

## Norms in AVT: A Dual Approach to a Long-Lasting and Fundamental Notion

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### Abstract

The main objective of this article is to review the concept of norm in Audiovisual Translation (AVT), a concept which has been subject to a dual approach when using it, both a descriptive one and a prescriptive one. The review proposed in this article is intended to be twofold: descriptive and critical. A descriptive approach will be the focus in the first two sections of the paper, where the history and evolution of the concept is analysed. A more critical stance is then adopted in the following two sections of the paper. The dual orientation of the concept of norm is highlighted in Section 3. The hypothetical application of norm theory to professional practices for the main modes within AVT has in most cases taken the form of guidelines, the result of a pure prescriptive approach. This discussion is covered in Section 4. The final fifth section summarizes the review, while pointing out the great significance of this fundamental notion within the field of AVT. All in all, the concept has proven to be successful and long-lasting, and it is mainly accepted that norms obtained from empirical research should give rise to guidelines for professional practice in translation.

**Key words:** audiovisual translation, norm, descriptivism, prescriptivism, dubbing, subtitling, accessibility.

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## 1. History and Norm Theory

The concept of norm in Translation Studies was introduced by the so-called Manipulation School, a group of scholars who held several meetings at the end of the 1970s, and who dealt mainly with literary translation. One of them, Theo Hermans, compiled their postulates in 1985, in a seminal volume entitled *The Manipulation of Literature, Studies in Literary Translation*. According to the scholar (1985: 10–11), all contributions in the volume had some points in common. Among them: (1) the view of literature as a complex and dynamic system; (2) the conviction that there should be an interplay between theoretical models and practical case studies; (3) an approach to literary translation which was descriptive, target-oriented, functional and systemic; and (4) an interest in the norms and constraints involved in the production and reception of translations. Other scholars belonging to this group, Gideon Toury and Itamar Even-Zohar, introduced the concept of *polysystem* in Translation Studies. These proposals were significant within the field and were further developed by others, such as Nord (1991), Chesterman (1997), Hermans (1999) and Munday (2001). However, the publications by Toury (1980, 1995) are the ones which may have had a big impact on the development of the concept of norm, especially his proposal to classify norms into different categories. Chesterman and Nord also presented their proposals for the classification of norms, which will be covered in some detail later in this section.

For a definition of the concept of norm, we can use the one suggested by Hermans:

[...] the term "norm" refers both to a regularity of behaviour, i.e. a recurring pattern, and to the underlying mechanism which accounts for that behaviour. The mechanism is a psychological and social entity. It mediates between the individual and the collective, between the individual's intentions, choices and actions, and collectively held beliefs, values and preferences. [...] The norms and conventions of translation guide and facilitate decision-making. The basic premise is that translation, as a communicative act, constitutes a form of social behaviour. For communication to succeed, those engaged in the process need to coordinate their actions. (Hermans, 1999, p. 80).

The quote above pairs together the concept of "norm" with that of "convention", without really defining a relationship rank between them. Toury (1995) introduces other terms like "rules" and "idiosyncrasies". It seems, then, that the degree of regularization (or the recurring patterns) in translation practice can have various potencies. Pedersen (2011) makes an excellent revision of "the potency of norms". He states:

More specifically, however, "norms" themselves are part of a cline of social and translation behaviour that is illustrated in Figure A. This means that the term "norm" is both a hyponym and a hypernym, which is somewhat unfortunate, but it is common norm studies terminology, and it should be clear from the context in what sense the term is used. (Pedersen, 2011, p. 30).

According to Pedersen, the mentioned figure A, entitled as *The potency of translation norms*, is based on Toury (1995), Chesterman (1997) and Hermans (1999), and it is explained as follows:

At the bottom of the cline, there are “idiosyncrasies”, which are fairly random, and are best used to describe the preferences of a single translator. The next level is called “regularities”, and these are recurring patterns, which may or may not have been noticed and shared by others. For the researcher, regularities in the material are the first sign that there might be a norm at work. “Conventions” is the first level where regularities of behaviour become socially noticed. [...] “Norms” are thus stronger than conventions, but norms spring from conventions. [...] The main difference between norms and conventions is that while conventions tell you what to do, norms tell you what you should do, because this is the way that people like you do things. [...] When we move beyond norms, we find “rules”, which tend to be both codified and authoritarian. [...] “Laws” of translation are a controversial issue, and they are of a slightly different kind from the other terms, in that they are not binding in the same way as e.g. rules. Instead, laws are of a universal nature, arrived at, not by legislation or other authorization means, but through observation by translation scholars. The laws of translational behaviour are predictive and probabilistic laws, and they have the following structure: “If X, then the greater/the lesser the likelihood that Y” (Pedersen, 2011, p. 31–33).

Another publication that has added some additional insight to this cline is the one by Martínez Sierra (2014). Here, the author moves from idiosyncrasies to norms, trying to find an intermediate path. He introduces the concept of “trend” or “tendency” (*tendencia*, in Spanish), which is used for “weak” norms, generally obtained from research that can be considered as “superficial” or “scarce” (e.g. from a corpus, which would be insufficient to formulate a new norm, but sufficient to suggest the possible presence of a norm). Although the author bases his study on the proposals by Toury (1995), he does not cite the work by Pedersen (2011).

Toury’s norms (1995, p. 56–58) are broken down into three main types: the initial norm, preliminary norms, and operational norms. The initial norm has to do with the translated text, in the sense that it adheres to the source culture norms (“adequacy”), or that it subscribes to norms originating in the target culture (“acceptability”). In a way, this norm somehow reproduces the two main extreme approaches that may be followed while producing a translation (Martí Ferriol, 2013). Hermans (1999, p. 76–77) has criticized Toury’s concepts of “adequacy” and “acceptability” on two accounts, as Pedersen (2011, p. 35) points out: first, the aspiration to produce an “adequate translation” is utopian, and second, the two terms are terminologically confusing.

The preliminary norms by Toury have to do with translation policies (which text types are to be translated), and with directness of translation (the use of mediating languages in translation). As far as operational norms are concerned, they are “conceived as directing the decisions made during the act of translation itself”. They are of two kinds: *matricial norms*, which govern the target-language material intended to substitute for the corresponding source-language material, its location in the text, and its segmentation; and *textual-linguistic norms*, which govern the selection of material to formulate the target text (lexis, sentence structure, etc.).

Pedersen (2011, p. 35) comments on Toury's norms as follows:

The advantage of Toury's norm system is that it is holistic: it takes the whole process into consideration, not only the translation itself. The drawback is that the terms are somewhat ambivalent. Furthermore, in Toury's system, all norms seem equally pertinent, but in actual fact they have very unequal leverage. While all Toury's norms should be taken into consideration when analyzing translations, in actual practice, the main focus will inevitably be the textual-linguistic norms, as some of the others could be easily investigated. One example is the norm of directness: is a pivot translation used? This is a basic yes/no question, whereas the analysis of textual-linguistic norms can – and does – fill bookshelves.

Chesterman's norms are to a larger extent associated with the individuals involved in the translation process, rather than with the translation process itself. They are split up into two groups: *product norms* and *process norms*. The former ones are also referred to as "expectancy norms", "established by the expectations of readers of a translation (of a given type) concerning what a translation (of this type) should be like" (Chesterman, 1997, p. 64). The latter ones are also termed "professional norms"; they are subordinate to expectancy norms, and are of three different types: the *accountability norm*, the *communication norm*, and the *relation norm*. The accountability norm is ethical, the communication norm sees translation as social interaction, and the relation norm focuses on equivalence and fidelity between source text and target text. These three norm types, respectively, are further described by the author as follows:

A translator should act in such a way that the demands of loyalty are appropriately met with regard to the original writer, the commissioner of the translation, the translator himself or herself, the prospective readership and any other relevant parties (Chesterman, 1997, p. 68).

A translator should act in such a way as to optimize communication, as required by the situation, between all parties involved (Chesterman, 1997, p. 69).

A translator should act in such a way that an appropriate relation of relevant similarity is established and maintained between the source text and the target text (Chesterman, 1997, p. 69).

According to Pedersen (2011, p. 36), "One advantage of Chesterman's norms is that they emphasize the role of the reader. Another advantage is that a distinction is made between product and process". However, Pedersen (2011, p. 36) also states that "A possible drawback of Chesterman's norm is that their form makes them open to criticism for being prescriptive". As it turns out, this dual interpretation of the notion of norm is inherent to its very concept, and as such, it has and will be highlighted along this article.

Nord's (1991) approach to norms is similar to the one by Chesterman, although her classification was presented some years earlier, in 1991. This similarity is due to the consideration of both product and process standpoints. For product norms, Nord uses the term *constitutive norms*, while she terms the process norms as *regulatory norms*, which might as well be considered as "conventions". Nord's early

and pioneering classification of norms could be termed as “paramount”, in the sense that it adds other considerations to the concept of norm, other than the role of the translator.

## 2. Research Methods and Studies Associated With Norms: The Descriptive Paradigm in AVT

By the end of the 80s, Delabastita (1989, 1990) made the first attempt to incorporate the notion of norm to AVT. This has been recognized by Karamitroglou, whose contribution will be further commented on later in this section, when he cites the work of Delabastita (1989, p. 206):

To my knowledge, Delabastita was the first Translation scholar to attempt to investigate this particular field, therefore “mapping the contours of a still virgin area” (Karamitroglou, 2000, p. 105).

Delabastita investigates the norms that lie behind the selection of audiovisual texts to be translated, in other words, Toury’s preliminary norms. Based on the observation of those translated texts, the author proposes a list of questions which may highlight the presence of certain regularities. Delabastita’s pioneering contribution was also followed by others like Lambert (1994), who suggests the possibility of using the descriptive paradigm in the field of AVT, and Hermans (1999, p. 45), who highlights this possibility as a clear indication of some wider objectives within the paradigm.

In 1993, Goris published the results of a case study related to dubbing in France, where he already proposed four types of norms for audiovisual translation: *linguistic standardization*, *naturalization*, *explicitation*, as well as the so-called “*secondary norms*” (respect of the grammar structures in the original text, and conservation of the specific characteristics of the genre in AVT). Besides this proposal, the French scholar presented a 4-step methodology to be followed in order to obtain global norms.

A big step forward was made in 2000, when Karamitroglou published his study on AVT norms (as conceived from the descriptive point of view) in Greece. His book includes an insightful critical theoretical review of the classifications proposed by Toury, Chesterman and Nord (described in the previous section). The Greek scholar also reviews the methodological approach which, according to him, should be followed in the study of norms in AVT. Apart from his comments on Delabastita’s publications (see above), he also reviews the work of other scholars, such as Toury (Karamitroglou, 2000, p. 97–88), Lambert & van Gorp (Karamitroglou, p. 99–100), Nord (Karamitroglou, p. 101–102), Puurtinen (Karamitroglou, p. 102) and Du-Nour (Karamitroglou, p. 102–103), although not all of these studies are really devoted to AVT. All in all, this book covers many interesting aspects, and it could possibly be defined as the first one to be fully devoted to translation norms in the field of AVT. The contributions made to AVT research on norms in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have been numerous. Ballester (2001) was probably the first one, and it has been followed by other scholars, where the main methodology used was the descriptive approach normally applied to dubbing and subtitling in the form of case studies.

Ballester devotes a case study to the Spanish dubbing of the film *Blood and Sand* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1941), in the historical context of Franco's dictatorship in Spain. She establishes some AVT norms, like *naturalization* (borrowed from Goris' work), *explicitation* (which is understood in a similar way as Goris does), and *euphemization*, where the ethical implications of some parts of content in the source text may be altered in the target text (by means of strategies like omission, addition or substitution), so that they are ideologically acceptable in the target culture.

By building on these and similar case studies, some new and specific classifications for norms in AVT (specifically for dubbing and subtitling) have been put forward (Martí Ferriol, 2007, 2013). In this case, the author proposes norms for two specific translation phases: the preliminary phase and the translation phase. For the former, which includes the part of the translation process where the translation act itself has not been started yet, norms have to do with the observation of professional and macro-textual conventions for dubbing and subtitling assignments, such as the translation *skopos*, the style to be followed (as stated in style books, for example), the schedule, and other situational and economic factors. For the latter, the translation process itself, the norm taxonomy is mainly built upon the above-mentioned components, although it also includes new norms: *linguistic standardization*, *naturalization*, *explicitation*, *linguistic fidelity*, *euphemization* and *disphemization*.

Most of the studies which identify norms in AVT also take into account other important notions, like constraints and translation techniques in AVT; these are usually considered in relation with the catalogue of norms put forward. Some discussion about the possibility of terming the results obtained from case studies as "norms" has also been present in literature. As mentioned in the previous section, this has been pointed out by Martínez Sierra (2014). When case studies are involved, research concepts like the selection of a corpus and its representativeness are undoubtedly important concepts to be considered.

Among more recent studies on AVT norms, Pedersen (2011) should be highlighted. He presents an empirical case study, in which he proposes translation norms for the specific problem of extralinguistic cultural references in TV subtitles.

Some research effort related to translation norms has also been devoted to the main accessibility modes, namely SDH (Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing) and AD (Audio description). As a result of this effort, a number of books and articles have been published, in which norms (or regularities) are in some cases supposedly identified from a descriptive standpoint. This is so, as it will be explained, because it is sometimes difficult to identify the main approach followed in these research studies (either descriptive or prescriptive, or a combination of both). Some selected publications in this fashion are mentioned below.

Among the former publications, the ones which deal with SDH, we could point out those by Neves (2005, 2008), and Matamala & Orero (2010); among the ones that deal with AD we can mention those by Snyder (2005), Salway (2007) and Matamala & Remael (2015). Other compilations, like Díaz-

Cintas, Orero & Remael (2007), deal with Accessibility as a whole. Some comments on their approach to norms and regularities follow.

The work published by Neves in 2005 is based on her PhD dissertation, the first one devoted to this AVT modality (SDH). The first part of its abstract clearly indicates that her work is especially relevant in a review like this, since it combines both the descriptive and prescriptive approaches:

A study of subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (SDH) with special reference to the Portuguese context. On the one hand it accounts for a descriptive analysis of SDH in various European countries (sic) with the aim of arriving at the norms that govern present practices and that may be found in the form of guidelines and / or in actual subtitled products. [...] Nonetheless it takes a step beyond to seek reasons and to propose change rather than (sic) simply to describe objects and actions.

In Neves (2008), the author tries to clarify some misconceptions and misunderstandings related to SDH and its practical implementation. Among the 10 fallacies cited, one (the fourth) is entitled *Standardization and norms are good*. The abstract of the article describes the approach followed:

In this paper, a few of the above-mentioned misconceptions will be addressed in a critical eye and a provocative tone. Ten fallacies are listed in the hope that other researchers and professionals might take up the problematic issues as a starting point for further research and thus shed further light on them.

Due to the prescriptive position mostly adopted as far as SDH norms are concerned in some European countries, the author indicates that these norms also have to take into account how operational these norms may be, once applied in real practice.

The book edited by Matamala and Orero (2010) presents the outcomes of a research project on SDH, where several parties (mainly Spanish universities) were involved. As its abstract states:

This book is the first monographic study on subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing from a multidisciplinary perspective, from engineering to philology. The book departs from studies, analyses, tests, validations, resulting data, and their application from the nation-wide research on accessibility and usability of subtitles carried out in Spain. [...] The book also contains articles which discuss present and future research on subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing carried out in Canada and across Europe: Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Poland, Spain, and UK. It provides an outlook for the implementation of the European Guidelines on Media Accessibility.

In this case, both descriptive and prescriptive approaches to norms and regularities in SDH are combined. As a consequence, it could be assumed in general terms that conclusions generated from research projects are more likely to fall into the descriptive area, although they may also involve the generation of some prescriptive conventions and standards.

The book edited by Díaz-Cintas et al. (2007) is probably the first compilation of articles devoted to Accessibility as a whole. Here, contributions related to SDH, AD and Sign Language are put together, either with a descriptive or prescriptive approach.

As far as AD is concerned, the publications mentioned before are the ones by Snyder (2005), Salway (2007) and Matamala & Remael (2015).

Snyder, in his work of 2005, presents an article which can be considered as pioneering and seminal for Audio description. The article was published together with many others in the *Vision 2005 Proceedings of the International Congress* held between 4 and 7 April 2005 in London, UK. As such, it contains definitions and general hints about this practice, as the abstract reads:

Audio Description (AD) allows persons with visual impairments to hear what cannot be seen at theater performances, on film and video, in museum exhibitions—in a wide range of human endeavor. [...] AD provides a verbal version of the visual—the visual is made verbal, aural, and oral for the benefit of people who are blind or have low vision.

Thus, this article sets the rules for the practice of this accessibility mode. It provides hints and recommendations for the practice of the mode (which could be considered as guidelines). Although they may be regarded as prescriptive, they do not really stem from descriptive research.

Salway (2007) tries to identify specific characteristics (regularities) of the language used in Audio description by making use of corpus analysis. This contribution can be found in the volume edited by Díaz-Cintas, Orero and Remael (2007). In a way, Salway's work could be classified as part of the descriptive efforts to identify fundamental norms for this modality in AVT (AD).

Matamala & Remael (2015) published a case study on AD, which illustrates the need for and implementation of additional descriptive studies in this AVT mode. The abstract of this article reads as follows:

This article explores whether the so-called new “cinema of attractions”, with its supposed focus on visual effects to the detriment of storytelling, requires a specific approach to audio-description (AD). After some thoughts on film narrative in this type of cinema and the way in which it incorporates special effects, selected scenes with AD from two feature films, *2012* (directed by Emmerich) and *Hero* (directed by Zhang Yimou), are analysed. [...] The results suggest that effect-driven narratives require carefully timed and phrased ADs that devote much attention to the prosody of the AD script, its interaction with sounds and the use of metaphor.

This sort of studies somehow indicates that some scholars are still trying to run the descriptive path (which may eventually lead to prescriptive guidelines) in some Accessibility modes like AD. As it turns out, it seems that it has not been until the first and second decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that descriptivism and norm theory have pervaded into the Accessibility world.



### 3. Discussion of a Dual Approach to the Notion of Norm

The concept of norm, from the very beginning, has been subject to a great deal of controversy. Although norms have always been understood as indications of patterns of behaviour, their potential use, once identified, has given rise to many discussions. A possible explanation to this may be the sheer definition of norm. As mechanisms of interaction among individuals, norms should meet expectations by others. But others might as well only accept them if they turn out as expected.

In terms of translation and translation theory, Toury (1980) proposed case studies as a means to identify “trends in translation behaviour”, which should then help “reconstruct” the norms operating during the translation process. This idea was later cited and rephrased by Munday:

The aim of Toury’s case studies is to distinguish trends of translation behaviour, to make generalizations regarding the decision-making process of the translator and then to ‘reconstruct’ the norms that have been in operation in the translation and make hypothesis that can be tested by future descriptive studies (Munday, 2001, p. 113).

But in his later publication (1995), Toury further elaborated the idea on how norms could be used, while following a more prescriptive path:

[...] the translation of general values or ideas shared by the community—as to what is right or wrong, adequate or inadequate—into performance instructions appropriate and applicable to particular situations (Toury, 1995, p. 65).

He even went further and stated in the same work that the cumulative identification of norms could lead to the formulation of “probabilistic laws of translation”, also known as “universals of translation”. This idea may inevitably include a final prescriptive intention. Munday recorded the idea as follows:

Toury hopes that the cumulative identification of norms in descriptive studies will enable the formulation of probabilistic “laws” of translation and hence the “universals” of translation (Munday, 2001, p. 155).

As a whole, although Toury’s original ideas on descriptive studies and their use as a means to identify norms (or regularities) are widely recognized, it is obvious that some of his proposals regarding norms may not be completely clear (or maybe they have not been quite correctly interpreted), since the balance between the use of the descriptive or the prescriptive approach for the notion of norm has, undoubtedly, become the basis of controversy. Hermans summarizes this as follows:

The strength of Toury’s work (Toury 1980 and 1995) lies in the consistency and rigour with which he draws up practical research procedures. The corollary has been the risk of sliding from rigour into rigidity, and a relative neglect of the theoretical underpinning of some of the methodological stances, which remain vulnerable to criticism for that reason (Hermans, 1995, p. 35).

From this, one could probably associate the concept of “rigour” with “descriptivism”, while the one of “rigidity” would probably have more to do with “prescriptivism”. This vulnerability to criticism, stated by Hermans, might as well have paved the way to the mentioned controversy.

It may also be possible (and this may be open to discussion) that the concept of norm, controversial as such from its very formulation, may have additionally undergone some sort of change in its initial meaning, or in its interpretation along the years, when the initial theoretical postulates of descriptivism have had to pass the filter of real case studies and their practical applications through decades.

All in all (and as Toury’s early work pointed out), it may only be logical to think that the knowledge acquired from descriptive research might as well be used to provide guidance to other translators involved in similar tasks. Additionally, the proposal of prescriptive “guidelines” (or “best practices”) related to the translation process for particular applications has also been important over the last decades, no matter if these recommendations came about from rigorous descriptive research, or not.

Some researchers, like Karamitroglou, have contributed to the field with publications following both approaches (descriptive and prescriptive), thus making it clear that they are not incompatible. Next to the already mentioned book published in 2000, whose conclusions are based on a descriptive research method (mainly related to the audiovisual translation policy in Greece for different AVT modes), in 1998 the author published a set of very practical recommendations for the creation of subtitles (*A Proposed Set of Subtitling Standards in Europe*), which were obviously prescriptive.

Another more recent and similar text was published by Pedersen (2011). In his case, the subtitling norms for the specific problem of extralinguistic cultural references are the result of a descriptive study. Still, obtained (and proposed) norms may be considered to be prescriptive in the sense that they can become guidelines to other professional subtitlers who must deal with the specific problem of translating cultural references in subtitling for TV.

These examples illustrate that a dual approach to the implementation of the concept of norm in AVT is both feasible and useful.

#### **4. Conventions and Standards: The Prescriptive Way**

In this section, some examples of conventions and standards regarding specific aspects of various AVT modalities are presented. From an analytic perspective, they may be placed in the central (or intermediate) part of the cline for the potency of norms proposed by Pedersen (2011), mentioned earlier in this article. Depending on the degree of their expected compliance, these conventions and standards could be termed as conventions, norms or rules, from a theoretical (or terminological) standpoint.

In some cases, these conventions stem from descriptive research (if pure practice observation could be considered as such). Thus, the most common practices are then recommended as guidelines. This may be the case for modalities such as dubbing and subtitling, the most consolidated and spread-out modalities of AVT, which are also the ones which have been subject to descriptive studies (mainly case studies) along the past decades.

In other cases, conventions and standards are developed by private or public organizations, in an attempt to create a standardised scenario where “best practices” are enforced. This is the case for Accessibility AVT modalities: Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing and Audio description. Both public and private organizations do generate conventions and standards, usually written by experts and consultants, as new rules and laws regarding accessibility concepts such as *Design for All* and *Inclusiveness* are passed in different countries. Because these accessibility modalities are much younger, the number of descriptive studies is smaller. Still, as mentioned above, case studies on these topics are becoming more and more common.

Some examples of guidelines for subtitling (we could consider them norms, as they result from a descriptive methodology) have been suggested by Díaz-Cintas: in a book from 2003, a volume written in Spanish for the linguistic combination of English-Spanish; and especially in the book from 2007, another seminal work written in English and co-authored with Remael, a “must” to be read by professional subtitlers. Not to be forgotten, mainly because of its early publication, is the pioneer *Code of Good Subtitling Practices*, endorsed by the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation in Berlin on 17 October 1998, and written by Mary Carroll and Jan Ivarsson. The list of suggested classic publications that enforce conventions and standards for subtitling would also include the early one by Karamitroglou (1998) cited above.

As far as dubbing is concerned, professional norms (and practices) vary across countries, or even across different regions within the same country, as it happens to be the case in Spain. Chaume is the scholar who has strived along the decades to try to come up with a description of dubbing practices in Europe, but also in other countries around the world. His work has been compiled in three books (as well as in many other publications of various kinds), each written in a different language: Catalan, Spanish and English. Those are his works from 2003, 2004 and 2012. His book published in 2012 could be considered seminal for two reasons. On the one hand, it compiles and summarises all his earlier research findings regarding dubbing and dubbing norms, while it also adds new interesting theoretical and practical material. On the other hand, the fact that it is written in English can provide access to a much wider audience.

Another more recent initiative (published in 2014) regarding subtitling and SDH guidelines is *Caption Quality: International Approaches to Standards and Measurement*, generated in Australia, a complete and comprehensive document which is an outstanding effort to compile regulations and conventions in all countries around the world as far as subtitling and accessibility in subtitles (SDH)

are concerned. This document also presents different models for measuring caption quality (WER, NCAM, NER), and evaluates caption quality measurement models.

These key aspects of the publication can be pointed out, as cited from its website:

Media Access Australia has released a white paper entitled *Caption quality: International approaches to standards and measurement*. It focuses on issues surrounding the live captioning of TV programs, the difficulties in measuring caption quality effectively, and some of the solutions that have been proposed.

Section 5 in this paper is possibly the most recommended section for reading, as far as standards and conventions are concerned. It is entitled Quality Standards Around the World, and it describes in much detail the efforts accomplished by different institutions and companies in countries like the United Kingdom, Canada, United States, France, Spain, Germany and Australia (all these countries are covered in sections 5.1 through 5.7).

Another AVT mode which has recently gained importance and visibility is Audio description. For this mode, the necessity to come up with standards and regulations may have not followed the same path as the one in other more “classical” AVT modes, like dubbing and subtitling. Unlike those, but as in SDH, AD may have suffered some delay in the production of empirical descriptive research results. However, different institutions have enforced the creation of conventions and standards for AD, since the usage of accessible audiovisual material in the media has been subject to the specifications of laws passed in different countries.

Some examples of institutions which have been involved in this process are Ofcom in the United Kingdom and AENOR in Spain. In the case of the United Kingdom, the document *Code on Television Access Services* (2012) covers specifications for “subtitling, signing and audio description”. For Spain, AENOR published in 2005 a specific norm for AD: *Audiodescripción para personas con discapacidad visual. Requisitos para la audiodescripción y la elaboración de audioguías* [Audio description for people with visual disability. Requisites for audio description and elaboration of audioguides].

A good review of the efforts to come up with standards and regulations for AD in Europe was summarized by Vercauteren (2007). His analysis also intended to provide “a first possible outline of such international guidelines”. This contribution, as some above, can be found in Díaz-Cintas et al. (2007), a book which was also cited earlier in this article.

Additionally, in 2015 ISO/IEC published the technical specification TS 20071-21, a document entitled *Information technology—User interface component accessibility—Part 21: Guidance on audio descriptions*, which provides specific guidelines for the production of audio descriptions.

## 5. Summary

The notion of norm has proved to be a very successful tool since its introduction in the Translation Studies field. Even though its life cycle has not been very long so far (some four decades altogether), it has provided a sound basis for a rigorous framework, both in research and professional practice. Being a theoretical, intuitive and broad notion, it has been subject to different interpretations, which have led to distinctive applications.

The two basic approaches to the concept of norm are descriptive and prescriptive in nature. Originally, and according to Toury, descriptive research studies in translation were supposed to find regularities (or norms) in case studies, which would then help translators to solve specific problems in a distinct way. The compilation of these solutions might end up generating sets of recommendations (conventions, standards, “universals”, some sort of “best practices”) to be applied when faced with specific problems. These recommendations would have been generated by impartial, empirical and descriptive observation of real-life solutions.

Still, this descriptive-to-prescriptive path has not been quite followed in some specific modalities in AVT. While in the case of Dubbing and Subtitling (older and subject to much more research) the complete path seems to have been pursued, the younger and less-researched modalities related to Accessibility (mainly Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of Hearing and Audio description) have seen the publication of conventions and standards which may not have originated from descriptive studies (although these have been simultaneously going on).

Another key element for the notion of norm is the terminology employed, as it is always the case within Translation Studies. The regularities associated with potential norms may be linked with different intensities. As such, a cline for the potency of norms in the literature has been cited here. There is clearly a difference between a “norm” (a notion which can be diffuse, but descriptive, used primarily by academics), and a “standard” (a more constraining, even prescriptive term which is traditionally used in the context of AV translator training and professional practices). The intention here has been to compile and review examples for both approaches, from a descriptive but also from a critical point of view. However, it may be obvious that all the efforts and initiatives mentioned stem from this theoretical concept (or notion), a key one to Translation Studies (and AVT) since several decades.

In the end, it is important to highlight that the usage of the notion of norm from different perspectives only reinforces its validity. Undoubtedly, the notion of norm in AVT is here to stay, and it is not unlikely that it might be open to additional new interpretations in the future, mainly due to its controversial nature.

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