT, a rather unsurprising fact since not even TS has the privilege of having its own undergraduate or graduate program in Japanese academia. Even so, the number of language academies and specialised schools offering courses in AVT is increasing.

Some of the most renowned academies offering AVT courses are: the Japan Visualmedia Translation Academy (JVTA), the Translation Department of the Audiovisual Technologic Academy, the Fellow Academy Technical School of Translation, and the Practical Translation Course of the Film School of Tokyo. These academies aim to foster future translators in the field of AVT and to prepare them for the job market. Some of them offer diplomas after the completion of the course and passing a final exam. Nevertheless, due to space constraints, the aim of this paper is not to list up all the existing courses. I will leave this task to future research.

In terms of course offerings, they offer different levels of disparity within the several disciplines of AVT. JVTA offers a wide range of courses and programs. They have four online main courses divided into levels (Basic course, Practice course, Advanced course and Professional course) and two online 'Skill-up' courses, and they sometimes offer translation seminars. The Basic course comprises 5 subtitling courses, and 1 voice-over course; the Practice course, 2 voice-over courses, 8 subtitling courses, and 1 lip-synch course; the Advanced course, 2 lip-synch courses, 2 voice-over courses, 8 subtitling courses, and 1 mixed course of voice-over and subtitling. Lastly, the Professional course offers 8 subtitling courses, 2 voice-over courses, and 2 lip-synch courses. The two Skill-up courses offered are a subtitling course and a voice-over course. As for the number of hours required, they are as follows: the Basic course requires 60 minutes/day, 5 days, for 3 months; the Practice course requires 75 minutes/day, 5 days, for 6 months; the Advanced course requires 75 minutes/day, 5 days, for 7 months; the Professional course requires 110 minutes/day, 5 days, for 6 months; and each Skill-up courses require 75 minutes/day, 5 days, for 3 months. Also, they offer some other courses and seminars in software, video games and web localization.

On the other hand, even though there is less on offer in comparison to the numerous programs in JVTA, the effort of other academies to teach AVT is noticeable. The Translation Department of the Audiovisual Technologic Academy offers courses on subtitling and dubbing. The Fellow Academy offers courses on dubbing, subtitling and voice-over. Finally, the Film School of Tokyo offers courses on subtitling.

Building on this, it is clear that subtitling is the most offered course in AVT specialized academies, which means it should be the specialization most in demand within the professional market in Japan. It is not surprising that the subtitling market is on the rise, nor that most of the AVT related research looks at the discipline of subtitling.

Nevertheless, even though AVT is gaining popularity in the professional sector, academia has yet some ground to cover. However, some scholars and translators like Minako O'Hagan have done a great job to make this field more visible over the past few years. Even though her area of specialization

is video game localization (e.g., Mangiron & O'Hagan 2006, O'Hagan 2012), O'Hagan has also noted some interesting peculiarities of Japanese media and their impact on AVT in the case of what she calls *impact captions* (O'Hagan 2013), intra-lingual open captions very common in Japanese, Chinese and South Korean TV programs. These subtitles, called 'Telop' in Japan (Sasamoto & O'Hagan 2014), can be placed on several parts of the screen, not limiting themselves to the traditional placement at the lower part of the screen. One of their peculiarities is that they are not mere translations of the text. These impact captions add extra information about impressions or comments related to things that are happening on the screen, and they also serve to help the audience to know what the program is about by adding headlines. Also, the extra-linguistic components of the subtitles (i.e., colour, font or size of the subtitle) tend to be personalized and to give extra-linguistic information to the audience. Their font, colour, shape, etc., can change considerably depending on the speaker that is talking in order to create a determinate image of that person. If, for example, a young girl makes a comment in a variety program and the editing team think that her intervention is worth being subtitled (either because it is relevant, funny or simply interesting), the colour of her subtitle is more likely to be pink, purple or red, whereas subtitles' colours for men are usually blue, black, yellow or green.

Another interesting point is the subtitling of foreigners' interventions. If a foreigner talks in a rather 'primitive' Japanese, his or her subtitles will most likely be translated using the *katakana* syllabary (used for transcription of foreign language words into Japanese and the writing of loan words, among other uses such as emphasis). There is a great variety of uses for these intralingual subtitles. The editing creativity is endless –they can also be interactive (i.e., becoming bigger if the person who is speaking is screaming). In their conference paper, Sasamoto & O'Hagan (2014) also explored the relationship between the producer's intention and the viewers' response with a multimodal content analysis and a reception study within the framework of relevance theory in order to shed some light on to how these captions 'hook' viewer's attention and in order to establish whether they 'retain' the viewers' attention.

This section also wants to draw attention to another distinctive issue within the subfield of Japanese subtitling: the way of translating puns (i. e., words with double meanings), since it differs greatly from the translation techniques used by Western subtitlers. Usually, Western subtitles have to choose between adapting the pun into the target's culture (domestication), which can change completely the meaning of the joke, or to translate it more literally (foreignization), with the risk that the target audience will not get the pun. In Japanese, subtitlers have the option of conveying two lines of information through two simultaneous subtitles (one smaller in font size than the other). This can be done thanks to the different writing systems that Japanese offers (*hiragana* and *katakana* syllabaries, also known as *kana*, as well as the Chinese characters or *kanji*). By combining them with *furigana*, a system used to gloss words with difficult pronunciations in Japanese, it is possible to create a double subtitle, that is, a subtitle above the main subtitle, or 'supra-subtitle.' For example, the explanation of a humorous comment is written either in *kana* or in *kanji* in the main subtitle, and right above it, the small *furigana* text conveys the romanised reading of the pun taken from the foreign language on the upper subtitle or 'supra-subtitle.' In this way, the target audience can have access both to the meaning of the pun as well as to its original reading, which will be simultaneously verbalised by the actor or actress, thus creating a stronger bond between the subtitles and the visual channel of the audiovisual product.

Normally, subtitlers need to make use of their creative skills in order to convey humour in these plays on words, an exceptionally difficult task where the translator is still restricted by yet another factor,

the maximum number of characters per line. Furthermore, Telop subtitles and 'supra-subtitles' give Japanese subtitlers a wide range of freedom when translating acronyms, names of organizations, or imaginary concepts. These are only some examples in which applied subtitling techniques vary significantly from one language combination to another.

These examples only cover some aspects of the peculiarities of Japanese media and the ways of translating audiovisual texts from different formats that are not used in the Western world, but further research is bound to reveal even more. The information gap concerning AVT techniques applied to the Japanese context is still vast. Nevertheless, the number of papers on AVT published on JAITS' online journal *Hon'yaku kenkyū e no shōtai* (Invitation to Translation Studies) over the years is still noticeable[12].

The most prolific AVT researchers are, with a total of two publications, Yoko Yada (2010, 2013), and Ryutaro Nishino and Kayoko Nohara, as co-authors (2013, 2014)[13]. As regards the number of AVT related publications in each issue, Vol. 3 had one AVT-related publication, Vol. 4 had three AVT-related publications, Vol.5 had one co-authored AVT-related publication, Vol. 7 had two AVT-related publications, Vol. 9 had one AVT-related publication, Vol. 10 had two AVT-related publications (one of them co-authored), and Vol. 12 had one co-authored AVT-related publication. Out of the total of 113 articles published in the journal up to Vol. 14 (issued on September, 2015), eleven were AVT-related.

Nº of volume	Month and year of publication	Total of papers published per volume issued	Total of AVT related papers per volume issued
1	January, 2007	8	0
2	February, 2008	11	0
3	March, 2009	9	1
4	May, 2010	10	3
5	February, 2011	8	1
6	August, 2011	5	0
7	March, 2012	10	2
8	August, 2012	6	0
9	April, 2013	12	1
10	August, 2013	5	2
11	April, 2014	3	0
12	October, 2014	10	1
13	May, 2015	6	0
14	September, 2015	10	0
TOTAL		**113**	**11**

Table 2. AVT-related papers in comparison to TS papers published on the journal
Hon'yaku kenkyū e no shōtai (Invitation to Translation Studies) from 2007 to 2015.

12 The most recent volume was issued in September 2015 (vol.14).

13 Yoko Yada also wrote her Doctoral dissertation on the semiotic and cognitive specificities of the subtitling of cultural referents of Spanish and French into Japanese (Yada 2009).

- Vol. 3 (issued on March, 2009): Kinuyo Ino's '*Eizō hon'yaku kyōiku ni okeru nyūsu kyōzai*' [News broadcasts as teaching materials to teach Audiovisual Translation].

- Vol. 4 (issued on May, 2010): Yoko Yada's '*Jimaku hon'yaku no kigōgakuteki bunseki: Almodovar no eiga to kigōgaku · Semiologic Analysis of Subtitle Translation: the Film [sic] of Pedro Almodóvar and European Semiology,*' Takuya Wakao's '*Shichōkaku hon'yaku ni okeru yūmoa no yakushikata · kessokusei no kanten kara*' [The translation of humour in Audiovisual Translation: From the point of view of unity], and Chihiro Tamura's '*Nihon no animēshon eiga no eigo fukikaeban ni okeru serifu no tsukekuwae ni kansuru kenkyū: Studio Ghibli no anime sakuhin no bunseki kara*' [Research on the addition of dialogue in the English dubbed versions of Japanese animation films: An analysis of the works of Studio Ghibli].

- Vol. 5 (issued on February, 2011): Yukiko Ushie and Michiko Nishio's '*Eiga jimaku ni mirareru "mijikai ōtō" no yaku no tokuchō*' [Peculiarities in the translation of short answers in audiovisual subtitling].

- Vol. 7 (issued on March, 2012): Mutsuko Tsuboi's '*Gurōbaruka to media hon'yaku: shakai kigōronkei gengo jinruigaku no kirihiraku aratana chihei (Globalization and Media Translation: A New Frontier Opened Up by Semiotic Anthropology),*' and a book review by Miwako Kitadai on Keisuke Takami's '*Jimaku no meikō: Himeda Yohishiro to furansu eiga*' [The craft of subtitles: Yoshiro Himeda and the French films].

- Vol. 9 (issued on April, 2013): Yuko Shinohara's '*Eiga "okuribito" no eigo jimaku ni okeru ibunka yōso (nihonteki yūhyōsei) no hon'yaku hōryaku ni kansuru kōsatsu (A Study of Strategies for Translating Culture-Specific Items in the English Subtitles of the film Departures)*'.

- Vol. 10 (issued on August, 2013): Yoko Yada's '*Nissei eizō hon'yaku hōryaku teigi no kigōgakuteki kenshō (Semiotic verification of Techniques of Translation for Audiovisual Translation between Spanish and Japanese),*' and Ryutaro Nishino and Kayoko Nohara's '*Development and Evaluation of Localization Training Software*'.

- Vol. 12 (issued on October, 2014): Ryutaro Nishino and Kayoko Nohara's '*Software UI eigo no rejisutā bunseki: mokuhyō tekusuto seisei nōryoku no kōjō ni mukete (Register Analysis of Software UI English: For Improving TT Generation Competence)*'.

List 1. List of AVT-related papers published on the journal
Hon'yaku kenkyū e no shōtai (Invitation to Translation Studies).

In conclusion, out of a total of 113 published articles, 11 deal with different disciplines of AVT. That is a 9.7 % of the total. Taking into account that *Hon'yaku kenkyū e no shōtai* is an interdisciplinary translation journal that welcomes papers related to different disciplines of TS (technical translation, literary translation, etc.), the fact that almost 1 in 10 papers are AVT related helps to support the hypothesis that AVT studies are, although slowly, holding on tightly to TS in the Japanese context. It is not unimaginable to think that, after some years, an exclusive AVT-related journal may be born. This, of course, will probably need to be backed by the academic world, but since some universities

like Kobe University are already offering subtitling courses in their translation programs, the settled establishment of AVT studies in Japan may not be too far away.

2. Accessibility in Audiovisual Translation in the Japanese context

This section will focus its attention on accessibility within AVT in the Japanese context. The lack of information concerning accessibility in the Japanese context has been a recurrent issue. This section wishes to shed some light on this field by providing up-to-date information on the subdiscipline of subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (SDH) in Japan. In addition, it also wants to encourage further research on accessibility by bringing out the figure of the movie narrator or *benshi* as an example.

2.1. An overview of the state of accessibility in Japan

Nowadays, the way in which media are conveyed to the audience is gaining more importance. On the same note, regulations are being drafted in more and more countries to ensure that all the audience can have access to audiovisual materials. Even though there is much work left to be done, accessibility in the media is little by little being taken care for. Accessibility in AVT mainly refers to the transmission of meaning to two specific audiences: to the deaf and hard-of-hearing by means of intralingual subtitling (also known as closed captioning), and to the blind and visually impaired by means of audio description.

Academically, intralingual subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (SDH) and audio description (AD) have been also the focus of many studies over the past years in Western scholarship. But as Gambier (2009: 17) points out, 'what has been done comprises strangely isolated descriptions, supposedly neutral and within national borders (Catalans speak about Catalan TV, Germans tackle dubbing in Germany), as if English were never used as a pivot language, or as if AVT never had implications for a minority, or corpus research could never help in the processing of data, etc.' To my knowledge, the study on accessibility in the Japanese media is still a field in its very early stages. This should not be a surprise, taking into account the situation of scholarship written on AVT in the Japanese context. This paper aims to bridge this gap.

2.2. The current state of SDH in Japan

Thanks to major improvements in sound editing and media techniques, nowadays accessibility to audiovisual products is not only an option but a requirement in some countries, to the extent that a minimum amount of hours per week need to be audio described or closed captioned. According to a study published by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan in 2008, there are approximately 343,000 hearing-impaired people and approximately 310,000 visually-impaired people who carry a physical disability certificate in Japan[14]. This number grows when one looks at Inoue Shigeki's *Research on The Usefulness of Closed Captions on TV Commercials*, where he reveals that 'there are today some 360,000 hearing-impaired people in Japan' with a physical disability certificate (Shigeki 2012: 01). Thanks to the transition to digital broadcasting, the national

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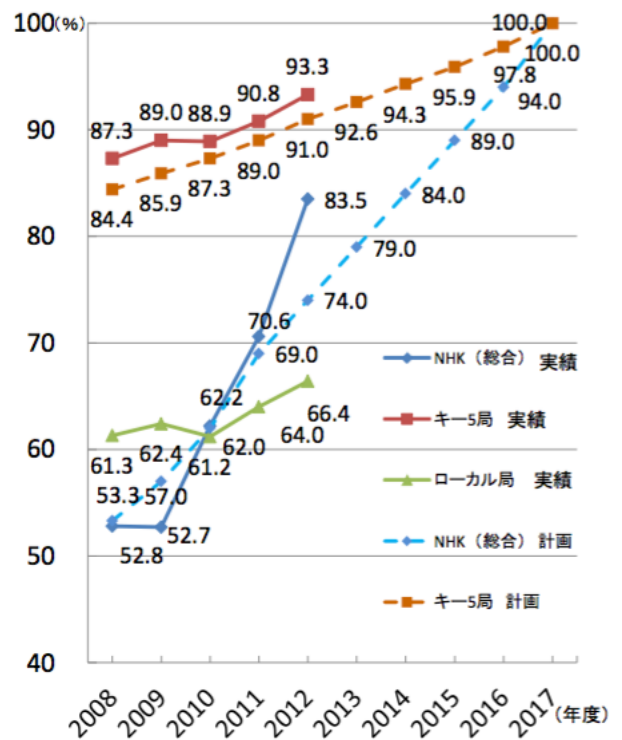14 The data for the number of visually-impaired people was last updated in 2006.

broadcaster NHK General offers closed-captioned programming in 100% of their broadcasts. Also, the five key commercial stations in Tokyo (Nihon TV, TV Asahi, TBS, TV Tokyo and Fuji TV) closed-caption more than 90% of programming. Yet as Shigeki points out, only the 20% of commercials are being captioned in the total airtime.

Nihon TV offers closed captions daily in almost all of its programs, even though the time frame differs (on weekdays it starts at 11:30, whereas on Saturday it starts at 8:00 and, on Sundays, at 5:40). *Jigeki Senmon Channel*, a Japanese subscription TV channel specializing in the transmission of period drama and movies, offers closed captions on all its broadcasts. On its website there is an explanation of some of the benefits of enabling closed captioning for people with no visual impairment, such as being able to enjoy the drama or movie with no necessity of having the volume too loud (i.e., watching a movie while somebody is sleeping nearby), or by being able to read how a rare word is written in *kanji*.

Nevertheless, the Japanese Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications has indicated that, by 2017, 100% of the applicable TV shows must have closed captions, and that 10% of the applicable TV shows and programs must be audio described.

The following graph, published on February 2014 and provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Internal Communications of Japan, shows the percentage of TV programs with closed captions up until fiscal year 2012, and the expected percentage by 2017. The channels appearing in the graph are: NHK General TV (continuous navy blue line), the five key commercial stations in Tokyo (continuous red line), and local stations (green line). The three continuous lines (navy blue, red and green) show the implementation rate of closed caption subtitles until 2012. The discontinuous lines, on the other hand, mark the expected implementation (in percentage terms) of the subtitling rates by 2017. Thus the discontinuous blue line marks the expected rate for NHK General TV, and the discontinuous orange line shows the expected rate for the five key commercial stations in Tokyo. The expected rate for local stations is not shown on the study.

Graph 1. Current and estimated rate of closed captions in Japanese TV stations. Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of Japan.

As the graph shows, NHK surpassed the 74.0% expectations and subtitled up to 83.5% of their programs. It can be said from the graph that from 2009 to 2012, NHK made a special effort to meet the quota. The five key commercial stations in Tokyo are also steadily increasing their closed captioning rates, always a little beyond the estimated rate (in 2012, the estimated rate of programs with subtitles was 91.0% but the accomplished rate was 93.3%).

Drawing on the graph, it is not difficult to imagine the total implementation of closed captions in Japanese TV programs by fiscal year 2017. This would follow the example of the United Kingdom's subtitling quota, since from May, 2008, UK's BBC offers closed captions on 100% of its channels (Díaz Cintas 2010).

Notwithstanding, this does not mean that full accessibility to audiovisual products has no ground for improvement. Accessibility in DVD & Blue-ray is also very important and in high demand. It is then no surprise that some associations or NPOs like the Media Access Support Centre (MASC) have created online databases in order to find DVDs and Blue-rays with intra-lingual subtitles and AD in Japanese. Some libraries, like the Japanese Braille Library (*Nihon Tenji Toshokan*), offer online services to rent DVDs and Blue-rays with audio description. Also, some cinemas in Japan offer audio guide services (Tokyo's Nihon Lighthouse Cinema, Nagoya's Cinemateche, Kobe's Art Village Centre, Yokoyama's Cinema Jack & Bettie, or Ota Cinema 5).

JVTA launched in 2011, with the collaboration of MASC, a series of courses on accessibility, also called barrier-free courses (*bariafurī kōza*) in Japanese, and on their joint website they have a series of studies on accessibility in the Japanese context, fifteen in total, written by students that have already graduated their courses[15]. Even though the list is not that long, it is still a good source of information and evidence that accessibility in the media (be it AD or be it SDH) is becoming a relevant topic nowadays in Japan[16]. These papers could become the future theoretical framework to sustain the basis of more specialized papers yet to come.

2.3. The live narration of films: the movie-teller or *benshi* (弁士)

This paper also wants to make a brief mention of the figure of the *benshi* (弁士), the movie interpreter or film narrator, as another example of the peculiarities of Japanese AVT studies. The issue of accessibility in movies can be traced back to the beginning of film itself. The intertitles, precursor to subtitles, were texts drawn or printed on paper, filmed and placed between sequences of the film. They were commonly used in silent films to deliver the message to the audience. Even though they were not meant for an audience with hearing impairments, intertitles helped to make the audiovisual product more accessible to the audience. These intertitles, placed between film frames, situated the action in specific temporal and spatial settings and gave relevant information to the audience. Sometimes they also provided viewers with comments (Ivarsson 1992). The first film to use intertitles was *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1903. At that time, the figure of narrators in the cinema was also common –figures in charge of telling the story to the audience while the action was taking place. According to Orrego (2013), this figure was also known as the *bonimenteur* in France (which could roughly be translated as a 'barker' or someone who 'spreads gossip'). In Japan they were known as *benshi* (弁士)[17]. The term *benshi* means 'orator' or 'rhetorician,' and it refers to narrators in Japanese silent cinema or film interpreters. The unabbreviated form is *katsudō benshi* (活動弁士) or *katsudō shashin benshi* (活動写真弁士). *Katsudō shashin* means 'moving pictures,' an old term used for films, and *benshi* is 'orator or public speaker'. Thus *benshi* were narrators who

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15 Data valid as of November, 2015.

16 To see the complete list of these studies, go to the following website: <http://www.jvtacademy.com/chair/lesson3.php>

17 For more on *benshi*, see Gerow (1994), Dym (2003) and Standish (2005).

accompanied the exhibition of every silent film in 1920s Japan, verbally narrating the details of the story and adding character dialogue. But even though these film narration techniques started in the Meiji period and had popularity up until the Taisho period (1912-1926), it is still an on-going activity nowadays in Japan. Midori Sawato, Vanilla Yamazaki, Yuko Saito, Ichirō Kataoka (who has also given some lectures on the art of *benshi* or film narration) or Raiko Sakamoto are some of the names of professional *benshi* nowadays[18].

Because of the nature of their work, the figure of the *benshi* has several similarities to the work of the narrator who audio describes a movie. In his paper on the figure of the *benshi* in the cinema context of Taisho Japan, A. Gerow talks about *benshi* in the terms of 'split[ing] the fictional source of enunciation by assuming the role of narrator and thereby purging the text of narrative itself' (Gerow 1994: 71). This statement is something most AD narrators can relate to. Some other common factors between *benshi* and the AD narrator are the importance of the voice narrator, the diction, and the premises of not stepping into the sound or dialogues of the film. Furthermore, the importance of text creativity in order to get the attention of the audience was of major relevance, and in the case of *benshi*, who performed the narrations or *setsumei* (literally, 'explanations')[19] of the film in a live performance, the task they performed had also some similarities with simultaneous interpreting.

3. Audio Description

This section will address another major accessibility subdiscipline in AVT: audio description (AD) for the blind and visually impaired. Since AD-related studies are still few in comparison to SDH-related studies in Western scholarship, this paper aims to draw special attention to AD in order to give it more visibility. Thus, this section will focus on the start of AD in various Western countries, then move on to analyse the basic guidelines followed when audio describing. It will also present a brief comparative study between the Japanese AD conventions in order to encourage the creation of a comprehensive Japanese AD guideline and to increase future comparative studies in AD.

3.1. A brief introduction to AD

AD is a narration technique that aims to provide as much information as possible and, at the same time, tries to be brief and precise when it transfers the visual dimension of films or plays into sound (Benecke 2007: 2). The final purpose of AD (narration turned into a script) is to be read aloud by a narrator. The target audience are people with visual impairments. It is precisely because of the particular needs of its audience that AD has had to carefully establish some guidelines in order to offer a good service over the years. The required quota has also been regulated in different countries[20].

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18 For more background on these film interpreters, see the Data Base of Matsuda Film Productions. For a personal overview of the activities of *benshi*, see the article of *benshi* interpreter Vanilla Yamazaki (2014), pseudonym of Masami Yamazaki.

19 See Dym (2003).

20 In Spain, the stipulated audio described quota is 10% of the total amount of public television's programming, a number that differs greatly from the 100% quota required in SDH (Díaz Cintas 2010).

According to Benecke, there are three critical questions that need to be asked before starting to audio describe: What has to be described? When do you describe? And how do you describe? (ibid.) It is equally important to bear in mind the target audience you are audio describing to, since there are different levels of blindness and visual impairment (total or partial, from birth or acquired, etc.). In the case, for example, of the UK, 'only about the 18% of people registered as blind have no useful sight at all and must surely rely solely on the television sound' (Ofcom 2006), whereas the remaining 82% have some sight. When narrating a movie, for example, it is highly recommended to describe places and people, and assuming that most of the visually impaired people have some degree of sight, naming colours or describing outfits will help them to get a better picture of the characters or settings.

Another important aspect is the voice. It must not be forgotten that AD is a script meant to be read by a narrator. Depending on the audiovisual product, some voices might be better than others (i.e., using an adult voice to narrate general movies or documentaries; using childish voices to audio describe children-oriented programs to connect more with the audience, etc.). Another important factor is the speed and intelligibility of the narration. Even though the correlation between the number of characters and seconds has not been fully established in all languages, the basic premise commonly accepted is that the narrator must have enough time to narrate the script in an understandable way at a normal speed. This is something that the audio describer must bear in mind –the equilibrium between the words that need to be spoken and the available time lapse is very fragile, and an AD with too many information is as bad as an AD with a long span of time with no narration at all. In the first case, the target audience will feel stressed; in the second case, they might think that there is a problem with the AD track if they don't hear it for some seconds (AENOR 2005: 7, Ofcom 2006). That said, the amount of blank seconds with no AD allowed has yet to be defined, even though it is suggested that it should not exceed two minutes (Ofcom 2006).

3.2. AD around the World: A Westernized Comparative Discourse

The United Kingdom's Independent Television Commission, now Ofcom, in May 2000 published the ITC Guidance on Standards for audio description. In its Code on Television Access Services (Ofcom 2006) it features AD as one television access service among others. In the United States, the American Council of the Blind published in 2003 the 'Organizing Principles,' and in 2009 it also published the Audio Description Standards, in the very same year that the Audio Description Coalition issued the 'Standards for Audio Description and Code of Professional Conduct for Describers.' Benecke & Dosch published in 2004 a series of guidelines for AD in Germany, and the next year Hörfilm e.V. Vereinigung Deutscher Filmbeschreiber published the *Qualitätsstandards für die Erstellung von Hörfilmen* (2005). In that same very year, the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland also issued the 'BCI Guidelines – Audio Description' (2005). In Spain, the 'UNE 153020 Guidelines' proposed in 2005 by the Spanish Association of Normalization and Certification (AENOR) are the most commonly accepted ones as the basis of AD, and Catalan scholars have started proposals for a future AD protocol (Puigdomènech 2007; Puigdomènech & Matamala & Orero 2010). In Greece, Yota Georgakopoulou drafted in 2008 the 'Audio Description Guidelines.' On that same year, the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel in France published 'L'audiodescription-Principes et orientations.' In 2010, Media Access Australia also published their own guidelines, the 'Audiodescription background paper'.

Scholar Gert Vercauteren, in his comparison of AD guidelines *Towards a European Guideline for Audio Description* (2007), suggests the creation of one European AD standard. In 2010, the Royal National Institute of Blind People published *A Comparative Study of Audio Description Guidelines*

Prevalent in Different Countries, and Hansjörg Bittner came up with a comparative analysis of the AD guidelines in UK, USA, Australia, France, Germany and Ireland where he concludes that, even though there are some differences, the various AD guidelines reveal 'strong similarities' (Bittner 2008: 8). The tendency to make comparative studies between European languages is not new to TS and AVT, and the wish to create a standard AD guideline will help the disciplinarization of the field.

AD's main purpose is to bring the movie closer to a blind or visually impaired audience. The concept of AD resembles Jakobson's criteria (1959/2004: 139) of intralingual translation or 'rewording' since, by his definition, this happens when we 'produce a summary or otherwise rewrite a text in the same language.' Nevertheless, some studies relate AD to adaptation and writing techniques, instead of a translation technique proper. Once again, some concepts may need to be revised in terms of their use and functionality in non-Western countries. As Chan argues, 'The current privileging of concepts like appropriation, transposition, transmutation, and transcreation means that a subtle shift has occurred, as a result of which adaptation can be rethought and re-evaluated' (Chan 2009: 397). O'Hagan (2012) also talks about the term *adaptation* in the domain of game localization as a 'relatively neutral description, whereas in TS this term tends to inspire negative connotations that imply a lesser form of translation, as highlighted in AVT forms such as subtitling' (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007: 9). However, in some Asian countries like Japan, the concept of adaptation as applied to translation has been regarded more positively (Chan 2009: 392-393). This leads to the question: What is the current state of AD in Japan?

3.3. AD in the Japanese context

According to Ofcom (2006), the earliest known audio described television was transmitted in 1983 by the Japanese commercial broadcaster NTV. But even though this was clearly a major achievement at that time, few studies cover the current state of AD in Japan.

As aforementioned, there are approximately 310,000 visually-impaired Japanese people that hold a physical disability certificate according to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan. In recent years, accessibility has been on the mind of the Japanese Government. Because of this, the Japanese Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications aims to have audio described 10% of the applicable TV shows and programs by 2017.

According to a survey of the implementation of AD carried out by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of Japan published in May, 2012, the quota of total audio described time within the total broadcasting time in 2008 was: NHK General TV, 5.6%; NHK Educational TV 10.0%; and the average rate of the five key commercial stations in Tokyo was 0.4%. In 2010, the audio described rate was: NHK General TV, 5.9%; NHK Educational TV, 10%; and the average of the five key commercial stations in Tokyo, 0.6%. This shows that there was no significant change over this time span.

On the other hand, out of the 127 operators of digital broadcasting system, 62 operators had AD implemented in their broadcasts in 2005, and in 2010, that number increased to 112 operators[21].

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21 See the 'Draft on the Research Seminar Relating the Improvements of Broadcast for Hearing and Visually Impaired People on the Digital Broadcasting Era, Document nº1' (2012).

Station	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010
NHK General	5.6%	5.7%	5.9%
NHK Educational	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%
5 key commercial stations in Tokyo	0.4%	0.5%	0.6%

Table 3. Implementation of AD in Japanese main TV stations.
Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of Japan.

This table, however, does not show the rate of audio described programs in the other main 5 broadcasting stations separately (namely Nihon TV, TV Asahi, TBS, TV Tokyo and Fuji TV). To my knowledge, this information has not been disclosed, and this section aims to address this issue by offering up-to-date information on this topic.

Nihon TV broadcasts six audio described programs per week. TV Asahi audio describes a total of five programs per week. On the other hand, TBS is only audio describing one weekly program[22]. Regarding TV Tokyo and Fuji TV, there was no available information on their official websites regarding the audio described programs they broadcast. It would also be interesting to look into what programs

- NIHON TV

  Nihon TV broadcasts six audio described programs per week: *Kyūpi sanpun kukkingu* [The 3 minutes of cooking with Kyūpi], broadcasted from Monday to Saturday from 11:45 to 11:55; *Sore ike! Anpanman* [Anpanman anime series], broadcasted on Fridays from 16:20 to 16:30; *Kinyō Rōdo Show!* [The Friday Road Show!], broadcasted on Fridays from 21:00 to 22:54; *Burari Tochū Gesha no Tabi* [Strolling around: Journey by train], broadcasted on Saturdays from 9:25 to 10:30; *Tōku e ikitai* [I want to go far away], broadcasted on Sundays from 6:30 to 7:00; and *Waraten* (a *rakugo* humour program), broadcasted on Sundays from 17:30 to 18:00.

- TV ASAHI

  TV Asahi audio describes a total of five programs per week: *Tetsuko no heya* [Tetsuko's Room], a 30 minutes program broadcasted twice or three times a week in weekdays from 12:00 to 12:30; *Go Go Waido* [Go Go Wide], a 1 hour program broadcasted twice or three times in the afternoon (the schedule varies every week); *Spēsharu Satadē Dai 2 Bu* [Special Saturday 2nd Bureau], airing on some Saturdays from 12:00 to 13:55; *Doyō Waido Gekijō* [Saturday Wide Theatre], airing every other Saturday from 21:00 to 23:06; and *Shinkonsan irasshai!* [Welcome, newlyweds!], airing every Sunday from 12:55 to 13:25.

- TBS

  TBS is only audio describing its weekly program *Getsuyō gōruden* [Golden Monday], broadcasted every Monday from 21:00 to 22:54.

List 2. Details of audio described programs in Japanese TV.

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22 Data retrieved from the week of 20-27 of November of 2015. Since Japanese programs are not always aired on a weekly basis, there might be more audio described programs that are not included in this section.

get to be audio described on what specific day and the timeframe for future research in order to know the target Japanese audience and the percentage of AD it gets in comparison to other groups (e.g., the percentage of audio described programs aimed at children in comparison to programs airing on weekday mornings, mostly aimed at housewives).

3.4. Towards Japanese AD Guidelines

As we have seen, some countries have developed their own AD guidelines over the years. In spite of small differences, most golden rules (i.e., not over-describe the actions, try not to insert script in determinate occasions) can apply to every guideline. The audio describer is advised to audio describe from a general view into a more specific view while answering the following questions: where, when, who, what and how (Benecke 2007: 02). This premise is a common practice for European, American and Australian audio describers. This should not be a surprise, taking into account that the languages used for AD in this analysis come from very similar roots. But what would happen with those 'golden rules' when the language is significantly different, as is the case with Japanese?

To my knowledge there is no official, comprehensive guideline for Japanese AD, and the places that offer professional training to future audio describers are the course offered at JVTA in collaboration with MASC, 'Training Course in Accessibility: Audio Description and Writer of Subtitles,' and Cinematheque Academy's 'Course on the Creation of audio described movies'.

On JVTA's website there can be found a basic guideline for how to audio describe. They begin by stating that AD has its own rules in contrast to the rules of dubbing, subtitling or SDH. Even though they are all disciplines of AVT, they point out in the very beginning that AD needs its own rules. This statement, which could easily be taken as 'too obvious,' is an easy and simple way to make people not used to AVT note the peculiarities of its different subdisciplines. Some of the AD rules they point out are: 1) try to audio describe the different scenes, movements of people, facial expressions, etc., without stepping over the dialogues; 2) use precise vocabulary when describing an object; and 3) do not put subjective comments on the audio description. Also, in an introduction video on accessibility uploaded in 2014 titled 'Ichiro Asano's definition of the accessibility turn in audiovisual media,' JVTA member and instructor Ichiro Asano audio describes the video for a short period of time and afterwards explains to the audience what are the most important questions that audio describers need to ask themselves: where, who, what, and how. Thus, we can conclude that JVTA's guidelines on AD are fairly based on Benecke's. That said, there is a need to further the research on Japanese AD guidelines in order to adapt them to the specificities of the Japanese language and context (e.g., what should the limitation of characters (or *kanji*) per second be?). Again, the lack of knowledge of this (and other) disciplines of AVT is still a problem that needs to be further looked upon.

The Japanese social welfare corporation Nihon Lighthouse for the blind and visually impaired also offers a brief explanation on AD and mentions Benecke's five questions (when, where, who, what and how to audio describe). Most interestingly, they also show a short audio description in Japanese. Since AD scripts are not easy to get a hold of, the information provided by the website of Nihon Lighthouse is rather appreciated. As a source material, they use the 1953 film *Roman Holiday*, and the audio described scene (approximately 30 seconds in total) shows Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn standing in front of *La Bocca della Verità*:
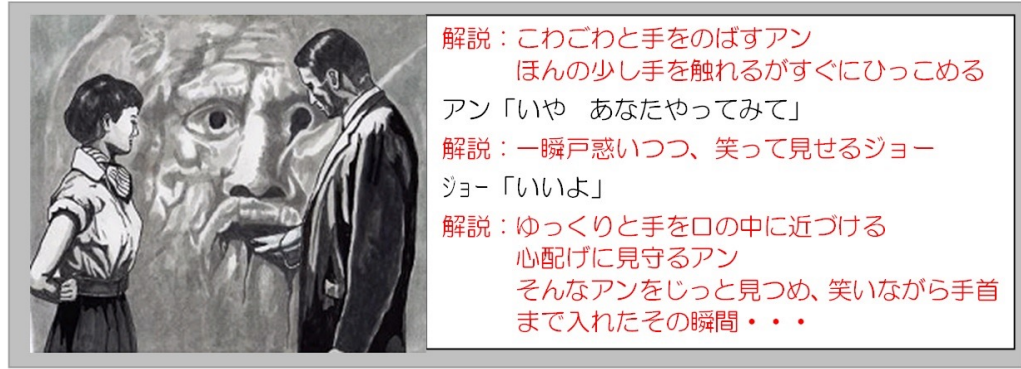
Picture 1. An example of a Japanese AD script (text in red).

The text in red stands for the AD (*kaisetsu*) and describes the actions of the characters, while the text in black corresponds to the script.

Transcription	Translation
Kaisetsu: Kowagowa to te o nobasu Ann. Hon no sukoshi te o fureru ga sugu ni hikkomeru.	AD: Ann reaches out her hand fearfully. She touches it a little but withdraws it immediately.
Ann: Iya anata yattemite.	Ann: No. You do it.
Joe: Ii yo.	Joe: Sure.
Kaisetsu: Yukkuri to te o kuchi no naka ni chikazukeru. Shinpaige ni mimamoru Ann. Sonna Ann o jitto mitsume, warainagara tekubi made ireta sono shunkan…	AD: He slowly moves his hand closer to the Mouth. Ann watches over him worriedly. He stares at her and, grinning, puts his hand in it up to his wrist, but then…

Table 4. Transcription from Japanese and translation into English of Picture 1[23].

From this short extract alone, we can perform a short qualitative analysis of how AD works in Japanese (verbs in informal form, absence of pronouns, etc.), and point out a couple of issues: the breaking of the 'objectivity rule' when talking about how Ann is 'worriedly' watching Joe instead of describing her facial expression (even though because of time constrains that is not always an option), or the final part of *sono shunkan* (literally 'at that moment,' and translated as 'but then'), that alerts the viewer that something is going to happen (Joe is going to pretend to have his hand stuck inside the Mouth of Truth to scare Ann) even before it happens.

Every audiovisual product (movies, series, programs, documentaries, etc.) has its own characteristics, so the premises do not have to be followed always to the letter. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to make a qualitative or quantitative analysis between one or several audio described films in Japanese to analyse whether the same number of characters per second are similar[24], to see whether they

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23 Transcripted and translated by the author.

24 Cabeza (2013: 133) stipulates in his Doctoral dissertation that the propitious speed rate in Spanish and Catalan audio described films is 14 characters/second. He adds, however, that this rate can be extended up to 17 characters/second ('still understandable, adult-oriented rate'). In children-oriented products, however, he proposes a 10 characters/second rate.

respect the '20 seconds rule' (Georgakopoulou 2008: 2) and to create a basic guideline for future audio describers in Japanese. I will leave this for future research.

Conclusions

This paper has aimed to provide provisional answers to the following questions: What is the current state of AVT studies in Japan? How is the academia reacting to it? What is the current state of accessibility in Japan? What is the percentage of closed captioned and audio described programmes in Japanese TV? Also, what are the criteria, if any, when audio describing a Japanese movie?

It has not been long since Japan's Translation Studies stopped digesting Western Translation Theories and started producing its own. Scholarship concerning TS is starting to form its foundations, as the increase of translation courses in undergraduate and graduate programs shows. This means that more students will pursue their research on TS and that, in the future, the number of scholars will rise.

The case of the discipline of AVT is somehow similar and yet different. It is difficult to think that AVT studies will gain great visibility without the push of Japanese TS. Even though in some countries, especially in Europe, AVT has gained its own relative independence from TS, this is highly improbable in Japan. Nevertheless, it is also a fact that AVT-related research is slowly growing, and the professional market is offering relatively many AVT courses. This could help foster this discipline in future years.

We could also say that AVT is undergoing, not only in Japan but in most of Europe and the United States, an 'accessibility turn.' Accessibility in the media is a recognised right for people with hearing or visual impairment, so it is only logical to assume that accessibility-related subdisciplines of AVT will start to receive more attention in the years to come. But in order to do so, more qualified instructors are needed in order to foster future professionals or scholars.

There are uncountable lines of research that lie unexplored in the field of AVT and accessibility. This paper has focused on AD in the Japanese context, but in the case of SDH, as aforementioned, the placing of subtitles, the concept of 'supra-subtitles' and the interactivity of closed intralingual subtitles or 'Telop' are still some fields rather unexplored. As with AD, as mentioned beforehand, there are also many possible lines of research. Most of the studies focus on quantitative and qualitative research with a pedagogical aim on the background. The problem-solution system is very popular amongst translation scholars. Nevertheless, most of the conclusions cannot be adopted as a general rule because of the singularities of every language. AD, unlike translation, shares more ground with adaptation and creative writing techniques than with translation techniques itself, since the audio describer needs to create a narration that fits the audiovisual product in terms not only of coherence, but of tone, adequacy and register. At the same time, the narration needs to be enjoyable while providing all the necessary information for the specific target whilst creating a harmony between the AD and the credibility of the film ('suspension of disbelief'). The link between literary creation, narrative techniques and AD in Japanese could help to provide better knowledge for future audio describers.

This paper would like to highlight also the enormous task that individuals, associations and NGOs are performing in order to give accessibility more visibility. The social repercussions it has must not be underrated in terms of equality. Thereby, we would like to encourage future research on accessibility in the Japanese context.

This study is by no means a complete, conclusive study on the state of AVT and accessibility in Japan, but it aims to form the basis of future research. Also, there are some other subdisciplines in accessibility that I have only briefly mentioned but that nonetheless deserve a further look into, like surtitling, Japanese sign language or respeaking, which has still more ground to cover in terms of visibility when compared to AD or SDH, even though being the preferred method by the deaf and hard-of-hearing collective when being provided by intralingual live subtitles on many TV channels (Arumí & Romero 2008). Notwithstanding, because of space constraints, I will leave this to future research.

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