



Audiovisual Translation



Getting started

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Introduction

Whether you're new to translation or are thinking of changing your field within this industry, audiovisual translation could be the right path for you.

Audiovisual translation, or AVT, is the transfer of meaning from a language to another of audiovisual materials: videos, films, series, documentaries, operas, musicals, theatrical plays, and even videogames. AVT is one of the biggest areas within the translation industry. It's currently worth USD 2.5 billion and is expected to continue growing over the next few years.

So this could be your opportunity to get into this field and diversify your income as a language professional. But before diving in too fast, there are a couple things you should know about working as an audiovisual translator. While it can be fun and interesting, it can also raise challenges that you should know about and be ready to tackle before you get started. In this ProZ.com guide, we'll share some of the key basics with you.



Translation for subtitling

One of the first challenges in subtitling is the translation itself. Subtitle translation can be described as “subordinate translation”, due to the inherent restrictions of this type of audiovisual translation, that is to say, time and space (we talk about these below). Subtitles should not interfere with the video, but help the viewer to understand its content. They should be concise, they should be easy to read, and they should transmit the meaning, not the form.

However, due to the restrictions mentioned above, subtitlers usually have to make some decisions on what content should be translated. Remember, the main goal is to transmit the meaning, not the form, while sounding natural in the target language and following certain rules and criteria.



Time restrictions

Every subtitle must start with a sound and end with a sound, that is to say, it must appear when a speaker starts talking and disappear as soon as the speaker finishes the intervention. But what if the speaker's intervention lasts less than a second, or lasts too long? As a general rule, subtitles should last at least one second to avoid a "blinking effect", and less than 6 seconds to avoid a "loop effect", where the reader starts reading the subtitle again and gets distracted from the video. However, these parameters may vary depending on the client's requirements.

Within that time-frame, keep in mind how much text can be read by the viewer, and therefore adapt your translation to their reading speed, that is to say the amount of characters that can be read in one second. This is one of the biggest challenges you will encounter while doing subtitling.



Space restrictions

As mentioned in the introduction, subtitles are subordinate to time restrictions and space restrictions. We reviewed some of the time restrictions in the previous section, but what about space?

Well, subtitles must comprise up to two lines, in which each line contains a maximum of 32 to 42 characters, depending on your client's requirements and the platform (TV, cinema, VOD platform, etc.). This restriction can oblige subtitlers to break one subtitle into two lines, so you need to pay special attention to segmentation too. A simple rule must be followed while segmenting subtitles, do not break syntagmas apart. If you follow these parameters you will be safe.



What about time-coding?

As a subtitler, your dream project is one in which you receive a clean .SRT file with all the time codes and subtitles which simply need translating and segmenting. However, this is not usually the case, and most often, you will need to create the subtitle file, whether in .SRT, .SUB, or any other format with all the time-coded subtitles from scratch.

To do so you'll need subtitling software. If you are just starting out, the best thing to do is use free subtitling software – it can be really useful and deliver a good quality product. Examples include Subtitle Workshop, Aegisub, Subtitle edit, etc. And as you get more experienced and once you start getting clients on your own, then invest in a paid subtitling software such as EZ-Titles, Subtitle Next, MacCaption/CaptionMaker, OONA, among others, all of which can produce better results while subtitling.



How to find clients

You can start by volunteering on well-known volunteering sites, so you can get used to the various rules and procedures, then reach out to independent film makers, local art institutions, and education institutions, in this way you can work on really interesting projects while you are getting experience and start building your portfolio, and then start applying for AVT agencies. Try not to rush and apply too early without having enough experience or knowledge.

Take your time, get used to the rules and procedures, be patient as you grow more familiar with the software. Then, when you feel ready, start looking for your dream client and dream project. Try not to limit yourself to the entertainment industry, diversify your services, and stay in tune with the latest trends and technologies.

Now it's time to get ready, prepare your CV and portfolio, set up your ProZ.com profile, and start your journey through audiovisual translation.



Your journey starts here

If you want to start your journey off on the right foot, then take the AVT Spotlight Course, where you will learn not only all the technical and practical aspects of subtitling, but also how to create subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing, and dubbing scripts from scratch.

Join now!



<http://proz.me/AVT>

