

## PAPER PRESENTATION

### [Slide 1:](#)

- Good morning to you all and thank you for being here.
- Before I start, I would like to thank the organizing committee for this opportunity and especially to Professor Teresa Seruya for having encouraged me to present this paper.
- This research focuses on translators' literacy – specifically of those working for the translation department of RTP: the Portuguese public television broadcaster;
- I based my study on interviews to the former coordinator of this department – Teresa Sustelo –, as well as to all those working today at RTP as news translators. I fortunately had the opportunity to observe them while they were working, which was extremely important to understand what exactly is at stake in this particular translational act.

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- Back in 2016, when I started this project, one of the translators was explaining me the whole process of creating a translated news piece. He showed me this video and asked: “Okay: he is saying this in clear English, it is not difficult to understand, it is not difficult to translate. **But what is he really talking about?**” I honestly answered: “I don't have a clue...” And he replied: “Exactly: hadn't I watched the news this morning, I wouldn't know either.”
- So, it was thanks to his **daily habit** of being informed about what happens in the world and in the country that allowed him to disclose that it was probably a statement...
  - \* of a spokesperson of the United Nations;
  - \* about human rights issues;
  - \* and possibly related to the situation in Aleppo, Syria, since it was a subject on the agenda at the time.

**BUT** the thing is that he could not tell for sure.

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- **It would have been very different if the journalist had sent him the whole piece:** for example, the line immediately before the spokesperson's speech presents information which could have been determinant for a **correct** translation in terms of meaning, NOT TO MENTION that the translator would have felt **much more confident** when pursuing his work.

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- **This made me wonder: what kind of skills** these translation professionals **MUST** have in order to...
  - \* perform this specific, difficult work?

\* Skills that are not necessarily required **in other kinds of translation**?

\* And which could turn it difficult for a **younger or less experienced translator** to work in this supdepartment?

- THEREFORE, my research question was: which is the specific literacy of audiovisual news translators?

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- **FIRST**, let me **briefly** present these RTP professionals:

- It is a team of five translators, who learned to translate either academically or professionally, mainly by virtue of their linguistic skills and experience in other kinds of translations;

- They arrived at RTP in different moments of time, but they all went through a similar process:

\* They learned how to subtitle in the house (i.e., at RTP) and they all started translating different audiovisual contents – such as documentaries, sitcoms and movies;

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\* Then, particularly when it was established the so-called “**24-7 era**” and RTP started to invest seriously in news contents, it was necessary to have a group of professionals **permanently** in the office, translating for **all** the newscasts of the **several** channels: RTP 1, RTP 2 and RTP 3, plus RTP Madeira, RTP Açores, RTP África and RTP International.

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\* They are organized in shifts, so that they can work for the news flows from 5AM (7AM during weekends) to midnight and, every day, there must be two translators during the peak hours, i.e., during the two main newscasts of RTP1: at 1PM and 8PM;

\* They need to be proficient in four working languages plus one – English, French, Spanish and Italian plus German, in which they are usually helped by an external collaborator;

\* And they must have a perfect domain of the Portuguese as well.

**BUT it is the fact that they work as a part of a much longer chain that makes this work so demanding:**

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- **The translation process ACTUALLY begins in the journalists’ room:**

1<sup>st</sup> The editor-in-chief decides the subjects and distributes them by each work group;

2<sup>nd</sup> Each journalist goes through a process of research, usually using the internet and also making personal contacts, which often materialize in live interviews and/or telephone contacts;

3<sup>rd</sup> Then, it is time to produce the news piece, associating a textual part (which is read by the journalist) and an audiovisual part - **WHENEVER the statements that he/she is going to include are in a foreign language OR when they are recorded by phone, journalists need to request a translation.**

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4<sup>th</sup> They contact AGS – the digital server of RTP, which manages all the process of creating a news piece. The video or the audio is saved in the server by the journalist – the person in charge in AGS calls the translators’ room (by phone) –he/she tells the name of the file (which is usually associated to the subject) – the translator copies the file to his/her working folder AND he/she starts working:

**5<sup>th</sup> First of all, he/she opens the file, and QUICKLY gets aware of the kind of work required**

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- These are the sorts of files that might be sent:



International events -  
interlinguistic



Major events: previous  
simultaneous translation -  
intralinguistic



Phone calls -  
intralinguistic



Distorted voices -  
intralinguistic

**- Each of them requires a specific kind of translation:**

- For example, if it is an international event, they will perform an **interlinguistic translation**;

- Shall there be a major event, as when António Guterres took office as UN Secretary-General, usually there is a process of **simultaneous translation (interpreting)** for a live broadcast (at the same moment)

- and only later on, for the following newscasts, the translator will need to substitute the interpreter’s voice by subtitles, so performing an **intralinguistic translation**;

- Also **intralinguistic** are phone calls and distorted voices: in both, subtitles are added in order to support less-understandable audios.

- In truth, they all represent **INTERSEMIOTIC translations**, since translations are essentially pursued by a **listening** process.

- At the same time, translators need to pay attention to **what is being shown on the screen**, so that they may divide the text in “the right” place: i.e., the information needs to be presented on the subtitle precisely when it is being orally pronounced by the speaker.

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**STILL, there are special cases:** when the speech is in a **non-working language** (for example, in Korean, Japanese or Russian) the journalist MUST ALSO send an email to the translator with the respective text of the video that he/she has chosen – and this text is already a **translation** usually taken from Reuters, most often in English (sometimes in French).

- This means that, in those cases, the translators perform an **INDIRECT translation**.

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- When finished, the translator replays the whole piece with the subtitles, checking if there aren't any errors (misspellings, misunderstandings) and confirms if the text is correctly divided on the screen;

- Then, he/she saves the file, calls AGS back, and the work returns to the journalist, to be finished and, finally, broadcasted.

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- This is the general picture and even though they regard ideal conditions, we might say that there are some skills which are very particular of audiovisual news translators:

1. The limits of space on the screen imply a **very significant ability of being concise** – which means not only to be able to choose a shorter word when needed, but also to avoid repetitions and oral speech marks;

2. The limits of time before the newscasts demand that they are **fast on typing** and **quick on thinking**;

3. The cultural and language-learning importance of subtitles makes it mandatory to be **accurate** in terms of terminology and spelling (namely in what concerns proper names and abbreviations);

4. The broadness of possible linguistic sources demand that they are **linguistically proficient and, at the same time, mentally agile enough** to be able to **constantly go back and forth** from different languages, rendering each content **fluently, in the clearest** way possible and **without** changes to what is being said (which is **still heard by the public**);

5. AND, the “**surprise factor**” that is implicated in this work (they never know which content they will be required to translate) demands NOT JUST a **very broad culture**, BUT MAINLY a **solid** and

**current** one – we must not forget that they deal with **day-to-day life facts**, which does not happen, for instance, with literary translators.

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- All these skills **go beyond** what we can learn from **books**, **tutorials** or even **direct observation** – RATHER, it is:

\* **life experience**,

\* **everyday practice**

\* And a continuous process of **self-cultivation/ improvement**

What allows news translators to act **automatically** and with the necessary degree of:

- **Technical proficiency**

- **Wisdom**

- **Emotional strength** to deal with the CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE and the STRESS

- **Sensitiveness**

Characteristics required to:

\* overcome possible and often constraints, such as a de-contextualization of the subject or low quality of the audio;

\* create a balanced product, in terms of sound, video and text;

\* work in shifts AND in a large team, including other translators, journalists and people in the AGS;

\* know **when** look for clarification, help a colleague, advise journalists or give them notice of mistakes resulting from a possible misinterpretation of their part;

\* learn **how** to put perfectionism and the ego aside AND **focus** on what is most important: **that the piece is broadcasted AND NEVER put at risk because the translator could not** accomplish his/her task.

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- The awareness of how demanding this specific work is reminds me of something that **Teresa Sustelo**, the former coordinator of the translation department of RTP, told me, back in 2016 – and that now I am truly capable of understanding: **that such translators are “SUPER TRANSLATORS”, because – and I quote:**

- ❖ Not only do they need to be “**extremely wise**” and “**fast**”, BUT AT THE SAME TIME “**calm**” and “**reasonable** enough to, in the midst of the fuzz and the quickness, still be able to ponder about their **own** work”

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- **All five news translators agreed** that it is surely a difficult role for a younger or less experienced translator to play AND that, if someone else eventually joins the team, he/she must go through a **significant process of training and supervising** before starting to translate the pieces.

- **They also recognized** that they are rather invisible in the whole process of creating a news piece – YET, that does not really bother them: on the contrary, they all stated that what is important is **to be part of the major project that is allowing people to LEARN about their own country and the world** – in other words, to contribute to the cultural LITERACY of the general public.

- ALSO, **none of them would like to change their job**, because the degree of both **personal and professional LITERACY** that they get in the audiovisual news domain is not achievable in any other.

THEREFORE, **despite being so demanding**, they find it **truly rewarding**.

**Thank you.**