

## AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION LEARNING PLATFORM: A NEW TOOL FOR AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION TRAINING

“Audiovisual Translation Learning Platform”: una nueva herramienta para el aprendizaje de la traducción audiovisual

Marta ARUMÍ, Jordi CARRABINA, Anna MATAMALA,  
Bartolomé MESA-LAO, Pilar ORERO y Javier SERRANO

*Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*

**ABSTRACT:** The article aims to describe AVT-LP (Audiovisual Translation Learning Platform), a new tool devised by a team made up of researchers from both the translation and engineering departments at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona which looks to foster self-learning in the main modes of audiovisual translation (dubbing, subtitling, voice-over, audio description, subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing). The entire project development process is presented, with the article describing the main phases and showing in detail the final results as well as the end users’ feedback.

*Key words:* Audiovisual translation, Media accessibility, Didactics, Self-learning, EHEA.

**RESUMEN:** El artículo describe AVT-LP (Audiovisual Translation Learning Platform), una nueva herramienta creada por un equipo de investigadores de los departamentos de Traducción e Ingeniería de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona que pretender promover el autoaprendizaje de las principales modalidades de traducción audiovisual (doblaje, subtítulo, voces superpuestas, audiodescripción, subtítulo para sordos). El artículo

explica cómo se ha desarrollado el proyecto, sus fases principales y los resultados finales, así como la evaluación por parte de los usuarios.

*Palabras clave:* traducción audiovisual, accesibilidad a los medios, didáctica, autoaprendizaje, EEES.

The increasing presence of audiovisual and multimedia formats in our society, as well as a growing awareness of the need to offer “media for all” by means of accessibility modes such as audio description and subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, has fuelled the need for training in the field of audiovisual translation (AVT). Where there were previously just a few isolated courses on AVT created thanks largely to the enthusiasm of individual lecturers, there are now a remarkable number of postgraduate courses. While initially the issue was the creation of the curriculum and skills needed for such courses along with the development of related infrastructure, as outlined in the first section of this article, the current challenge is to adapt these courses to the new European High Education Area (EHEA). The new requirements of the EHEA (as outlined in section 2) evoke the possibility of complementing academic learning with new tools, in this case tools with relation to AVT content. A good example of the implications of this much needed learning innovation is AVT-LP (Audiovisual Translation Learning Platform), a new software platform devised by a team of researchers from both the translation and engineering departments at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.<sup>1</sup> This article aims to describe this platform, focusing not only on the tool itself but also highlighting both the theoretical background that supports it and the end users’ feedback. It is our hope that describing the process in detail, including setbacks as well as positive results, will benefit future researchers embarking on a similar venture.

---

<sup>1</sup> This research is part of the 2008MQD000014 project, financed by the “Departament d’Innovació, Universitats i Empresa de la Generalitat de Catalunya” (Catalan Government), of the Spanish project FFI2009-0827, and of the Catalan research group Transmedia Catalonia, funded by Generalitat de Catalunya (2009SGR700).

## 1. AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION TRAINING: AN OVERVIEW

Almost 20 years ago, Luyken *et al.* (1991) complained that AVT training was scarce and highlighted Lille as the only university where audiovisual translators could be formally trained. However, in the new millennium the situation has changed radically. Mayoral (2001), Díaz Cintas (2003), Moreno López-Torroella (2005), Sponholz (2003) and Díaz Cintas and Orero (2003) make an inventory of available courses, which includes an extensive list of universities in Antwerp, Barcelona, Brussels, Castelló, Copenhagen, Dublin, Ghent, Granada, Helsinki, Lampeter, Las Palmas, Leeds, Lille, Ljubljana, London, Madrid, Manchester, Mons-Hainaut, Strasbourg, Stockholm, Turku, Vic and Vigo, among other cities.

Some of these courses began back in 1982 when according to Mayoral (2001: 40) voice-over and subtitling were taught in a general translation course, but the main bulk of AVT teaching began in the 1990s. Most of these courses are introductions to AVT or non-compulsory courses within Translation Studies degrees, but the widest availability is currently to be found in postgraduate studies such as the MAs in AVT offered at various Spanish universities (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Universidad de Cádiz, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Universidad Europea de Madrid, Universitat Pompeu Fabra), as well as by other European institutions (Surrey University, Roehampton University/Athens Metropolitan College, City University London, the University of Sheffield, the University of Leeds, Università di Bologna and Università di Parma).

One of the leading universities providing AVT training has been Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, which currently offers a Barcelona-based MA programme in AVT, a European Online MA in AVT (METAV), and an online Postgraduate Diploma in Media Accessibility.<sup>2</sup> The Barcelona-based programme began in 2001 as a Postgraduate Diploma (Díaz Cintas and Orero 2003, Matamala 2006). Given its success, in 2003 this was developed into an additional online postgraduate diploma (Amador, Dorado and Orero 2004, Bartoll and Orero 2007). Both versions of the diploma subsequently evolved into full MA courses in 2004. Four years later, the online PgDip in Media Accessibility was created and finally in 2009 the European MA in AVT

---

<sup>2</sup> A module on AVT is also offered as part of the MA in Translation and Intercultural Studies at the same university.

(METAV) was launched. Among the issues surrounding the creation of the virtual learning platform and the course content were the design of the initial curriculum and finding the right teaching staff in order to provide a balance of academics/professionals who were both active translators and competent lecturers. With hindsight, while there was much enthusiasm to begin teaching using this new virtual platform, there was little prior experience of using this technology in the field of audiovisual translation. Some observers therefore doubted the viability of virtual platforms to facilitate learning in this area, and thus questioned the viability of the course's quality and delivery methodology. Today many learning platforms are widely available (Moodle being one of the most popular), but at that time we had to design our own. Whilst a taxing exercise, it was also useful since the platform was tailored to our specific needs (Amador, Dorado and Orero 2004). After years of running the PG courses, and once available technology was fully exploited, the focus became that of adapting to emergent transfer modes in media accessibility by means of curriculum changes.

The team behind these PG courses has always been keen to understand new technological possibilities, both as a means of achieving faster communication and as a learning tool. New audiovisual services with media access and the implementation of speech technologies to aid subtitle creation in real time meant there was more investment in learning tools and remote student interaction, since more specific software had to be used. The last wave of modifications was triggered by the new Bologna process. This new learning paradigm (briefly described in section 2) has not only forced us to adapt the curriculum design of all our courses, but also to create new resources to promote self-learning, such as the tool presented in this article.

## **2. A NEW LEARNING PARADIGM IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA: TUTORIALS AND SELF-LEARNING**

Universities in most EU countries are currently going through the process of adapting their systems to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In recent years, much work on redesigning course content and re-evaluating the transversal and specific competences needed for each subject (the cornerstone of students' academic activities) has been carried out. Curriculum design has shifted from course content definition to listing skills and expected outcomes. At the same time, new assessment mechanisms have

also been put in place and specific activities outlined in order to ensure the smooth transition of students and lecturers to the new educational framework.

Generally speaking, the practical implementation of EHEA entails a reduction in the number of student contact hours and lectures. The shift from teaching to learning has empowered students with the responsibility of being at the centre of their own education, but it has also meant the introduction of new learning scenarios. Not all lectures have the same format or have the same number of students, and this situation is further complicated by the heterogeneous nature of classes which therefore results in a wide variance in the knowledge base within individual groups. As a result, new strategies have been created in order to compensate for the reduction in classroom contact time and to tackle the issues associated with the heterogeneous nature of the groups. The preferred approach has been the inclusion in courses involving self-learning activities which occur outside the classroom. In the words of Kiraly (2000: 46), the aim has been “helping them not to travel the teacher’s path, but to build viable roads of their own”. Now more than ever, the teacher’s role involves encouraging students to take control and regulate their own learning process; students now have to *learn to learn* – one of the eight key competences set out by the European Reference Framework for lifelong learning (European Parliament 2006). Nowadays, learning has also become a lifelong process whereby people have to adapt to new technologies and working processes.

Traditionally, teaching has been based on the transmission of knowledge by the lecturer. One of the biggest challenges currently faced by educational institutions is how to train autonomous and participative students who are capable of describing, planning and monitoring their own experience and having the necessary metalanguage to evaluate themselves. According to Little (1997), autonomy cannot exist without being consciously implied in the learning process, since the basic purpose of higher education is to prepare students for lifelong learning. Autonomy is understood as being the capability to make decisions, act independently and think in an objective and critical manner. The key issue is not whether the student works with or without the actual presence of the teacher or with or without his or her guidance; the key issue is that students must be capable of making decisions about their learning process and, above all, they must be aware of the knowledge and skills required to fulfill the learning process in any given learning situation (Sinclair 2000). Thus, students develop themselves through interaction with other people and it is only students who can make this process really successful. According to Coll

(1993), learning is understood to be an active process for students in which they build, modify, enrich and diversify their learning in relation to different content through the meaning and sense that they actually confer onto this.

Creating a learning environment based on collaboration and interaction brings mutual benefits for the lecturer and students. Lecturers no longer deliver a lecture where they are alone at the centre of the stage, and their role is no longer restricted to the simple unidirectional transmission of knowledge. In the new paradigm, among other elements, lecturers must also bring about interaction, create cognitive challenges and offer the necessary assistance in terms of knowledge building. Consequently, students now participate actively in their learning process instead of passively absorbing the information the lecturer is presenting to them. For such an approach to be successful, it is of utmost importance that students are supplied with the necessary tools to work responsibly and effectively. In addition, students are encouraged to make significant decisions on what they want to learn and when to learn it, with a view to achieving the learning objective and established outcomes. Students are also expected to plan the efforts required to achieve the goal, consciously applying learning strategies and constantly evaluating both the process itself and the result of their learning activities. An active constant evaluation is at the heart of this new educational shift.

The most recent theories in the field of psycho-pedagogy increasingly emphasize the teacher's mediating function in smoothing the way to self-regulation. The essence of this function lies in gradually transferring the control and awareness of the learning activities from teacher to student (Kiraly 2000, Veenmann 2005, Arumí 2009). The promotion of the "learning to learn" competence can take different forms and one of these is tutorials. Whilst in some academic traditions, such as that of the UK, tutorials have been previously present in teaching duties and strategies, other countries are only now discovering their implications for both lecturer and student. García Garrido (2002) highlights the need to undertake a significant methodological leap in which tutorials are part of the change because they facilitate personalized orientation and allow the introduction of new learning models.

In summary, the introduction of EHEA has meant a considerable change of existing teaching scenarios in most EU university systems, with both self-learning and tutorials now being key concepts. However, guidance and new tools must be offered to all parties operating under the new Bologna agreement. As proposed by Alcón (2003), the goal would be to encourage the

students' reflective process through dialogue and debate, through a new, more active model whereby autonomous learning is promoted. The tenets summarized in this section, as well as the practical teaching experience of the researchers involved, inspired the development of the project that follows.

### 3. NEW LEARNING FORMATS FOR NEW REQUIREMENTS

The experience gathered after years of running and updating the many PG AVT courses in the two formats at UAB has allowed us to think of ways to promote new learning challenges. After a decade of creating teaching materials, we had a wealth of source language video clips which could be exploited in the many translation modalities. New cloud computing storage capabilities, together with faster broadband Internet access, presented the perfect combination for developing an ambitious self-learning platform which could optimise resources and technologies. Members of the departments of engineering and translation joined forces to work towards a common goal. The main aim of the project was to create a multilingual user-friendly purpose-built platform that would enable students to learn to translate audiovisual products autonomously as a complementary addition to actual face-to-face lectures. When the Catalan government launched an initiative to fund innovative learning projects in 2008, the development team came together to devise a proposal and submit it for evaluation. The platform would include exercises to practice the main audiovisual translation modalities (i.e. dubbing, subtitling, voice-over, subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, and audio description) from English into Catalan or Spanish. Two approaches were adopted, since the teams complemented one another. The translation team would be in charge of defining the features of the exercises, selecting the audiovisual clips and creating the related exercises, transcribing and digitizing materials, uploading the exercises, specifying the functional requirements of the system, defining the user interface and testing the system. The engineering team would generate the technical design, and develop the software system, the search engine and the interface.

Funding was secured through the Catalan Government and from the very beginning it was important to specify the different platform features and facilities. At the same time, it was also essential to define the type of exercises to be included so that the technical development would encompass the learning requirements. A 'chicken and egg' situation developed, since the exercises were

needed for the definition of the platform features, and vice versa. A compromise was necessary and requirements were drafted by two members of the translation team, with regular input from the other members. This was the most challenging step, since decisions taken at this stage were to have a direct impact on the architecture of the platform and the future of the project in terms of its exploitation and sustainability.

The developmental approach taken was a ‘bottom up’ one, that is to say that efforts were made to draft a list of metadata which would later be retrieved for each exercise. The list was formatted using the following categories:

First of all, information was included to allow users to identify the clip both from a formal point of view and in terms of its content: film title, year, director, language of the original version (Catalan, Spanish, English, German, French or other), plot (general information about the film), clip length, context (information about the scene).

Secondly, data about the specific translation challenges was included. After a brainstorming session between lecturers in AVT, the following categories were selected:

- a) Concerning communication features of the original: comprehension, speed/rhythm, mistakes.

It was observed that students are accustomed to written translations and often depend on a written script, so it was proposed that exercises be included which would develop the skills of oral comprehension. These would focus on the comprehension of fast-paced originals (or speakers with specific accents or speech features which are difficult to understand) without providing a written transcription. Exercises on audiovisual excerpts containing mistakes in factual content, for instance an incorrect date concerning the year in which an artist was born or an incorrect picture title, were also considered necessary since in AVT both content and communication are at stake.

- b) Concerning linguistic characteristics: terminology, formal language, colloquial language and slang, dialects, historical variation, proper nouns, wordplay, interjections/onomatopoeia.

This category covers language variation in all its forms: variation due to the origin of the speaker (dialect) and the historical period, and variation due to the situation, defined by the topic (terminology) and the relationship between the speakers (formal/colloquial/slang). Wordplay was also considered a challenge for audiovisual translators, and interjections and onomatopoeia were



included. Finally, proper nouns present specific characteristics and translators have to confront them taking into account not only linguistic and translation constraints but also merchandising issues, especially in animation.

- c) Concerning visual information and narrative: costumes and props, objects, actions, characters, credits, and facial and body language.

The literature includes the items listed above as key issues when rendering visual elements in written form, and our lecturers agreed. Characters are key elements in plot development (Fresno 2012), credits often present challenges due to the abundance of written captions that coexist with visual elements (Matamala and Orero 2011), and some objects are difficult to precisely describe.

- d) Describing sounds, identifying characters, selecting relevant information, short changes, sound descriptions, and synchronisation.

These items were identified as key issues when subtitling, especially when doing so for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. Deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences not only need to access the written condensed and synchronised version of the most relevant information in the original dialogues, but they also need to access the original sounds heard, identify the characters and access other relevant information.

- e) *Adlibs* and synchronisation

When adapting a translation to dubbing constraints, synchronisation is essential. Lip synchrony, isochrony and kinetic synchrony are the three main synchronies that need to be observed, and in the brainstorming phase it was considered essential to include exercises in which students would have to confront these challenges. Moreover, it was decided that a specific task associated with dubbing in which students required training was the creation of *adlibs* – invented dialogue used in scenes where characters talk but no clear dialogues are understood.

- f) Culture

Conveying the specific cultural references of the original version can be approached differently depending on various issues, such as the relationship between the original and target culture or the specific visuals that constrain the translation. Both domesticating and foreignizing approaches are to be found, depending on the transfer mode and the country's tradition (Pedersen 2011, Ramière 2006, Rodríguez Espinosa 2001, Tomaszkievicz 2001). This is why

culture was considered important by the lecturers who participated in the initial brainstorming.

g) Humour

Humour, conveyed by means of wordplay or other methods, is especially difficult to communicate when the visuals interact with the words to create meaning. Audiovisual translation trainees should consider how best to convey the humorous passages in the original, bearing in mind the visual restrictions.

h) Other issues

Although this list of categories is quite extensive, the brainstorming participants were aware that further unforeseen issues might arise and a general item was defined to include these.

Apart from the metadata used to identify and understand the clip and that relating to the specific translation challenges posed by the excerpt, information about the AVT modality and the target language to be used in the exercise was included as a third group of metadata. The AVT transfer modes chosen were dubbing, voice-over, subtitling, audio description and subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, and the possible target languages were Catalan, Spanish, English, German, French and an additional unspecified language. It was decided to focus on the three main traditional AVT transfer modes plus the two key accessibility modalities. As for language, the main languages taught at our institution were selected, although the open architecture of the platform allows for the future entering of more language combinations, and an additional field (“other”) was included.

The fourth set of metadata corresponds to the item “pedagogical feedback”. It is an open field which contains didactic remarks and complements the proposed broadcast version that students can download. The observations made usually refer to previously identified challenges, and propose alternative solutions to those which have been broadcast, in order that students can critically evaluate their translations.

Finally, a field with automatic data was added, including the author of the exercise and its date of creation.

To summarize, the list of metadata fields comprised the following: contextual information (film title, year, director, source language, plot, clip length, and context), translation challenges, AVT modality, target language, pedagogical feedback, and author and date. Having selected the metadata to be

associated with each exercise, the translation team drafted the high level structure of the platform, and for each HTML file a sample page was designed. Two profiles were identified: lecturers (who would be able to upload exercises) and students (who would only be able to work with exercises). The proposed structure was presented to the engineering team, who then adapted the requirements to the technical definition and the development of the platform as described in the next section.

#### 4. AVT-LP: THE PLATFORM

In this section, the final operational version of the platform is shown. A previous version was presented by Igareda and Matamala (2011).

After accessing the platform's homepage, users enter the main page (Figure 1), which offers navigability functions and user-profile definition (students/lecturers/admin). Each profile has different access options associated with it, but collaborative learning and content creation is nevertheless always at the heart of the project.

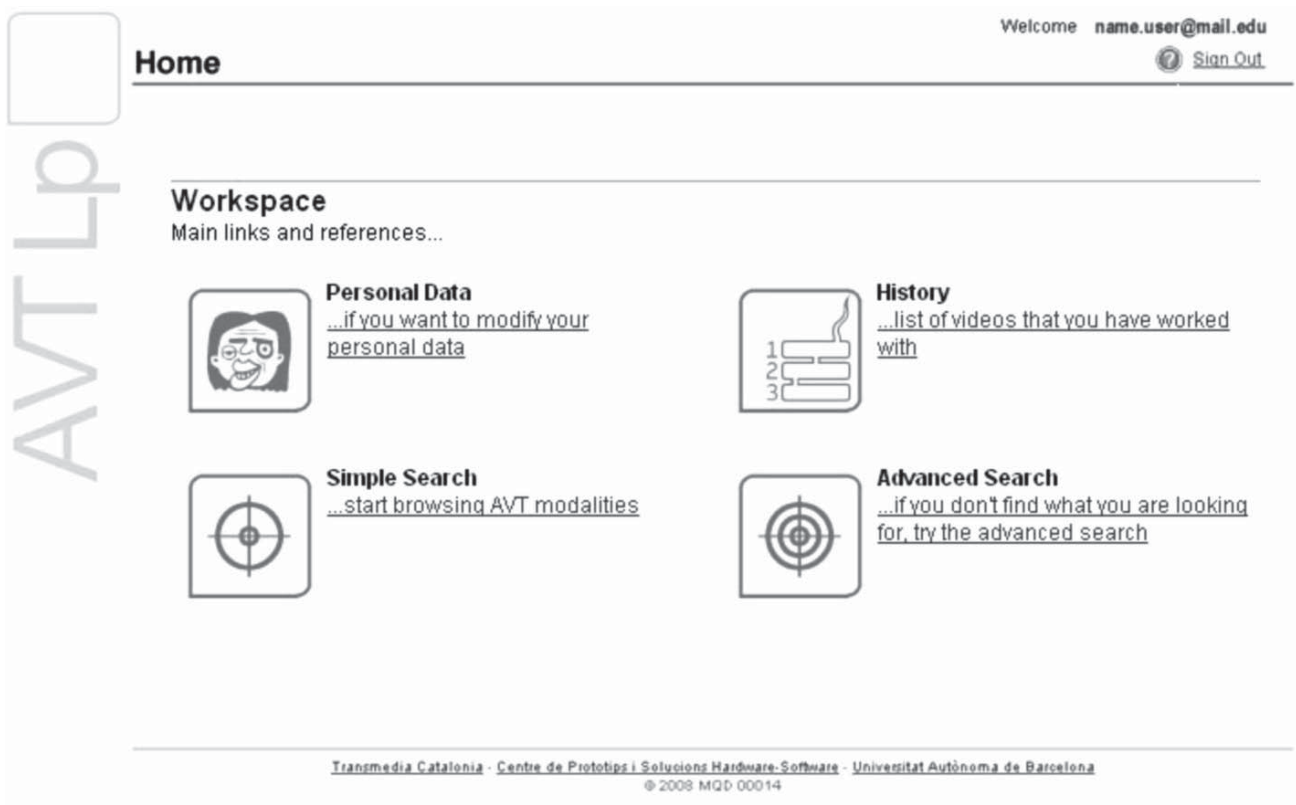


Figure 1: AVT-LP main page (student profile)

The icons to be found on the homepage are as follows:

- a) *Personal Data* (students/lecturers/admin): users can modify their personal data (name, e-mail, etc.) through this webpage.
- b) *History* (students/lecturers/admin): this icon includes a list of exercises accessed by the user.
- c) *Simple Search* (students/lecturers/admin): this allows users to search for exercises through a simple search. Students can write free text in the box or select an audiovisual transfer mode to access exercises related to this modality.
- d) *Advanced Search* (students/lecturers/admin): this icon allows users to define further search criteria. Students can choose clips with certain key words, source and target languages, specific transfer modes, and the main difficulties of the associated exercise. These challenges can relate to linguistic issues such as variation in all its forms (dialects, terminology, formal and informal language, historical variation) and also to proper nouns, wordplay, interjections and onomatopoeia. They can also relate to issues linked to visual aspects generally found in audio description, challenges originating in the source product such as comprehension problems due to speed/rhythm difficulties or mistakes, and specific issues such as identifying characters. They can also deal with problems surrounding the description of sounds in subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, shot changes in subtitling, *adlibs* or synchronisation problems in dubbing, as well as more general problems such as dealing with cultural references and humour.
- e) *Upload* (lecturers/admin): this icon allows lecturers to upload more exercises.
- f) *User Admin* (admin): this icon allows the administrator to give access or deny access to students.

After searching for an exercise through either a simple or advanced search, students access a list of possible activities. Once an exercise is selected, a working interface appears (Figure 2).

The elements included on this page are as follows:

- A window in which the video can be viewed.

The screenshot displays the AVT-LP interface. On the left, a vertical logo reads 'AVT Lp'. The top right corner shows a user login: 'Welcome name.user@mail.edu' with a 'Sign Out' link. Below this, the clip information is shown: 'Clip ID : 101' and 'Title: Trainspotting\_01'. The central video player shows a scene with three men. To the right of the video is a metadata table:

Source language:	English
Target language:	Spanish
AVT Modality:	Dubbing
Uploader:	paula.igareda@gmail.com
Year:	1996
Director:	Danny Boyle
Challenges:	Adlibs
	Language: colloquial language
	Language: dialects
	Language: interjection
	Language: proper nouns
	Speed/Rhythm
	Synchronisation

Below the video player is a row of six icons: a play button, a download button labeled 'MPEG', a document icon, and three 'solution' buttons (each with a lightbulb icon). Below this is the 'Context' section: 'Beginning of the film. Introduction to film characters. Renton's voice over. Edinburgh city.' The 'Instructions' section reads: 'Traduce el siguiente video para el doblaje del inglés al español teniendo en cuenta aspectos como los ambientes, el lenguaje coloquial, las interjecciones y los nombres propios.' At the bottom, there is a 'Pedagogical feedback...' section with a button that says 'Click here to get some feedback!'.

Figure 2: AVT-LP working interface

- A set of metadata fields on the right of the window with information such as the source and target languages, AVT modality, uploader, year and director, and the exercise objectives.
- Six buttons below the window: three on the left hand side relating to the original version (from left to right: watch the video in streaming, download the video in .mpeg format, and download the transcript in a .doc file) and three on the right hand side relating to the target language version (from left to right: video in streaming, video in .mpeg format, and transcript in a .doc file).

- Below the buttons mentioned above, there are two further fields: ‘context’ and ‘instructions’. ‘Context’ gives contextual information about the scene so that students can fully understand it without watching the whole movie. The ‘instructions’ field explains to students what they are expected to do.
- A tab at the bottom of the screen, which can be clicked, offers pedagogical feedback helping students assess their own translations. Here, the main translation problems are identified and commented upon, with reference made to the broadcast version in the target language.

An example of a learning session where all of the above functionalities are put to use (i.e. a hypothetical working session) would be as follows: a student wishing to practice the translation of colloquial language from English into Catalan with dubbing as the translation modality would log into the platform and choose the advanced search option. He or she would narrow their search by selecting “English” as the source language, “Catalan” as the target language and “Dubbing” as the modality. “Language: colloquial language” would be the chosen challenge. A number of possible activities would then be listed and the student would choose one according to their interests. The results would appear in a screen as shown in Figure 2. The student would then read the contextual information and exercise instructions and would then download the video file and transcript. After creating a possible translation for dubbing, the student would then check the pedagogical feedback and download the broadcast version, both as a video file and as a written transcription.

## 5. TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT

The technical development was prepared by the engineering team using the functional designs proposed by the translation researchers; however, these designs were adapted and improved upon in many ways via a process of continuous feedback between the two teams. The application was implemented using a client-server architecture. The server side includes the data storage (videos and training materials), video streaming and user and data management. On the client side, there is a web application to access the user interface. The platform was developed using Java EE, and the Spring v2 framework was implemented. The use of Spring allowed the development team

to modularise the platform into different independent components, so as to facilitate teamwork and the reuse of components. The client side component was developed with JSP and uses JSTL in order to present the data to the end users.

The central server components are the main nucleus of the platform and manage both the multimedia content and the user administration. The database management system is also hosted on the central server and has been implemented using a MySQL database. This database is indexed with the different fields of metadata mentioned above, which represent the data that the platform administrator has to complete when uploading new videos and exercises to the server. The videos are transcoded (if necessary) into MPEG-2 before being stored on the server. As well as allowing users to download videos and exercises, the platform also includes a streaming service (HTTP Lite), which permits users to view the video before downloading it.

The video storage and streaming are currently housed on the same server machine together with the remainder of the application components, but if the number of users were to significantly increase, it is expected that the platform could be easily scaled up by adding in an additional server and splitting the core tasks between the two i.e. having one server for video storage and one for the database.

## 6. EXERCISE CREATION

The platform development was a long process which ran parallel to the creation of the exercises. The aim was to include exercises in the platform that conformed to the previously established criteria. In other words, researchers had to look for short, self-contained scenes from DVDs that could be used to practice the selected transfer modes (dubbing, subtitling, voice-over, SDH and AD) in the chosen language combinations (English>Catalan/Spanish). Exercises had to be created for all the selected challenges.

Finding self-contained scenes that fulfilled these criteria was a time-consuming exercise. First, an initial list of DVDs containing the maximum number of audiovisual transfer modes into both Catalan and Spanish was created. Researchers then watched all of these films, noting those scenes that were relevant for the learning goals of the platform.

Once the scenes were selected, they had to be converted into the required formats (.mpeg and flash video), in both the original language and the target language versions. As explained in detail by Igareda and Matamala (2011), various freeware packages were used: DVD Decrypter, Avidemux, Handbrake and FLVTool2.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, documentation had to be created to convert these videos (in both the original and target language versions) into usable teaching material. Also necessary were a set of instructions clearly stating what students were expected to do with the video, contextual information to allow the scene to be understood, a transcription to facilitate the task and, most importantly, a pedagogical feedback document which would allow students to assess their proposed translation in combination with the actual broadcast version of the clip. It must be stressed that to avoid copyright problems, only short excerpts are included and users are always required to explicitly accept that they will only use the available materials for learning and/or research purposes. Some examples follow.

Example 1: This scene, from the film *From Dusk till Dawn*, was selected because of the colloquial language and slang it contains. Students are asked to produce two versions: one for subtitling and one for dubbing, which thus compels them to compare strategies depending on the audiovisual transfer mode.

RADIO: *Be advised suspects are armed and should be considered extremely dangerous. Use caution apprehending them.*

PETE: Hey, Earl.

SHERIFF: Yes, sir.

PETE: What do you know?

SHERIFF: Well... it's a hot goddamned day.

PETE: I haven't felt it a bit. I've been inside with the air-conditioner blastin' all day long.

SHERIFF: Oh, is that right?

---

<sup>3</sup> Various available online at: <http://www.dvddecrypter.org.uk/>, <http://fixounet.free.fr/avidemux/download.html>, <http://handbrake.fr/> and <http://rubyforge.org/frs/download.php/17498/flvtool2-1.0.6.zip>.



PETE: That's right.

SHERIFF: Didn't you break for lunch or nothin'?

PETE: I'm by myself today. I ate my lunch out of the microwave.

SHERIFF: Jesus H. Christ, Pete. When are you gonna learn that microwave food will kill you faster than a bullet? I mean, them damn burritos ain't good for nothin' but a hippie... when he's high on weed. Pull me out a bottle of that Jack, will you?

PETE: Yep.

SHERIFF: I think I'm gonna get tanked tonight.

PETE: What's the matter?

SHERIFF: Ohh, hell. Been one long goddam hot, miserable, shit-ass fuckin' day every inch of the way. First off, Nadine over at the Blue Chip got sort of sick since she got that goddam Mongoloid boy of hers workin' the grill. I mean, that fuckin' idiot doesn't know rat shit from Rice Krispies. I eat breakfast about nine o'clock and I'm pukin' up pigs in a blanket like a sick fuckin' dog by ten thirty.

PETE: Isn't there a law or somethin' against retards servin' food to the public?

SHERIFF: Well, if there ain't, there ought to be. I mean, who in the hell knows what's goin' on in the mind of a goddamned Mongoloid? Nadine should've hit that boy in the head and sold the fuckin' milk.

PETE: You could sue the shit out of her, you know that? That kid belongs under a circus tent, not flippin' burgers. You could own that fuckin' place.

SHERIFF: Oh, shit, Pete. What would I do with that grease pit? Besides, Nadine's got a cross to bear. I mean, taking care of that... potato head. I guess you heard about that shit up in Abilene. Bank robbery?

PETE: It's all that's been on the box all day. They killed some people, didn't they?

SHERIFF: Yeah. Killed four Rangers... three cops... one civilian. Took a lady bank teller hostage with them. Supposed to be headed for the border, which'd bring 'em right my way. Get my hands on them crazy, sick fuckin' bastards, it's payback time. I mean- Well, we'll get 'em. - We'll get 'em.

PETE: Well, I don't doubt it.

SHERIFF: Well... I gotta drain my lizard. Mind if I use your commode?

PETE: Knock yourself out.

SHERIFF: Thank you.

PETE: You're welcome.

Some of the expressions in the previous scene which can pose a problem to audiovisual translation trainees are: *goddamned day, Jesus H. Christ, damn burritos, hell, one long goddam hot, miserable, shit-ass fuckin' day, goddam Mongoloid boy, fuckin' idiot, sick fuckin' dog, fuckin' milk, potato head, crazy, sick fuckin' bastards* and *I gotta drain my lizard*. The pedagogical feedback proposes several solutions for translating these lexical units and provides further thoughts on the usage of slang in both the dubbed and subtitled versions. Self-assessment is therefore possible not only because a proposed broadcast version is included but also because specific comments on the key points of the passage are made, providing students with research strategies and various solutions.

Example 2: This exercise, involving a clip from the film *V Vendetta*, asks students to translate an excerpt with wordplay for dubbing purposes i.e. by keeping the various synchronies associated with this transfer mode: lip synchrony, isochrony and kinetic synchrony.

V: I can assure you, I mean you no harm.

EVEY: Who are you?

V: Who? Who is but the form following the function of what and what I am is a man in a mask.

EVEY: Well I can see that.

V: Of course you can, I'm not questioning your powers of observation, I'm merely remarking upon the paradox of asking a masked man who he is.

EVEY: Oh, right.

V: But on this most auspicious of nights, permit me then, in lieu of the more commonplace soubriquet, to suggest the character of this dramatis persona. Voila! In View a humble VaudeVillian Veteran, cast Vicariously as both Victim and Villain by the Vicissitudes of fate. This Visage, no mere Veneer of Vanity, is a Vestige of the "Vox populi" now Vacant, Vanished. However, this Valorous Visitation of a bygone Vexation stands Vivified, and has Vowed to Vanquish these Venal and Virulent Vermin, Van guarding Vice and Vouchsafing the Violently Vicious and Voracious Violation of Volition. The only Verdict is Vengeance; a Vendetta, held as a Votive not in Vain, for the Value and Veracity of such shall one day Vindicate the Vigilant and the Virtuous. Verily this Vichyssoise of Verbiage

Veers most Verbose, so let me simply add that it's my Very good honour to meet you and you may call me V.

EVEY: Are you like a crazy person?

V: I'm quite sure they will say so. But who might I ask am I speaking?

EVEY: I'm Evey.

V: Evey? E... V... Of course you are.

A proposed version which maintains both the wordplay and the synchrony is offered to students, next to some additional pedagogical feedback allowing them to assess their own work. Although an additional revision by a lecturer would provide a more thorough assessment, the platform was devised for autonomous work and the written comments included in the pedagogical feedback were created with this in mind.

Example 3: This third exercise, involving a clip from the movie *Cashback*, was chosen as an example of a scene with more than one language. In this scene, one English-speaking girl indicates that she is learning Spanish. Students are asked to provide a translation for dubbing.

BEN: Did you get to college?

SHARON: I was doing p. T. Therapy, but I dropped out.

BEN: Why?

SHARON: It wasn't me. And besides, I needed to start earning money.

BEN: What are you saving for?

SHARON: Putting myself through evening classes.

BEN: Yeah? Studying...

SHARON: Spanish.

BEN: Spanish?

SHARON: Yeah. What's wrong with that?

BEN: Nothing. I just wasn't expecting it. So what can you say?

SHARON: Tu equipo de fútbol es una puta mierda.

BEN: Which means?

SHARON: It means your football team is shit.

BEN: 26-nil. So why Spanish?

SHARON: I've lived here all my life. I've worked at the supermarket for two years and, even though it's happening slow, I just feel that my life's ticking away a second at a time. I thought that Spanish would be one way that I'd be able to find a job that would involve travel. Like being an air hostess or teaching English at Spanish-speaking schools. I've always dreamt of traveling to far-off places. Like South- America. To places where the sun kisses every morning. But more than that, I wanna be able to talk to people about their lives and about their dreams. Silly, really.

BEN: No, it's not.

When dubbing this excerpt into Spanish, the whole scene loses meaning if the original reference to Spanish is included, so alternative strategies have to be adopted. In this case, the dubbed version changed the context and the girl was supposed to be learning Italian, thus adapting the reference to the target audience.

The examples above show some of the scenes selected, and their corresponding translation difficulties. It must be stressed that in this first version of the prototype, all exercises follow the same pattern and ask students to provide a translation focusing on one of the challenges initially identified. However, in future versions it is our aim to broaden the scope and typology of the exercises, with activities such as those outlined in the following non-exhaustive list:

- Enriching students' vocabulary for AD: students could be provided with an audio-described clip without adjectives and could be asked to write four different ADs, including various adjectives in these.
- Character identification in SDH: students would be offered a subtitled clip with white subtitles and would have to include colours to indicate who is speaking.
- Sound identification in SDH: students would be asked to include information about contextual sounds in various forms (icons/

onomatopoeia/description of the sound) in a clip with no indications of this type.

- Lip synchronisation for dubbing: students would be asked to synchronise an already translated clip for dubbing purposes.
- Post-editing in AVT: students would be asked to edit a machine-translated set of subtitles.
- Proper nouns: students would be given short clips with lots of proper nouns and an incorrect transcription i.e. a transcription with spelling mistakes which they would be asked to identify.
- Terminology: students would be given a 5-minute excerpt of a wildlife documentary and would be asked to find all the terminological units and provide the scientific name in Latin along with the translation into the target language.

The array of exercises to be created is vast, but one key issue is how to assess the students' results. It is not feasible to individually assess each translation on an open platform and it is also not possible to offer a unique solution to all clips. This is why students are given not only a written and audiovisual version of the broadcast version (itself one of a number of possible solutions), but also a pedagogical feedback function which gives them some hints as to possible solutions and key difficulties. Moreover, this platform can be used as part of a standard online or face-to-face course, probably in the form of tutorials, and the lecturer can provide more specific feedback and assessment.

## 7. SYSTEM TESTING

Towards the end of the project, 'quality of experience' tests were performed with a sample of users. These users were chosen as representing instances of possible target audiences. Two approaches were adopted:

a) **Group A:** 30 students studying for the MA in Audiovisual Translation at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona were given a presentation on the platform and offered the opportunity to access it freely for ten weeks. No further guidance was given for the rest of the course.

b) **Group B:** 14 students taking a course on AVT as part of the MA in Translation and Intercultural Studies at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

were given a presentation on the platform and provided with access for ten weeks. In addition to the presentation session (which was exactly the same as the one given to the previous group), one tutorial was scheduled in which students were encouraged to use the platform with the assistance of the introductory class lecturer.

After this evaluation period, the participants were given the following questionnaire to complete anonymously.

### *Contextual questions*

1. How many times have you used the platform?  
Never / Only once / 2 to 5 / 6 to 10 / More than 10.
2. How many times have you used the help page?  
Never / Once / Twice / 3 to 5 times / More than 6 times

### *Questionnaire (closed questions)*

3. Assess on a scale from 1 to 5 the extent to which the platform helps with the following issues (5 being “a lot” and 1 “little”).

- ⊙ The platform allows me to further work on aspects discussed in class.
- ⊙ The platform allows me to adequately organise my self-learning.
- ⊙ The interface is user-friendly.
- ⊙ The search system is easy to understand.
- ⊙ The advanced search produces results adapted to my needs.
- ⊙ The Help page is thorough and answers all possible questions.
- ⊙ The screen where the video player appears is user-friendly and easy to use.
- ⊙ It is easy to understand the function of each of the buttons located below the video player.
- ⊙ Contextual information about the exercises is sufficient.
- ⊙ The pedagogical feedback helps me assess my own translation.
- ⊙ I can rapidly reproduce videos on-line (streaming).
- ⊙ I can rapidly download videos from the platform.

**Questionnaire (open questions)**

4. In your opinion, which elements from the platform could be improved?
5. Has the platform been useful to you and if so, how?
6. Do you have any additional comments about the platform?

Group B returned nine questionnaires (almost a 65% response rate), but only one questionnaire was returned by group A (out of a potential 30 respondents). The results of all the questionnaires are presented below in three broad categories: contextual questions, closed questions and open questions.

**a) Contextual questions:**

Regarding the number of times the platform was used outside the classroom (not during the tutorials), 80% of students had only used it once, whilst 20% had used it between 2 and 5 times. As for the Help page, 40% of students had consulted it only once, whilst 20% had not read it at all and the remainder had checked it more than once. The results relating to the use of the platform were discouraging and contrasted with the generally positive evaluation of the platform that was derived from the set of questions analysed below in sections b and c.

**b) Closed questions:**

The results are shown in Table 1 (below). Please note that 1 is the lowest evaluation possible and 5 represents the maximum score in terms of positive feedback. In contrast with the discouraging results relating to platform usage, students evaluated the learning tool very positively.

	No reply	1	2	3	4	5
The platform allows me to further work on aspects discussed in class.	0%	0%	10%	30%	30%	30%
The platform allows me to adequately organise my self-learning.	0%	0%	10%	0%	40%	50%
The platform is user-friendly	0%	0%	0%	20%	40%	40%
The search system is easy to understand.	0%	0%	0%	20%	50%	30%
The advanced search produces results adapted to my needs.	0%	0%	0%	40%	60%	0%
The help page is thorough and solves all the possible doubts.	10%	0%	10%	0%	70%	10%

	No reply	1	2	3	4	5
The screen where the video player appears is user friendly and easy to use.	0%	0%	10%	10%	20%	60%
It is easy to understand the function of each of the buttons below the video player.	0%	0%	0%	40%	40%	20%
Contextual information about the exercises is enough.	0%	0%	10%	20%	50%	20%
The pedagogical feedback helps me assess my own translation.	0%	0%	10%	10%	50%	30%
I can reproduce videos on-line (streaming) rapidly.	0%	0%	20%	0%	40%	40%
I can download videos from the platform rapidly.	20%	0%	10%	20%	20%	30%

Table 1: Questionnaire Results (Closed Questions)

### c) Open questions:

The responses to the list of open questions were also very positive and many useful suggestions to improve the platform were made.

In response to the question “What elements of the platform could be improved?” students suggested the following:

- Increase the number of exercises and language combinations (three comments)
- Improve the video reproduction (one comment)
- Solve some visualization/downloading problems with the videos (one comment)
- Solve some mistakes in the broadcast translations (one comment)

In answer to the question “Has the platform been useful to you and how?” students considered that the platform helped them in the following ways:

- To practice knowledge acquired in class (4 comments) with sample solutions (1 comment)
- To access learning materials from home (3 comments)
- To practice subtitling (1 comment)
- To practice various audiovisual transfer modes (1 comment)



It was surprising to have such positive feedback even though the majority of students had only used the platform once, but there was one comment which might help us to understand this. One student wrote: “Due to the quality of the platform, it would have been great to devote more time to it in class. Although it has been developed for student’s self-learning, the lecturer could have asked us to work on specific exercises from the platform at home”.

Finally, when students were asked to add any additional remarks regarding the platform, they mentioned the following:

- It is good to have such a site but it needs improving: more speed, more exercises, and various solutions.
- It would be interesting to have access to the platform even after finishing the course.
- It is positive to have training materials for various transfer modes and to not just be limited to one audiovisual translation modality.
- It is an ambitious and useful project. It would be great if future students could also use this platform.

From this assessment, at least two main lessons can be learnt: on the one hand, it is obvious that the platform was used less than expected, especially by group A. However, in contrast to this, the feedback from the questionnaires was positive and students apparently found it a good self-learning tool. This shows that when offering students new self-learning platforms, there must also be an element of continuous guidance. It would therefore make sense to plan tutorials where the platform is actively used and give specific instructions to students in relation to self-learning.

On the other hand, from the replies to the questionnaires, one can conclude that the platform’s function (self-learning at home) and design (interface, search system, help page etc.) are well thought out and useful, although there is obviously room for improvement and as such some of the students’ suggestions for further development should be taken into account for future enhancements of the platform. That said, some students requested more exercises and language combinations, which could actually be considered as positive feedback. The number of exercises preloaded onto the platform was dictated by the available budget, so this is an issue that can be easily addressed with financial support. In addition, some students complained about technical issues concerning the video visualization and downloading functions. Following the evaluation, the results from

performance tests were taken on board and it was determined that both the video visualization and downloading speed were adequate, and the specific issue was probably caused by the students' own hardware.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this paper has presented a project in the field of learning innovation applied to audiovisual translation. To the best of our knowledge, it can be considered the first tool in the field which fosters self-learning in many different audiovisual transfer modes (dubbing, subtitling, voice-over, audio description, subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing), and provides students with feedback and sample broadcast versions in two language combinations (English to Catalan and English to Spanish). Needless to say, many improvements can still be made to the platform such as increasing the number and type of exercises, improving the way of providing feedback (peer feedback is a possibility which is currently being explored) and expanding its use to supervised tutorials. Indeed, although initially conceived as a tool for self-learning, it seems the platform can be a useful tool for tutorials in the classroom, where students are given the freedom to choose from the wide array of exercises provided and work at their own pace with constant and on-the-spot feedback from the lecturer. This allows them to advance gradually depending on their needs. It must be stressed that within the EHEA, new methodological trends have been implemented and tutorials and self-learning have become key concepts. However, this new scenario requires new tools to be developed for these specific situations, and technology can undoubtedly have a key role here. In fact, translation students not only need to acquire technological competences in order to carry out their future job, but technology can contribute to enhancing their training.

The project presented in this article went live in September 2010 and will be made available to students of Audiovisual Translation at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Concerning its future prospects, contacts have been made with other universities to increase the number of possible users as well as the number of exercises. A first step will be to offer free access to this platform to other universities in exchange of the creation and donation of a certain number of exercises. This will allow other students to benefit from this platform, whilst at the same time growing the platform with new exercises created by other universities. It is our aim that in the future this network will include a large number of trainers willing to exchange resources and work towards an improvement in the quality of AVT in the academic arena.

## REFERENCES

- Alcón, Eva. "Tutoría personalizada y pedagogía reflexiva en el contexto universitario". *La tutoría y los nuevos modos de aprendizaje en la universidad*. Ed. Francesc Michavila. Madrid: Cátedra Unesco de Gestión y Política Universitaria, 2003. 85-93.
- Amador, Miquel, Carles Dorado, and Pilar Orero. "e-AVT: A Perfect Match: Strategies, Functions and Interactions in an On-line Environment for Learning". *Topics in Audiovisual Translation*. Ed. Pilar Orero. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004.141-153.
- Arumí, Marta. "Nuevos retos en la formación de intérpretes. La incorporación del componente metacognitivo en el aula. *Trans. Revista de Traductología*, 13 (2009):149-162.
- Bartoll, Eduard, and Pilar Orero. "Teaching Subtitling On-Line". *Translation Ireland. Translation and Irish in the Twenty-First Century*, 17.2 (2007): 97-107.
- Coll, César. *El constructivismo en el aula*. Barcelona: Graó, 1993.
- Chaume, Frederic. *Doblatge i subtitulació per a la TV*. Vic: Eumo, 2003.
- Díaz Cintas, Jorge. *Teoría y práctica de la subtitulación: inglés/español*. Barcelona: Ariel, 2003.
- Díaz Cintas, Jorge, and Pilar Orero. "Postgraduate Courses in Audiovisual Translation". *The Translator*, 9.2 (2003): 371-388.
- European Parliament. "Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC)". *Official Journal of the European Union*. 30.12.2006. <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:394:0010:0018:EN:PDF>>
- Fresno, Nazaret. "Experimenting with Characters. An Empirical Approach to the Audio Description of Real Characters". *Media for All 3: The Audiovisual Turn*. Eds. Mary Carroll, Pilar Orero and Aline Remael. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012. 147-171.
- García Garrido, José Luis. "La educación universitaria ante el siglo XXI". *Aprender para el futuro: universidad y sociedad, documentos de un debate*. Ed. Ricardo Díez Hochleitner. Madrid: Santillana, 2002.
- Igareda, Paula, and Anna Matamala. "Developing a Learning Platform for AVT: Challenges and Solutions". *Jostrans*,16 (2011): 145-162.
- Kiraly, Don. *A Social Constructivist Approach to Translator Education. Empowerment from Theory to Practice*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 2000.
- Little, David. "Language Awareness and the Autonomous Language Learner. *Language Awareness*, 6.2-3 (1997): 93-104.

- Luyken, Georg-Michael, Thomas Herbst, Jo Langham-Brown, Helen Reid, and Herman Spinhof (eds). *Overcoming Language Barriers in Television. Dubbing and Subtitling for the European Audience*. Manchester: The European Institute for the Media, 1991.
- Matamala, Anna. "Les noves tecnologies en l'ensenyament de la traducció audiovisual". *Actes de les X Jornades de Traducció i Interpretació a Vic: Tecnologies a l'Abast*. Vic: Universitat de Vic [CD-ROM], 2006.
- Matamala, Anna, and Pilar Orero. "Opening Credit Sequences: Audio Describing Films within Films". *International Journal of Translation*, 23.2 (2011): 35-58.
- Mayoral, Roberto. "Campos de estudio y trabajo en traducción audiovisual". *La traducción para el doblaje y la subtitulación*. Coord. Miguel Duro. Madrid: Cátedra, 2011: 19-45.
- Moreno López-Torroella, Lina. "El estado actual de la traducción audiovisual en España. La formación". *Puentes*, 6 (2005): 95-107
- Pedersen, Jan. *Subtitling Norms for Television*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2011.
- Ramière, Natalie. "Reaching a Foreign Audience: Cultural Transfers in Audiovisual Translation". *Jostrans*, 6 (2006): 152-166.
- Rodríguez Espinosa, Miguel. "Subtitulado y doblaje como procesos de domesticación cultural". *La traducción para el doblaje y la subtitulación*. Coord. Miguel Duro. Madrid: Cátedra, 2001.103-117.
- Sinclair, Barbara. "Learner Autonomy: the next phase?" *Learner Autonomy, Teacher Autonomy: Future Directions*. Eds. Barbara Sinclair, Ian McGrath, and Terry Lamb. London: Longman, 2000. 4-14.
- Sponholz, Christine. *Teaching Audiovisual Translation. Theoretical Aspects, Market Requirements, University Training and Curriculum Development*. Unpublished research project. Mainz: Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, 2003.
- Tomaszkiewick, Teresa. "Transfert des references culturelles dans les sous-titres filmiques". *(Multi)Media Translation*. Eds. Yves Gambier, and Henrik Gottlieb. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2001. 237-247.
- Veenman, Marcel V.J. "The assessment of metacognitive skills: What can be learned from multimethod designs?" *Lernstrategien und Metakognition: Implikationen für Forschung und Praxis*. Eds. Cordula Artelt, and Barbara Moschner. Berlin: Waxmann, 2005.75-97.

Artículo recibido: 28/11/2011

Artículo aprobado: 18/07/2012