



The International Journal for
Translation & Interpreting
Research
trans-int.org

Introduction.

Riding the streaming wave: Broadening global access through audiovisual translation and media accessibility

Sofía Sánchez-Mompeán
University of Murcia, Spain
sofia.sanchez@um.es

Serenella Zanotti
Roma Tre University, Italy
serenella.zanotti@uniroma3.it

DOI: 10.12807/ti.117202.2025.a01

1. Streaming without borders and for all

Since Netflix “re-invented” television in 2007 with the launch of its streaming platform (Jenner, 2023: 24), followed by other video streamers such as Amazon Prime Video, Hulu, HBO Max, and Disney+, subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) or over-the-top (OTT) services have become deeply embedded in daily life, fundamentally altering how audiences watch television and engage with entertainment. This paradigm shift has profoundly impacted the film industry by redefining broadcasting and distribution models as well as transforming traditional viewing habits. Streaming has not only reshaped audiovisual consumption but has also fostered a user-centric media landscape that grants viewers greater autonomy, flexibility, and empowerment (Bucaria, 2023; Chaume, 2019; Orrego-Carmona, 2018). As a result, audiences now enjoy access to a broader and more diversified array of content, including original productions and niche programming, while the dominance of Anglophone media has gradually diminished in favor of other languages (Díaz-Cintas and Hayes, 2023; Hayes and Bolaños-García-Escribano, 2022). These developments have opened a gateway to cultural exchange by nurturing the rise of a globally connected audience that transcends linguistic, sensory, and geographical boundaries.

With over 280 million subscribers worldwide (Singh, 2025), Netflix, which was originally founded as a DVD rental service in 1997, has established itself as the top streaming platform, thus serving as a benchmark for competitors striving to replicate its success. Its privileged status in the streaming market has been acknowledged by Jenner (2023: 1):

among the different streaming platforms, Netflix constitutes the ‘normal’ of streaming, as the ‘baseline’ of the shape streaming takes for viewers, a habit, even usual. This position reflects its seniority, but also success in building the existing infrastructures of transnational streaming. Thus, no matter what the future holds for Netflix, its influence on how streaming is organized, not only on an industrial level, but also in the way streaming looks and feels for viewers, remains visible and immense.

As a leading platform in “transnational streaming”, Netflix has played a pioneering role in breaking language barriers by making its content accessible to a multinational audience (Lotz, 2021) through localization techniques such as captioning and revoicing, which have become paramount to its global expansion strategy. With six out of seven Netflix subscribers residing outside the United States (Lotz and Lobato, 2019), the platform has made significant investments in expanding its productions beyond Anglophone territories and creating original content, also referred to as “commissions” (Lotz, 2021), in a vast number of countries. While the initiative to produce more non-English content and guarantee media pluralism has been partly influenced by European Union legislation requiring that at least 30% of content available on OTT platforms in Europe be of European origin (Official Journal of the European Union, 2018), these productions—offered with translations into multiple languages—position Netflix “both as a global player and a local player” (Higson, 2021: 11) and, for the first time, challenge the longstanding dominance of English as the primary language of audiovisual material. As a matter of fact, in 2020, 45% of the total library available on Netflix in the United States consisted of foreign-language titles (Moore, 2020), a trend that has been on the rise since then.

As streaming companies navigate an increasingly globalized market that is no longer conquered by English-language originals, localization has emerged as a pivotal strategy for reaching and engaging a broader international audience. The success of highly popular non-English language shows such as *Squid Game* (South Korea), *Money Heist* (Spain), and *Lupin* (France) highlights this evolving AVT landscape, marked by considerable impacts on localization demands, workflows, and trends. Key examples include the growing consumption of dubbing in English-speaking markets (Chaume, 2018; Hayes, 2021; Ranzato and Zanotti, 2019; Sánchez-Mompeán, 2021; Spiteri Miggiani, 2021), the widespread use of English as pivot language (Carrero Martín and Reverter Oliver, 2023; Dalli, 2024; Pięta et al., 2024), and the increasing pace of translation workflows to manage high volumes of content while ensuring the simultaneous release of media—a practice known as the “day-of-broadcast model” (Massidda, 2023: 455)—, which has brought about even tighter production schedules.

By promoting individualized culture through algorithmic curation, which tailors the way spectators interact with and consume media (Jenner, 2023), users can select their preferred language and AVT mode for accessing content, depending on the options available for each title. The vast number of offerings on OTT platforms has inevitably boosted the demand for translation services capable of “reaching wider communities in a short time frame” (Choi et al., 2023: 6). While subtitling and dubbing remain the most common modalities for distributing streaming content today, other modes such as voiceover (lektoring) continue to dominate in countries like Poland, where it has traditionally been the primary way of consuming fiction. Nonetheless, the preferences of younger Polish audiences now appear to be shifting toward subtitling, especially as they increasingly benefit from the flexibility offered by streaming services, which allow them to select their preferred AVT mode without being constrained by voiceover as the default option (Flis and Szarkowska, 2024).

In terms of accessibility, streaming platforms also provide content with closed captions (CC) or subtitles for the d/Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (SDH), as well as audio description (AD) and sign language interpretation (SLI), with the latter often available through an extension. Although streaming services are leading the charge in embracing media accessibility (MA), significant gaps seem to persist, as highlighted by a survey conducted by Scope (2025), a UK-

based disability equality charity. Most of the survey respondents reported experiencing accessibility issues with SVoD platforms, and 19.5% had even canceled their subscriptions due to these challenges. The findings also indicate a need for improvements, especially in AD services, both in terms of quality and availability. Despite this, streaming giants like Netflix and Disney+ have embraced the motto “entertainment equality for all” (Aquino, 2022), expressing their commitment to making their libraries fully accessible to all audiences while ensuring a user-friendly interface. These developments are critically examined by Cameron (2025), who investigates the role of fan campaigns in both initiating the provision of captions on streaming platforms and maintaining quality control. She analyzes the 2012 fan-led campaign and subsequent federal court case (*National Association of the Deaf et al. v. Netflix*), which compelled Netflix to commit to captioning 100 percent of its video content. Cameron also discusses the 2018 controversy surrounding the captioning of the Netflix original *Queer Eye* (David Collins, 2018–2021), highlighting how fan activism effectively influenced the platform’s accessibility policies. She then turns to more recent shifts in Netflix’s discourse on captioning, arguing that streaming platforms increasingly frame accessibility as part of their own narrative, often overlooking the foundational role of fan work in shaping these practices.

The growing emphasis on AVT and MA in today’s mediascape has facilitated the expansion of non-local productions beyond language barriers and increased access to diverse localized versions. The wide array of options that viewers have now at their disposal enables them to combine different translation modes (Chaume, 2019), thus giving rise to hybrid formats such as the so-called “dubtitles” (Sokoli, 2024). Dubtitles, which are only available when the dubbing is selected, function as interlingual captions that transcribe the dubbed version verbatim and tend to offer a perfect match between what can be read in the subtitles and what is heard in the audio track. These game-changing formats, however, present several challenges for both practitioners and users, including readability issues due to the rapid pace of verbatim dubtitles and obvious deviations from established conventions.

Scrutiny and criticism of localized versions have also increased due to the ease of comparing the original and translated content on the same platform. While negative feedback is not always justified—especially when it overlooks the nature of translation and its inherent constraints (Orrego-Carmona, 2021)—some comments have contributed to advocating for higher quality standards, updated conventions, and improved working conditions (Bucaria, 2023; Sánchez-Mompeán, 2021; Spiteri Miggiani, 2021, 2022). Although the work of translation practitioners is gradually gaining visibility in society, the challenges they currently must face, alongside remarkable transformations in the media industry (e.g., the acceleration of workflows, the evolving roles of the professionals involved, etc.), emerging trends in the production, distribution, and consumption of localized streaming content, and recent technological advancements such as cloud-based and automated localization services (Bolaños-García-Escribano and Díaz-Cintas, 2020; Chaume and de los Reyes Lozano, 2021; Georgakopoulou, 2021; Spiteri Miggiani, 2023), have placed AVT and MA at the forefront of academic research today, as clearly demonstrated by the contributions included in this special issue.

2. Emerging trends and challenging transformations

One of the most evident and fascinating transformations brought about by the streaming era is the “role reversal” of English (Díaz-Cintas and Hayes, 2023:

1), which has shifted from its traditional role as a source language to increasingly serving as a target language in translation. A direct outcome of this shift is the resurgence of English-language dubbing, particularly in countries where audiences are unaccustomed to consuming foreign content in dubbed formats. Largely driven by Netflix, and initially used as a testing ground, English dubbing has emerged as a strategic tool to pull in a wider audience and maximize international revenue. Although it is obvious that Anglophone viewers' unfamiliarity with this AVT mode may make them more vulnerable to its artificial nature (Sánchez-Mompeán, 2023), streaming platforms like Netflix remain confident that high-quality dubbed productions can reshape consumption habits in English-speaking markets and position dubbing as a priceless asset for global content distribution.

To stimulate subscribers to watch dubbed versions, language settings are often configured to default dubbing, aiming to create an immersive experience where viewers either forget they are watching a dubbed production or even perceive it as an original version. As the number of titles available with English dubbing on Netflix continues to expand (Hayes and Bolaños-García-Escribano, 2022), this practice remains relatively uncharted territory in the Anglophone dubbing industry nowadays (Spiteri Miggiani, 2021), thus offering greater flexibility for experimentation and research while gradually establishing its own distinct identity.

The popularity of non-English-language productions has encouraged the consumption of European content but also media in other languages, as evidenced by the surging demand for South Korean dramas (commonly known as K-dramas) and Turkish telenovelas, both of which have become a major focus of investment for most SVoD services nowadays. As Ju (2020: 34) observes, the audience interested in these titles consists not only of dedicated fans but also of “non-fan viewers looking for fresh content”. In the US, for instance, K-drama viewership has increased by 200% since 2019 (MacDonald, 2021), while Turkish soap operas have generated over \$600 million in export revenue in a single year (Topcu, 2025). The rapid proliferation of these productions, coupled with the necessity of localizing content into multiple languages under tight deadlines, has led to the growing reliance on English as an intermediary, or pivot, language. In this process, the source language is removed, and translation projects are centralized through English (Dallı, 2024). A reception study by Carrero Martín and Reverter Oliver (2023) reveals that this practice has increased over the past five years, driven by the expansion of OTT platforms. Particularly, their research shows that Japanese, Turkish, and Korean are the three most frequently translated source languages using English as a pivot language.

The advent of streaming has particularly accelerated the use of pivot subtitling, which has become an effective solution for translating large volumes of non-English media while meeting viewers' demand for immediacy. Even though pivot templates have been designed to streamline localization workflows and facilitate translation between less common language pairs, in Dallı's (2024: 3) opinion, “pivot subtitling is not strictly a necessity but rather a deliberate policy and strategy pursued by VoD services and their vendors for cost-efficiency and operational feasibility”. According to the researcher and dubbing dialogue writer Spiteri Miggiani (Agulló García et al., 2024), translators working from a pivot version encounter several challenges. In the case of dubbing, the need to rely on pivot translations due to a lack of proficiency in the source language compels translators to place full trust in the intermediary text. However, they cannot fully disregard the original product since the non-verbal cinematic cues remain rooted in the source language. This lack of

command has prompted scholars like Dore and De Nicola (2023) to question whether there is room for creativity in the production of dubbed and subtitled versions when translation relies solely on a pivot language.

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) to generate automatic captions and dubs has also been in the eye of the storm recently. AI-driven solutions have sparked intense debates among both academics and AVT practitioners concerning quality, efficiency, ethical implications, responsibilities, environmental and social sustainability, and the potential devaluation of professional expertise (Jiménez-Crespo, 2024; Moorkens and Guerberof-Arenas, 2024). While these technologies tend to promise efficiency and scalability, they can often do so at the expense of linguistic and cultural accuracy, creativity, as well as professional workflows. Against this backdrop, it is imperative to reassess the role and usefulness of AI in the current streaming era and embrace it not as a replacement for human translators, but rather as a tool able to support their vital work without undermining it.

3. Streaming platforms and the localization of audiovisual content: Paradigm shift?

Although streaming services are often credited with transforming media consumption, media studies scholars have raised critical perspectives on their broader cultural and societal implications. Jenner (2023) highlights how emerging technologies have reshaped television consumption by giving viewers a sense of greater control over what they watch, when they watch it, and how they engage with television content, although this control may be more symbolic than substantial (Arnold, 2016). By emphasizing algorithmic recommendation systems and individualized binge-watching practices, SVoD companies have positioned themselves as viewer-centric media services, offering tailored content to diverse audience segments. Customization, i.e. the tailoring of the user experience to individual preferences and needs, has thus emerged as a defining feature of the streaming industry's approach to both content creation and translation (Higson, 2021; Iordache, 2022).

Customization is closely intertwined with internationalization, as streaming platforms operate across local, national, and global media spheres. In his analysis of Netflix, Lobato (2019) emphasizes that global success depends on the platform's ability to recognize and integrate "the locality of taste", that is, audiences' preferences for culturally and linguistically proximate content. Not only does Netflix localize existing content for diverse markets through extensive language adaptation (Higson, 2021: 14) but ensures that its own productions are designed with a global audience in mind from the outset. This dual strategy enables the platform to address the tension between the global and the local (Lotz, 2021).

To facilitate the (trans)national circulation and reception of its content, Netflix has developed a range of strategies that align with what Jenner (2024) terms the "grammar of transnationalism"—a set of production practices designed to enable media texts to transcend borders and appeal to diverse audiences beyond the US market. One key strategy, as Jenner (2021) explains, is the de-nationalization of texts, which involves minimizing or removing overtly local elements. This approach not only enhances the translatability of content but also supports its transnational flow and resonance. A notable example is the series *Sex Education* (Laurie Nunn, 2019–2023). Although set in Wales, the show was adapted to appeal to international audiences by minimizing regional linguistic markers—specifically through the removal of

“the regionality of accents” (Jenner, 2021: 196). As Jenner observes, the use of ‘posh’ accents by the main cast obscures any distinct regional identity, particularly any association with Welsh national identity, instead projecting a more generalized Britishness, or Englishness. This linguistic strategy reflects the series’ intent to transcend local specificity and resonate with global audiences who may be unfamiliar with, or uninterested in, the nuances of regional cultural contexts.

Viewed through this lens, English-language dubbing emerges as a key component of Netflix’s grammar of transnationalism, as it “has made it easier for non-English language texts within the transnational Netflix ecology” to circulate and be received globally (Jenner, 2021: 192). In its effort to position itself as a globally accessible platform, Netflix relies heavily on strategies of “domestication”, achieved primarily through translation (Jenner, 2023: 245). As Lobato (2019: 120) observes, “Netflix is now translating more content into more languages than almost any other media service has done or could do”. These dynamics raise several important questions: What role does translation play in the broader cultural and industrial dynamics underpinning the global expansion of streaming platforms? How does translation partake in what streaming services want audiences to see, and how does it influence the ways in which particular texts are intended to be read? In what ways do translation and accessibility contribute to the industrial logic of customization within streaming platforms?

A notable feature of Netflix’s grammar of transnationalism is the use of a liberal value system in both content and branding. Cultural diversity and cosmopolitanism are core elements of its brand image (Elkins, 2021). By foregrounding ideals such as individual freedom, equality, diversity, and inclusion, Netflix constructs an image of itself as a progressive and globally minded media service (Asmar et al., 2023; Yoon, 2023). Translation plays a central role in shaping Netflix’s cosmopolitan image, as it fosters cross-cultural connections and supports the platform’s mission to promote “global citizenship through culture” (Asmar et al., 2024: 4).

More specifically, as Asmar et al. (2024) argue, Netflix is “an actor which strategically uses cultural diversity in its branding”. The role of streaming services in promoting diversity has been the subject of ongoing debate among media scholars and critics. Some argue that these platforms have contributed significantly to increasing cultural diversity in media content and production, particularly when contrasted with traditional media (Aguilar and Waldfogel, 2018; Limov, 2020). Others, however, are more critical, questioning whether this focus on diversity is authentic or just serves corporate interests (Higson, 2021; Khoo, 2022; Thuillas and Wiart, 2024; Yoon, 2023). This perspective is reflected in what Asmar et al. (2024) refer to as “the business of diversity”.

The concept of diversity that Netflix associates with its brand encompasses gender, linguistic, and cultural dimensions. According to Asmar et al. (2024), the streamer’s “diversity strategy” is enacted not only through an emphasis on diverse representation within its content, but also through a strong focus on local production. This commitment to local content highlights the platform’s multilingual character, evident in its ever-expanding catalogue of non-English-language content and its growing investment in dubbing and subtitling.

This leads us to consider the Netflix discourse surrounding translation and translators, who are defined as not “just talented linguists”, but as “ambassadors between two cultures” (Netflix Partner Help Center, n.d.). As stated on the Netflix website, one of the responsibilities of translators is to “[avoid] undue offense” by refraining from “introducing disrespectful, inaccurate terms or perpetuating old stigmas” (ibid.). While affirming its firm stance against

“watering down” the message of its content in localized materials, Netflix emphasizes the need for “heightened awareness” when translating sensitive content. Particular care is required when handling profanity and dialogue that “represents attitudes toward race and ethnicity, the LGBTQIA+ community, gender, health and disabilities, religion” (ibid.). This seems to suggest that the “long-distance localization” policy (Lobato, 2019: 114) adopted by streaming platforms is fostering unprecedented attention to identity representation, which is likely to influence and reshape translation norms.

Netflix’s localization policies are made available to translation professionals worldwide through its Partner Help Center, where they can find detailed, language-specific guidelines for creating subtitles, dubbing and voice-over tracks. These guidelines also include instructions for addressing inclusive and sensitive language, as well as the use of neutral and non-binary terminology. As the streamer highlights, “inclusion is a core value at Netflix” and an important element of its “brand identity” (Netflix Partner Help Center, n.d.). To ensure that individuals feel properly represented and respected when engaging with its programmes, Netflix provides extensive paratextual materials—such as detailed guidelines—to support the professionals involved in the localization of its contents. This approach not only reflects awareness of the pivotal role translation plays in advancing the platform’s diversity strategy, but also acknowledges the risks associated with the cross-cultural mismanagement of identity representation in translation.

As highlighted by recent research (Alsharhan, 2020; Bucaria, 2024), the emergence of streaming platforms has also brought noticeable changes in the translation of taboo content. The global reach of these services has allowed them to exert greater control over how their content is adapted across various target languages, particularly when it comes to their original productions. For instance, through the paratextual materials available on its Partner Help Center, Netflix encourages translators to make informed decisions to avoid unintentionally offensive language, while preserving the integrity of the original content. Netflix’s commitment to zero tolerance towards manipulation in translation is clearly reinforced in its guidelines for audiovisual translation providers. These guidelines instruct freelance practitioners to ensure that translations accurately reflect the source text’s original intent, without introducing additional vulgarity or censorship. They explicitly state that dialogue must not be censored and that expletives should be translated as faithfully as possible to preserve the original tone and meaning (see Bucaria, 2024: A61).

According to Bucaria, Amazon Prime Video has similarly implemented localization guidelines. She notes that, while professionals once had considerable autonomy in the translation process, decisions regarding the translation of taboo language and sensitive content are now centralized by the corporation, rather than being delegated almost entirely to national localization teams as in the past. Although this policy does not eliminate the potential for manipulation, instances of censorial intervention in audiovisual texts are now subject to closer scrutiny and are more likely to be identified during the localization process (Bucaria, 2024: A61).

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that significant shifts are underway in the cross-cultural localization of audiovisual content on streaming platforms. While the full extent of these changes will only become clear over time, this special issue represents an important initial step towards understanding and documenting this evolving and dynamic landscape.

4. AVT and MA in the age of streaming platforms: This special issue

This special issue brings together eleven outstanding contributions that explore the dynamic landscape of AVT and MA in the era of streaming platforms. Reflecting the diversity of these disciplines, three articles focus on subtitling, two on dubbing, two on sign language interpreting and subtitling for the d/Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, three on audio description, and one on translanguaging. The authors approach the central theme of this special issue from a broad spectrum of perspectives, employing empirical, theoretical, and descriptive methodologies to offer valuable insights into the evolving practices and challenges within AVT and MA today.

The opening article of this special issue, titled “Pivot subtitling workflows in the age of streaming platforms”, is co-authored by Rocío Baños, Harun Dalli, and Jorge Díaz-Cintas and examines the role of localization agents in pivot subtitling, paying special attention to the workflows and complexities inherent in this multilingual process. By comparing pivot and direct interlingual subtitling, the study identifies shared features such as the use of master templates and the division of technical and linguistic tasks, but also highlights key differences, including a reliance on blank templates, especially when a subtitle file in the original language has not been requested by the client, as well as the involvement of the asset coordinator and trainers. Their findings further reveal that language service providers (LSPs) tend to adopt English-centric workflows to enhance efficiency, yet this approach poses quality issues, particularly when English pivot templates serve as a final deliverable or when linguistic competencies are insufficient for undertaking technical roles. The authors acknowledge that their findings may also be extensible to dubbing, where the high number of agents taking part in the process underscores the need to optimize pivot localization workflows. Finally, they discuss AI integration in subtitling processes and call for further research on automation and audience reception as a potential way of streamlining current pivot localization practices.

In their article entitled “Busting ‘ghost subtitles’ on streaming services”, Jan-Louis Kruger and Sixin Liao analyze a large corpus of English interlingual subtitles from Netflix, the world’s leading streaming platform. The study examines subtitle speed across various languages in Netflix-produced films and series. According to Netflix’s English Timed Text Style Guide (2024), the maximum subtitle speed is 20 characters per second (cps). The authors investigate how often this threshold is exceeded and focus on “ghost subtitles”—those displayed on screen for such a short period of time that viewers are unlikely to read them in full. Their analysis reveals that while the average subtitle speed across languages is around 15 cps, nearly 15% of subtitles exceed the 20 cps limit. This suggests that a significant number of subtitles are too fast, potentially impairing comprehension. The study also finds that viewers adjust their eye movements to prioritize reading under time pressure, often at the expense of processing visual content. This imbalance may negatively affect the viewing experience. The authors conclude that subtitle speed requires careful attention, not only on Netflix but likely across other platforms as well. Their findings highlight the cognitive demands of subtitled viewing and stress the importance of prioritizing accessibility and user experience over cost-efficiency in subtitling practices.

The provision of customizable subtitle options in streaming services is the focus of Gabriele Uzzo’s contribution “‘Your subtitles will look like this’: Exploring user preferences for closed captions across streaming platforms”. The article discusses the rise of streaming services as a factor that has democratized entertainment access, enabling global audiences to enjoy personalized viewing

experiences. Viewers can now customize content through translation and accessibility options, including subtitles for the d/Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (DHH). While these options enhance flexibility, subtitle customization is often limited by platform-specific standards. To gain deeper insight into how users engage with subtitle customization in streaming services, the article investigates the preferences of the Italian DHH community regarding caption styles, focusing on readability, aspect, and user satisfaction. A key component of the study is a detailed questionnaire designed to capture the community's nuanced preferences. Findings reveal that the ideal subtitle format includes medium-sized, white block-font text displayed within a black box. This combination enhances readability and contrast, ensuring clarity without overwhelming the screen. The study concludes that improved subtitle customization can significantly enhance user satisfaction, particularly for DHH viewers. This, in turn, may boost subscription rates and revenue for streaming platforms. As a result, investing in user-driven research and development becomes both a socially responsible and commercially beneficial strategy for content providers.

The first article on dubbing, “Culture-bound humour in English-language dubs: A reception study”, co-authored by Alejandro Bolaños García-Escribano, Carla Botella Tejera, and Mar Ogea Pozo, explores the role of English as a target language in dubbing. Specifically, the study examines audience preferences when watching the English-dubbed version of Netflix's original Spanish series *Valeria* (María López Castaño, 2020–2025). Using a sample of 109 respondents, the authors assessed audience reception of humor-bound cultural references across seven audiovisual clips, each presented in two different versions, namely the English dubbing and the Spanish original with both English and Spanish subtitles. The self-administered questionnaire targeted non-Spanish speakers who were either native or proficient in English. Drawing on a taxonomy of translation techniques adapted from Franco Aixelá (1996) and Gottlieb (2009), their reception study found that Netflix's foreignizing approach to dubbing and subtitling in this series was largely ineffective for many viewers, with 46% favoring substitution techniques. Their findings highlight significant challenges in understanding culturally embedded humor, as many participants questioned the adequacy of the translations in both the English dubs and the subtitles. While these results seem to align with previous research, they do not substantiate the claim that Netflix's Spanish series and films into English tend to standardize original accents, as indicated by Hayes and Bolaños-García-Escribano (2022). Against this backdrop, the authors note a discrepancy between the translation techniques employed by script translators and the voice performance of English dubs, pointing to potential mismatches between the translation and vocal delivery of humor-bound cultural elements.

The next contribution shifts the focus to Slovak dubbing. In their study “The taboo revolution on streaming platforms in Slovakia: *Euphoria* keeps changing the game”, Jana Ukušová and Mária Koscelníková examine the strategies used to transfer taboo language in the Slovak dubbed version of *Euphoria* (Sam Levinson, 2019–2022). Interviews with the series' producer and director revealed that Max (the successor of HBO Go in Slovakia) prioritized authenticity without requesting linguistic moderation, meaning that any attenuation or compensation was solely the result of creative team decisions. Their analysis identified three primary strategies: adequate transfer, omission, and compensation through attenuation, with amplification and addition playing a minor role. Adequate transfer emerged as the most frequent strategy (44-65% per episode), while omission, though significant (17-40%), did not compromise the overall authenticity of taboo language representation. Their findings also suggest that Slovak dubbing for streaming platforms diverges from traditional

television practices, presenting taboo language in a more unfiltered and authentic manner. The authors conclude that streaming platforms afford greater flexibility in translating taboo language and that localization norms in Slovakia seems to be evolving to accommodate this new paradigm.

Changing the focus from AVT to MA, the article “Delivery in American sign language interpreting: A case study of *The Circle USA*” by Zeynep Melissa Seyfioğlu opens the door to the world of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting in media settings. Her study investigates the role of Paris McTizic, a hearing interpreter, in Season 5 of the contest *The Circle USA* (2022), where he provides sign-to-voice interpretation for Deaf contestant Raven Sutton, who communicates in ASL. Unlike traditional sign language interpreting, which often involves spoken-to-sign translation, Paris’ role here is unique as he actively participates in the program alongside Raven, making her communication accessible to non-signing hearing viewers. By analyzing Paris’ interpretation, the study focuses on prosody (including intonation, stress, and rhythm) and uses pitch analysis and transcription to assess how emotions and attitudes are conveyed. The findings suggest that Paris’ voice reflects Raven’s emotional expressions, making him not just her interpreter but also a narrator of her personal experiences. His interpretation challenges conventional norms in interpreting studies and illustrates how prosody can shape meaning and foster “access intimacy”, a deep connection between the interpreter and the Deaf individual. Ultimately, Seyfioğlu’s research underlines the evolving role of interpreters in the media and the fact that their work goes beyond linguistic transfer to encompass both emotional and narrative dimensions.

The notion of creativity in media access is at the core of the following contribution by Alicia López Salvador and Giselle Spiteri Miggiani, entitled “Creative freedom versus conventional norms in SDH: The case of *Stranger Things*”. The article explores the application of Creative Media Accessibility (CMA) by analyzing SDH tags in *Stranger Things* (Duffer and Duffer, 2016–2025), focusing on how sound effects, vocal sounds and music are described in captions. In Season 4, Netflix granted subtitlers creative freedom, allowing them to move beyond conventional norms and standardized solutions. The study investigates two main questions: how this freedom influences the subtitlers’ authorial presence, and how it affects the descriptive quality of sound tags. To assess this, the authors compare one episode from Season 1, which follows a conventional approach, with one from Season 4, where a more creative style is evident. While both approaches prioritize plot comprehension, the subtitles in Season 4 are notably longer and make more frequent use of adjectives. The findings show that conventional captions tend to be brief and objective, focusing on plot-relevant sounds. In contrast, the creative approach incorporates subjectivity and communicative meaning, aiming to evoke emotional responses. This not only increases viewer engagement but also highlights the subtitlers’ visibility and interpretive role. The authors show that this aligns with Romero-Fresco and Chaume’s (2022) definition of CMA, transforming SDH tags into expressive tools that enhance immersion for d/Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing viewers.

In the article “Exploring the accessibility creative continuum on streaming platforms: A contrastive multimodal analysis of subjectivity and objectivity in audio description”, Alejandro Romero-Muñoz sparks off the debate on whether audio description should be primarily objective or subjective. The author admits that existing guidelines generally advocate objective descriptions, but there is growing interest in more interpretative approaches. His study examines AD scripts from Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, and Apple TV+ to determine their position on an accessibility creative continuum, which ranges

from strict objectivity to varying degrees of subjectivity. His results reveal that, although guidelines significantly influence the degree of objectivity in AD, both objective and subjective approaches coexist in AD across all platforms, albeit in different proportions. Apple TV+ emerges as the most objective (85.43%), whereas Disney+ exhibits the highest degree of subjectivity (31.69%). Despite the general preference for objectivity, 25% of AD content across platforms seems to incorporate a more creative approach. The study highlights that, while guidelines continue to play a crucial role in shaping AD style, describers integrate subjective elements to enrich the user experience. This suggests a potential shift towards a more flexible model of AD, one that allows for greater engagement while maintaining accessibility.

The second contribution revolving around AD is the one written by Margherita Dore and Fabio Ciambella, entitled “The audio description of sex scenes in *Élite*”. This study examines the Spanish and English audio descriptions of sex scenes in Season 6 of *Élite* (Carlos Montero Castiñeira and Darío Madrona, 2018–2024), highlighting cross-linguistic differences in the portrayal of explicit content. By adopting a contrastive and qualitative perspective, the authors analyze how heterosexual, homosexual, and transgender sex scenes are described across the eight episodes under study. Their findings indicate that, while both AD versions adhere to Netflix’s guidelines, the Spanish AD is generally more explicit and direct, particularly in transgender sex scenes involving one of the characters, whereas the English AD adopts a more euphemistic tone. Additionally, the Spanish AD employs character names more frequently, reducing confusion in multi-character homosexual scenes, whereas English AD relies more on pronouns, which may lead to ambiguity. The study also suggests that these differences reflect broader cultural norms, with Spanish AD embracing a more direct approach to sexual content, while English AD tends to balance formal and informal registers, especially in the depiction of transgender experiences. Finally, the research brings to the fore the inherent subjectivity of AD as well as the challenges of standardizing descriptions across linguistic and cultural contexts.

Blanca Arias-Badia and Anna Matamala’s article “How easy are audio descriptions? Exploring the viability of hybrid access services across English, Spanish and Catalan” examines the use of easy-to-understand (E2U) language in film audio descriptions across English, Spanish, and Catalan. E2U languages encompass Plain Language, Easy Language, and any intermediate variety that enhances comprehensibility. While traditionally applied to written texts, the study explores its viability in audiovisual environments. The authors analyze a multilingual corpus of ADs to assess how closely current practices align with E2U principles. Metrics such as sentence length, verbs per sentence, type-token ratio (TTR), and information load were used to evaluate readability. Results show that ADs in all three languages generally follow E2U principles, often surpassing validated Easy Language texts in readability scores. English ADs tend to use shorter sentences and fewer verbs per sentence but carry a higher information load. Spanish ADs also favor short sentences but avoid modifiers and adjuncts. Catalan ADs, while using longer sentences, exhibit the lowest information load, contributing to ease of understanding. The study highlights that ADs can be inherently accessible when specific linguistic features are considered. It also showcases the potential of hybrid accessibility services that integrate E2U principles into audiovisual media, offering a more inclusive experience for diverse audiences.

This issue’s final contribution, “Linguistic *werk* in streamed drag: A translational and translanguaging analysis” by Iván Villanueva-Jordán, explores how translation and translanguaging shape the representation of drag culture

in *Drag Race España* and *Drag Race México*, two international editions of the *RuPaul's Drag Race* franchise. Using a comparative approach, the author analyzes six episodes from each show to examine how linguistic strategies index drag identities and reconfigure local drag subjectivities and culture within a global media format. The study introduces the concept of “linguistic *werk*” as a form of queer labor which incorporates excess, style, and performance, emphasizing how drag performers use language as a powerful marker of identity. The “drag lingo” of the franchise in English includes catchphrases, camp talk, and word play. The analysis focuses on the translation of its iconic phrases, the use of codeswitching, and the adaptation of cultural references. The author shows that these elements are not only translated but reinvented to reflect local contexts, often incorporating regional slang and intertextual references. The findings reveal that both shows creatively adapt the franchise’s iconic linguistic repertoire, balancing fidelity to the original with local innovation. This hybridization enhances audience engagement and affirms drag as a culturally and linguistically dynamic performance.

5. Concluding remarks

The advent of global streaming platforms such as Netflix has fundamentally reshaped the landscape of AVT and MA, initiating a paradigm shift in how content is produced, localized, and consumed across linguistic and cultural borders. The rise of SVoD services has not only challenged Anglophone hegemony by elevating the visibility of non-English content but also accelerated the demand for an array of translation methods, including captioning, dubbing, SDH, SLI, AD, and even hybrid formats like dubtitles. Simultaneously, the increasing use of pivot languages and AI-driven tools in localization workflows reflects both the operational complexities and ethical tensions inherent in this new era.

As streaming services expand globally, their focus on customization and diversity has contributed to the industrial normalization of transnational strategies, where domestication, linguistic neutrality, and inclusive language policies are carefully crafted to appeal to broad international audiences. However, this process has also prompted debates around authenticity, creative autonomy, and corporate control over cultural narratives. The role of translation is now central to the representation of identity and audience reception, with translators positioned as linguistic mediators and ambassadors between two cultures.

As proved throughout this special issue, the ongoing evolution of streaming is not merely technological or commercial but deeply sociocultural. The articles herein take stock of these current practices and demonstrate how viewers interact with global content as well as how identity, representation, and language are negotiated through translation. Such developments call for continued scholarly inquiry, as AVT and MA stand at the intersection of accessibility, inclusion, and globalization, shaping the future of mediated cultural exchange in the age of streaming platforms.

References

- Aguiar, L., & Waldfogel, J. (2018). Netflix: Global hegemon or facilitator of frictionless digital trade? *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 42(3), 419-445.
- Agulló García, B., Orrego-Carmona, D., Spiteri Miggiani, G., Menezes, R., Valdez, S., Sokoli, S., & Pięta, H. (2024). Indirect (pivot) audiovisual translation: A *Translation & Interpreting* Vol. 17 No. 2 (2025)

- conversation with and among B. Agulló García, D. Orrego-Carmona and G. Spiteri Miggiani. *Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*, 32(5), 849-866.
- Alsharhan, A. (2020). Netflix no-censorship policy in subtitling taboo language from English into Arabic. *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*, 3(1), 7-28. <https://doi.org/10.47476/jat.v3i2.2020.127>
- Aquino, S. (2022, May 19). *With accessible movie screening, Netflix pushes on normalizing entertainment equality for all*. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevenaquino/2022/08/10/with-accessible-movie-screenings-netflix-pushes-on-normalizing-entertainment-equality-for-all/?sh=23064f8e68ac>
- Arnold, S. (2016). Netflix and the myth of choice/participation/autonomy. In K. McDonald & D. Smith-Rowsey (Eds.), *The Netflix effect: Technology and entertainment in the 21st century* (pp. 49-62). Bloomsbury.
- Asmar, A., Raats, T., & Van Audenhove, L. (2023). Streaming difference(s): Netflix and the branding of diversity. *Critical Studies in Television: An International Journal of Television Studies*, 18(1), 24-40.
- Asmar, A., Raats, T., & Van Audenhove, L. (2024). Netflix and the transnationalisation of teen television. *Television & New Media*, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15274764241292334>
- Bolaños-García-Escribano, A., & Díaz-Cintas, J. (2020). The cloud turn in audiovisual translation. In L. Bogucki & M. Deckert (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of audiovisual translation and media accessibility* (pp. 519-544). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bucaria, C. (2023). The audience strikes back. Agency and accountability in audiovisual translation and distribution. In J. Choi, K. H. Kim & J. Evans (Eds.), *Audiovisual translation in the age of streaming. Target: International Journal of Translation Studies*, 35(3), 331-353.
- Bucaria, C. (2024). (Re)assessing the adaptation of audiovisual taboo content: The role of paratextual information. *mediAzioni*, 43, A56-A76. <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1974-4382/20516>
- Cameron, K. (2025). Contesting captions: Netflix, fan campaigns, and the labor of access. *Television & New Media*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15274764251314178>
- Carrero Martín, J. F., & Reverter Oliver, B. (2023). English as a pivot language in audiovisual translation: Industry and profession in Spain. *Ikala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, 28(2), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.ikala.v28n2a03>
- Chaume, F. (2018). Is audiovisual translation putting the concept of translation up against the ropes? *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 30, 84-104. <https://doi.org/10.26034/cm.jostrans.2018.197>
- Chaume, F. (2019). Audiovisual translation in the age of digital transformation. Industrial and social implications. In I. Ranzato and S. Zanotti (Eds.), *Reassessing Dubbing. Historical approaches and current trends* (pp. 103-124). John Benjamins.
- Chaume, F., & de los Reyes Lozano, J. (2021). El doblaje en la nube: La última revolución en la localización de contenidos audiovisuales. In B. Reverter Oliver, J. J. Martínez Sierra, D. González Pastor & J. F. Carrero Martín (Eds.), *Modalidades de traducción audiovisual: Completando el espectro* (pp. 1-16). Comares.
- Choi, J., Kim, K. H., & Evans, J. (2023). Introduction: Translation and streaming in a changing world. *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies*, 35(3), 319-330. <https://doi.org/10.1075/target.00020.cho?locatt=mode:legacy>
- Dallı, H. (2024). Pivot subtitling on Netflix: The case of *Squid Game*. *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*, 7(1), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.47476/jat.v7i1.2024.279>
- Díaz-Cintas, J., & Hayes, L. (2023). Role reversal: An overview of audiovisual translation into English. *Ikala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, 28(2), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.ikala.v28n2a01>
- Dore, M., & De Nicola, G. (2023). Creativity in pivot audiovisual translation. *Parasite* subtitled and dubbed in Italian. *Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*, 32(5), 797-814.

- Elkins, E. (2021). Streaming diplomacy: Netflix's domestic politics and foreign policy. In J. Dal Yon (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of digital media and globalization* (pp. 150-157). Routledge.
- Flis, G., & Szarkowska, A. (2024). Voice-over country? Okay, Boomer. How young viewers are disrupting the AVT landscape in Poland. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 42, 193-216. <https://doi.org/10.26034/cm.jostrans.2024.5989>
- Franco Aixelá, J. (1996). Culture-specific items in translation. In R. Álvarez, & M.C.-A. Vidal (Eds.), *Translation, power, subversion* (pp. 52-78). Multilingual Matters.
- Georgakopoulou, P. (2021). Technologization of audiovisual translation. In L. Pérez-González (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of audiovisual translation* (pp. 516-539). Routledge.
- Gottlieb, H. (2009). Subtitling against the current: Danish concepts, English minds. In J. Díaz-Cintas (Ed.), *New trends in audiovisual translation* (pp. 21-43). Multilingual Matters.
- Hayes, L. (2021). Netflix disrupting dubbing: English dubs and British accents. *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*, 4(1), 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.47476/jat.v4i1.2021.148>
- Hayes, L., & Bolaños-García-Escribano, A. (2022). (Main)streaming English dubs: A snapshot of Netflix's playbook on strategies for english dubbing. *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*, 5(2), 213-233. <https://doi.org/10.47476/jat.v5i2.2022.211>
- Higson, A. (2021). Netflix – The curation of taste and the business of diversification. *Studia Humanistyczne AGH*, 20(4), 7-25. <https://doi.org/10.7494/human.2021.20.4.7>
- Iordache, C. (2022). Netflix in Europe: Four markets, four platforms? A comparative analysis of audio-visual offerings and investment strategies in four EU states. *Television & New Media*, 23(7), 721-742. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15274764211014580>
- Jenner, M. (2024). The quantification of diversity: Netflix, visibility politics and the grammar of transnationalism. *Convergence*, 30(4), 1474-1489. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565241264003>
- Jenner, M. (2023). *Netflix and the re-invention of television* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jenner, M. (2021). Transnationalising genre: Netflix, teen drama and textual dimensions in Netflix transnationalism. In M. Jenner (Ed.), *Binge-watching and contemporary television studies* (pp. 183-200). Edinburgh University Press.
- Jiménez-Crespo, M. A. (2024). Professional translators' attitudes towards control and autonomy in the human-centered AI era: Presenting a survey study. *Proceedings of new trends in translation and technology* (pp. 91-98). Varna, Bulgaria. https://doi.org/10.26615/issn.2815-4711.2024_008
- Ju, H. (2020). Korean TV drama viewership on Netflix: Transcultural affection, romance, and identities. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 13(1), 32-48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2019.1606269>
- Khoo, O. (2022). Picturing diversity: Netflix's inclusion strategy and the Netflix recommender algorithm (NRA). *Television & New Media*, 24(3), 281-297. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15274764221102864>
- Limov, R. (2020). Click it, binge it, get hooked: Netflix and the growing U.S. audience for foreign content. *International Journal of Communication*, 14, 6304-6323.
- Lobato, R. (2019). *Netflix nations: The geography of digital distribution*. NYU Press.
- Lotz, A. D. (2021). In between the global and the local: Mapping the geographies of Netflix as a multinational service. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 24(2), 195-215. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877920953166>
- Lotz, A. D., & Lobato, R. (2019, November 14). *Apple, Disney and Netflix's streaming battle isn't winner-take-all*. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/apple-disney-and-netflixs-streaming-battle-isnt-winner-take-all-125360>
- MacDonald, J. (2021, December 13). *2021 K-Drama Trends Feature Vigilantes, Monsters, Idols and Web Comics*. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/joanmacdonald/2021/12/13/2021-k-drama-trends-feature-vigilantes-monsters-idols-and-web-comics/>

- Massidda, S. (2023). Disruptive AVT workflows in the age of streaming. The Netflix equation. *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies*, 35(3), 455-475. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/target.00021.mas>
- Moore, K. (2020, June 13). *Does Netflix have too much foreign content? What's on Netflix*. <https://www.whats-on-netflix.com/news/does-netflix-have-too-much-foreign-content/>
- Moorkens, J., & Guerberof-Arenas, A. (2024). Artificial intelligence, automation and the language industry. In G. Massey, M. Ehrensberger-Dow, & E. Angelone (Eds.), *Handbook of the Language Industry: Contexts, Resources and Profiles* (pp. 71-97). De Gruyter.
- Netflix Partner Help Center (n.d.). *KNP: Sensitive terminology management*. <https://partnerhelp.netflixstudios.com/hc/en-us/articles/11786538799251-KNP-Sensitive-Terminology-Management>
- Official Journal of the European Union. (2018). *Article 13 of the Audiovisual Media Services Directives*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/chapter/05.html?expand=0505>
- Orrego-Carmona, D. (2021, October 18). Squid Game: Why you shouldn't be so harsh on translators. *The Conversation*. <https://rb.gy/qpzgl7>
- Orrego-Carmona, D. (2018). New audiences, international distribution, and translation. In E. Di Giovanni & Y. Gambier (Eds.), *Reception studies and audiovisual translation* (pp. 321-342). John Benjamins.
- Pięta, H., Valdez, S., Menezes, R., & Sokoli, S. (2024). Indirect (pivot) audiovisual translation: A burning issue for research and training. *Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*, 32(5), 763-779. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2024.2374649>
- Ranzato, I., & Zanotti, S. (2019). The dubbing revolution. In I. Ranzato & S. Zanotti (Eds.), *Reassessing dubbing. Historical approaches and current trends* (pp. 1-14). John Benjamins.
- Romero-Fresco, P., & Chaume, F. (2022). Creativity in audiovisual translation and media accessibility. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 38, 75-101.
- Sánchez-Mompeán, S. (2023). Engaging English audiences in the dubbing experience: A matter of quality or habituation? *Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, 28(2), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.ikala.v28n2a13>
- Sánchez-Mompeán, S. (2021). Netflix likes it dubbed: Taking on the challenge of dubbing into English. *Language & Communication*, 80, 180-190. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2021.07.001>
- Scope for business. (2025). *Accessibility and video on-demand streaming services. Disabled viewers are being left behind by the video on-demand streaming revolution*. <https://business.scope.org.uk/businesscase/streaming/#analysis>
- Singh, S. (2025). *Netflix subscribers statistics (2025) – users & revenue*. Demand Sage. <https://www.demandsage.com/netflix-subscribers/>
- Sokoli, S. (2024). *Dubtitles: The “hidden” subtitles on Netflix*. Notion. <https://ssokoli.notion.site/Dubtitles-the-hidden-subtitles-on-Netflix-1f8ba1130d2543bcaa82deec0b133e05>
- Spiteri Miggiani, G. (2023). Cloud studios and scripts: Evolving workspaces and workflows in dubbing. In C. Pena-Díaz (Ed.), *The making of accessible audiovisual translation* (pp. 145-175). Peter Lang.
- Spiteri Miggiani, G. (2022). Measuring quality in translation for dubbing: A quality assessment model proposal for trainers and stakeholders. *XLinguae*, 15(2), 85-102. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18355/XL.2022.15.02.07>
- Spiteri Miggiani, G. (2021). English-language dubbing: Challenges and quality standards of an emerging localisation trend. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 36, 2-25. <https://doi.org/10.26034/cm.jostrans.2021.054>
- Topcu, E. (2025, March 15). *Popular Turkish series a mix of commentary, propaganda*. DW Culture. <https://rb.gy/wd7par>
- Thuillas, O., & Wiart, L. (2024). Cultural diversity according to Netflix: A means of legitimizing an industrial strategy? *Online Media and Global Communication*, 3(2), 290-306. <https://doi.org/10.1515/omgc-2024-0015>
- Yoon, K. (2023). Questioning platform-driven diversity: diasporic Korean storytelling on Netflix. *International Journal of Communication*, 17, 6915-6933.