Subtitling and the Relevance of Non-verbal Information in Polyglot Films

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the relevance of non-verbal information when subtitling films belonging to the polyglot film genre. As this cinematic production normally uses language diversity to portray communication problems among cultures, fictional characters tend to resort to non-verbal signs to surmount language barriers. This means that non-verbal elements tend to play a key role in understanding this film genre and, consequently, need to be carefully considered when translating. Due to the polysemiotic nature of audiovisual products and following Vanoye's differentiation of horizontal and vertical dimensions of artefactual conversation (1985), a multimodal approach is used with the purpose of analyzing the function of non-linguistic signs and how they are used when subtitling two scenes from a polyglot film titled *Spanglish*. The analysis reveals the important interplay of subtitles and non-verbal signs for the understanding of the multicultural and multilingual problems depicted in this film genre.

KEYWORDS: non-verbal information, subtitling, polyglot film, multimodality.

Introduction

In spite of the polysemiotic nature of films, the linguistic code has received far more attention than other elements such as non-verbal information. Nevertheless, as Zabalbeascoa (1997) and Perego (2009) have pointed out, non-verbal elements cannot be ignored in audiovisual products as they add meaning and/or reinforce linguistic statements. In fact, it is precisely this non-verbal information that can become of paramount significance for the understanding of films belonging to the so-called *polyglot film genre* (Wahl 2008), a type of cinematic production in which languages play their social function and bring to light characters' cultural and social differences. As language diversity commonly poses communication problems between people from different cultures, these films tend to include characters that use non-verbal information to overcome this idiomatic barrier. Consequently, non-verbal elements can play a significant role in the filmic diegesis and can, therefore, be essential for the understanding of the film. My objective in this paper is to demonstrate the significant function that non-verbal information can perform when subtitling polyglot films so as to attract the attention of the audiovisual translation (AVT) research community towards this traditionally sidelined element.

This paper focuses on a specific polyglot film called *Spanglish* (James L. Brooks 2004) and its Spanish version. Despite the tendency to dub films in Spain, the translated versions of polyglot films increasingly include a variety of AVT modalities (mainly dubbing and subtitling) as languages play a major role within the plot and they need to be maintained for the films to be understood.[1] In the case of *Spanglish*, this polyglot film was mainly subtitled in order to maintain the communication problems caused by the continuous presence of

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[1] Consider, for example, Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* (2009), where throughout the film characters resort to different languages according to their intentions within the story. Given the necessity to maintain these languages, the translated version into Spanish uses different AVT modalities (dubbing, subtitling, no translation, etc.).

English and Mexican Spanish in the original (Sanz 2009:27). Since characters speak either one language or the other, they frequently need to resort to non-verbal strategies to communicate. Drawing on Vanoye's differentiation of horizontal and vertical dimensions of artefactual conversation (1985), this paper aims to explain how communication is established between the fictional characters and how that communication is conveyed to the audience. In relation to this, it is expected that non-verbal components aid communication between characters and can also work as an additional element – together with subtitles – enabling audiences to comprehend the multilingual and multicultural complexities portrayed in this film genre.

With the intention of evaluating the role of non-verbal information when subtitling, and due to the polysemiotic nature of films, a multimodal analysis of two scenes from the Spanish version of the film will be adopted, i.e. scenes will be described by taking into account the interplay of subtitles and other semiotic codes. In this way, this article also hopes to highlight the necessity of abandoning a purely linguistic approach to audiovisual material.

Non-verbal information in audiovisual translation

Audiovisual texts are composed of several signifying codes transmitted through two channels: visual and auditory. According to Chaume, the meaning of each signifying code, together with the meaning they create when they interplay with each other, provides audiovisual texts with their own idiosyncrasy (2004:163). Non-verbal information comprises the paralinguistic information conveyed through the acoustic channel, as well as the visual information provided by images (2004:186). In relation to this, authors such as Eco (1977) and Poyatos (1997) have drawn attention to the interaction between verbal and non-verbal information by stating that verbal messages are *always* accompanied by kinesic, proxemic and paralinguistic elements that convey meaning while reinforcing verbal utterances. Consequently, as Perego highlights, these elements are essential given their pragmatic and emotive functions and therefore, they need to be taken into consideration when dubbing and subtitling verbal statements (2009:60). It could be added that they are even more relevant in those films where the "non-verbal and semiotic dimensions of the image have an important function" (Pettit 2004:27) as is the case with polyglot films.

Despite the various signifying codes of audiovisual products, scholars have traditionally concentrated their research efforts on the linguistic code, leaving the non-verbal component aside. Chaume suggests that the limited attention paid to non-verbal information might be due to the fact that it is generally believed that iconic language is universal and consequently, semiotically understandable for nearly all cultures (2004:226). However, Nord states that non-verbal elements are culture-specific and, therefore, at least some of them will have to be adapted when translated into a target language (1991:110). Likewise, Zabalbeascoa emphasizes that "when interpreting a text and the relations between the verbal and non-verbal signs it is important to know whether one is subordinated to the other or whether they are meant to complement each other" (1997:339). By doing this, screen translators can decide the best translation strategy to follow and the different solutions that can be adopted at the verbal level – the only level at which they can intervene as the image cannot be altered.

The different types of non-verbal signs can be categorized into the following four: *paralanguage*, *kinesics*, *proxemics* and *cultural signs*. The term *paralanguage* covers the non-verbal qualities of voice such as intonation, rhythm or tone that are associated with emotions (e.g. screams, groans) and are, therefore, transmitted through the acoustic channel. The transfer of such vocal qualities when dubbing does not generally pose problems among

Western cultures as it is expected that the linguistic competence of the viewers allows them to fully understand the communicative and pragmatic values of every sound (Chaume 1997:321).

Kinesics comprises the body movements and gestures that accompany words or that convey meaning non-vocally, such as a smile or a wink. Although many kinesic signs are shared by Western societies, some of them are culture-specific and might need to be translated, particularly when their understanding is essential for the film (e.g. in certain cultures nodding indicates 'no' instead of 'yes'). When this happens, different strategies can be applied. In some situations, the kinesic sign is not accompanied by a linguistic explanation and, as a result, it is likely that the audience will not be able to decode its meaning. In others, the kinesic sign can be shown together with a linguistic explanation and, consequently, screen translators have the space of the original description to explain, add or reinforce the meaning of the kinesic sign. There is a third possibility that involves the use of a kinesic sign and the deliberate violation of its meaning (Chaume 2004:267). In this case, the verbal subtext accompanying the non-verbal element does not correspond to the meaning normally associated with that specific kinesic sign. This is generally used with the intention of creating ironic situations and different solutions can be adopted depending on the case. When deciding which strategy to follow, it is important to consider whether the audience will be able to decode the meaning of the kinesic sign or not, and to take the conventions and constraints of either dubbing or subtitling into account in order to achieve cohesion and coherence between the verbal and the visual subtexts.

Proxemics is the branch of knowledge that deals with the interpersonal space that people establish when interacting with others, i.e. it refers to how people use their physical space and privacy depending on the context and the other speaker(s). Although the use of proxemic signs depends on the socio-textual practice of every community, Díaz Cintas and Remael point out that globalization has reduced cultural differences among different civilizations and that there is "a great uniformity in the degree of physical closeness that is acceptable" (2007:53). When divergences arise among interpersonal space because of far-off cultures, distance or closeness can be established by using more formal or less formal language (Chaume 2004:261).

This degree of physical closeness also determines the translation task when dubbing and subtitling. For example, the distance between the fictional characters and the camera will determine the degree of lip synchronization in dubbing. Similarly, in subtitling, if several characters speak concurrently and only one character's turn can be translated, the closeness of the camera can determine the speech that will be subtitled due to space restrictions. Consequently, as Díaz Cintas and Remael point out, "the challenge for the subtitler resides in the detection of coherence between movement or closeness and intonation, word choice, as well as other linguistic features that will, of course, be co-determined by the narrative situation and the scene as a whole" (2007:53).

Finally, *cultural signs* deal with the meaning of colours, places, physical appearance, etc., and they are not normally translated if they are not accompanied by a verbal explanation (Chaume 2004:231-232). Therefore, the translation of films set in remote cultures can pose more problems when translating as the meaning of cultural signs may differ significantly (e.g. in certain Asian cultures white is used as a sign of mourning, whereas the colour of mourning in many European cultures is black).

Given the information that non-verbal signs carry, the signifying codes conveyed by these semiotic modalities need to be considered when translating audiovisual products (Zabalbeascoa 1997; Taylor 2003). The next section intends to illustrate the major role of these signifying codes in polyglot films with the purpose of stressing their importance when subtitling this film genre.

Subtitling and non-verbal information in polyglot films: a multimodal approach

According to the film scholar Chris Wahl, polyglot films have been produced with increasing frequency since the 1990s when filmmakers, pushed by their desire to represent global social realities (e.g. immigration, diaspora, multiethnic societies), started to shoot films in which several languages were present, such as *El Norte* (Nava 1983) or more recently *Babel* (González Iñárritu 2006) (2008:348). Despite the overall tendency to use English as the *lingua franca* of the cinematic world, polyglot films do not try to conceal the actual existence of language diversity behind the mask of a universal language. In polyglot films, languages are used as a means of characterization as they signpost the cultural, social and personal backgrounds of characters, thus playing their social function. Similarly, in this film genre language diversity is also used as a vehicle for plot development and, consequently, languages have a marked diegetic function and are more than just a vehicle of content.

Polyglot films typically draw on linguistic and cultural diversity to portray the communication problems and cultural misunderstandings of the current world. This means that, as a recurrent feature of the genre, fictional characters undergo states of confusion and find themselves in situations where communication is impeded due to linguistic barriers. It is under those circumstances that the relevance of non-verbal information is emphasized, as characters will tend to resort to these elements with the intention of surmounting such communication problems. Consequently, it can turn out to be essential that the audience understands these non-verbal signs in order to comprehend the film plot.

With the intention of accounting for the role of non-verbal information and due to the aforementioned polysemiotic nature of audiovisual texts, a model of analysis that takes all signifying codes into account is needed. I have chosen the multimodal analysis (see Taylor 2003, 2004; Baumgarten 2008) as most appropriate for my purposes. Audiovisual texts are multimodal inasmuch as their "meanings are realized through more than one semiotic code" (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996:183). As Taylor states, the multimodal tool "provides insights into how meaning is 'made', in the Hallidayan (1994) sense of the expression, via the combination of various semiotic modalities, and thus how the verbal message interacts with other sources of meaning" (2003:194).

In relation to multimodality, Vanoye's distinction between *horizontal* and *vertical dimensions* (1985, quoted in Remael 2004:107) is particularly relevant to this study. Although these two concepts were designed in relation to how the authenticity of film dialogue is achieved, both dimensions are important for any film. While the so-called *horizontal dimension* deals with the interaction between fictional characters, the *vertical dimension* is concerned with how fictional characters interact in relation to the audience. As Vanoye points out, "tandis qu'une conversation *entre* des gens se tient à l'écran, une histoire est racontée *à* (ou bien un discours est tenu *à*) des spectateurs potentiels").[2] In this paper, it is understood that non-verbal

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[2] "On screen a conversation *between* people is going on, but meanwhile a story is also being told *to* (or a form of discourse is being addressed *to*) the film's potential spectators" (Translated by Remael 2004:122).

components are expected to perform an essential function in relation to how characters relate to one another and to the original and target audiences of polyglot films.

With the purpose of conducting a multimodal analysis, the AVT modality and the constraints imposed by the technical conditions of the medium need to be taken into account. Subtitling is an example of diasemiotic translation because the translated film uses different channels of communication from the original (Gottlieb 2005:4). Therefore, a subtitled film consists of the spoken word, the image and the superimposition of written text, i.e., the subtitles (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007:9). Subtitling is characterized by spatial and temporal restrictions, which make text reduction inevitable. However, two other reasons justify this condensation. On the one hand, the human reading capacity is not as fast as the hearing capacity and, on the other hand, "there is a great deal more for the eye to absorb than just the subtitles" (Ivarsson and Carrol 1998:64). This results in the necessity of conveying the essential information while leaving time for the viewer to roam the screen.

As meaning in film is achieved through the combination of several semiotic modalities, there is a need to rely on the information provided by the visual and auditory channels when subtitling. Hence the usefulness of the multimodal analysis, as it indicates to what extent there is a need to intervene at the verbal level (see Taylor 2003, 2004). This means that when meaning is conveyed by other semiotic modalities, translators can reduce or even delete part of the verbal component, thus justifying the use of translation strategies such as condensation or deletion. This is what Chaume calls *semiotic cohesion* (2004:235). In relation to this concept, there are a couple of features at play. Firstly, there is extra-diegetic visual information (camera movement and editing) that does not belong to the fictional story and secondly, there is diegetic information (gestures, body language and expressions) that *does* belong to the story (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007:49). As Díaz Cintas and Remael state, the aim is to achieve *intersemiotic cohesion* which, in the case of subtitling, "refers to the way it connects language directly to the soundtrack and to images on screen, making use of the information they supply to create a coherent linguistic-visual whole" (2007:171).

In view of the fact that a multimodal approach helps unveil the interplay of the linguistic code with the other semiotic modalities of a film, the multimodal analysis will be conducted with the purpose of (1) finding out how non-verbal elements help the diffusion of information between characters (horizontal dimension) and from characters in relation to the audience (vertical dimension), and of (2) illustrating the paramount role that non-verbal signs can play when subtitling this film genre in order to convey its multicultural and multilingual complexities. With these objectives in mind, a selection of scenes, in which communication problems arise because of linguistic barriers, was carried out for the polyglot film *Spanglish*. However, due to spatial restrictions, only two exemplary scenes will be thoroughly presented here from a multimodal approach.[3]

Spanglish

Spanglish (2004) is a polyglot Hollywood movie that was shot in English and Mexican Spanish. It tells the story of Flor, a Mexican woman who emigrated to the USA with her daughter Cristina in search of a better life. The story is set in Los Angeles, a multicultural city with a strong Hispanic presence. This explains how Flor and Cristina quickly become integrated into a Mexican community and live isolated from white Americans for six years.

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[3] This paper is based on my MSc dissertation (Sanz 2009), where four excerpts from *Spanglish* were analysed from a multimodal perspective. For translation purposes, only scenes where English was mainly spoken were selected. Furthermore, only scenes where characters use non-verbal signs to communicate were chosen.

During that time, Cristina learns to speak English, but Flor is unaware of the difficulties of the language barriers until she starts working for the Claskys, a white US-American family.

As this is a film that deals with the processes of integration and adaptation which the immigration phenomenon entails, Wahl classifies it under the *migration film* subgenre (2008:347). The bilingual situation that is experienced in certain states of the USA, including Los Angeles, accounts for the constant co-existence of English and Spanish in the film, which also depicts the recurrent misunderstandings and communication problems across cultures as well as the difficulties that immigrants face when trying to integrate into a different society.

Although the original versions of most polyglot films include subtitles for the foreign language (*ibid.*), no subtitles are used in *Spanglish* to render the Spanish dialogues between the Mexican characters into English. Some filmmakers do this deliberately in order to make the audience feel alienated (Martínez Sierra *et al.* 2010:24), only resorting to, subtitles if the content is important for the development of the plot. Nevertheless, in order to convey the meaning of these essential exchanges, the original version of *Spanglish* uses two different strategies: a narrator (Cristina) and *diegetic interpreting*. Cristina's narration is used to complement the information provided visually as well as some of the exchanges between the Mexican characters. *Diegetic interpreting* is a translation strategy that involves the presence of fictional interpreters who translate the interventions of other characters (O'Sullivan 2007:83). In this case, the role is played by Mexicans already integrated among white Americans.

The Spanish version of *Spanglish* was mainly subtitled for its audience in order to manage the constant communication problems that the presence of the two languages poses in this film. Dubbing was limited to Cristina's narration (in English in the original) and it is worth mentioning that, in order to confer more realism to the story, her voice and linguistic expressions were adapted to Mexican Spanish. No subtitles were provided when a fictional interpreter translates other characters' turns. As a result, both languages have been made accessible to the target audience, which means that the Spanish viewer does not perceive the sense of alienation experienced occasionally by the original audience.

For analytical purposes, the selected excerpts contain communication problems between characters and have English as a 'main' language and Spanish as a 'secondary' language. In addition to this, scenes are divided according to the presence or absence of a character playing the role of an interpreter. This division is used to illustrate the notion that non-verbal information can be equally significant even when a fictional interpreter helps overcome linguistic barriers. Furthermore, the multimodal analysis will be conducted from an integrated approach (Baumgarten 2008:8); that is to say, I understand that the meaning-making process in *Spanglish* is constructed through the interplay of its various parts and how they influence each other to create a whole.

The analysis itself covers the extra-diegetic and diegetic information, the linguistic choices as well as how information is conveyed at horizontal and vertical levels. Likewise, when required, the different perceptions that the original audience and the target audience can achieve will be explained.

Analysis 1: scene with a fictional interpreter

The first excerpt under analysis is drawn from the scene of Flor's interview as she applies to become the Claskys' new housekeeper. Because Flor is outside the Mexican environment, her cousin Mónica, who speaks English, accompanies her in order to interpret for her. However, Mónica has not mastered the English language completely and sometimes does not understand what Mrs Deb Clasky says. To explicate this for the target audience, the subtitling modality is used.

This excerpt involves Deb, Flor and Mónica and the reasons it poses translational problems are mainly twofold. First, Deb's quick way of speaking; within a few seconds she says more than the subtitles can render. The second issue is the shot-reverse shot filming technique. This means that the camera alternates between the characters of a conversation, sometimes focusing on the character that is speaking and other times focusing on other characters to catch their reactions (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007:53). In this excerpt, shots alternate very quickly, which means that it is important for the viewer to understand the essential information when Deb is speaking, while having time to look at the screen to catch Flor's and Mónica's reactions.

The actual scene goes as follows. Deb, Mónica and Flor are seated around a garden table. After the introductions, the camera focuses on Deb (close-up) while she tells Mónica and Flor about her family (TCR = Time Code Reading; OV = Original version; SV = Subtitled version):[4]

Example 1	TCR: 00.09.45-00.09.48
OV	SV
Anyway, I have two children. My son Georgie is nine. Bernice you know…	Dos hijos: Georgie, 9 años, y a Bernice ya la conocen. [*Two children: Georgie, 9 years, and Bernice (you) already know her.*]

While Deb speaks, the camera quickly turns and focuses on Flor and Mónica (medium close-up) for a very short time. Mónica turns to her cousin to interpret for her, but then she realizes that Deb is still talking so Mónica turns to her again and to Flor once more. In the meantime, Flor looks to both Deb and Mónica in a rather disconcerted manner, not knowing what is happening. At this stage, it is clear that the fictional characters cannot communicate (horizontal dimension) although both audiences (vertical dimension) understand Deb's turn and the confused state of the Mexican characters. As it is equally significant to comprehend Deb's utterance as Mónica's and Flor's reactions, the subtitles have been considerably reduced, focusing on the propositional dimension, i.e. the content. In order to do so, the verbs 'to have' and 'to be' have been omitted, as their meanings can be implied from the context, and the connector '*anyway*' has been sacrificed.

This shot is followed by a close-up of Deb, and she now starts talking about her home with a tone of excitement in her voice:

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[4] All quotations of film dialogue, unless otherwise noted, have been transcribed from the screen.

Example 2	TCR: 00.09.49-00.09.55
OV	SV
and I like the house, I like the house to be like me… you know… and I'm, I'm very loose and meticulous, you know, at the same time.	Me gusta que la casa sea como yo:… …desenfadada y meticulosa a la vez. [*I like the house to be like me:… …carefree and meticulous at the same time.*]

While Deb speaks, the camera switches constantly between her and Mónica, who unsuccessfully tries to find the opportunity to interpret for her cousin and therefore keeps turning and looking at Deb and Flor. It is possible to notice visually how Mónica is becoming somewhat exasperated because Deb does not stop talking and let her interpret. The constant alternation of shots between her and Deb necessitates the further application of condensation procedures. This is why the subtitles of this speech have mainly omitted the repetitive language typical of oral speech (such as '*You know*', '*I'm*') in order to reduce the content. This way both audiences catch Deb's words while having time to roam the screen to grasp Mónica's and Flor's reactions.

The camera remains focused on the Mexican characters as Deb continues:

Example 3	TCR: 00.09.56-00.10.03
OV	SV
But it's all about first names and closeness here. Let her know, absolutely, but I do care about the place. I'm so sorry. I'm not leaving you time to translate.	Pero me va el tuteo y la cercanía. Dígaselo. Pero me importa la casa. No le doy tiempo para traducir. [*But I like first names and closeness. Tell her that. But I care about the house. I don't give you time to translate.*]

These words are accompanied by a relaxed facial expression and a gentle voice. The subtitles focus again on the content of Deb's fast-moving utterance while maintaining a strong spoken orientation by using '*pero*' (but) twice. Likewise, by conjugating verbs using the Spanish polite form of address ('*dígaselo*' and '*le doy*'), the subtitles of Deb's speech establish some distance and respect in relation to Mónica, using the proxemics of language to establish the interpersonal space. Although the omission of the translation of the marker of modality '*I'm so sorry*' can affect the way a character is perceived, the fact that Deb smiles and invites Mónica to translate by extending her arm, makes her character gentler, hence compensating somewhat for the omission. This is a case where voice prosodics and kinesic action help carry out trimming operations.

After Mónica is finally provided with the opportunity to interpret, the audience realizes that she did not completely understand Deb's words, most likely as a result of Deb's high rate of speech. Before interpreting to Flor the few ideas she understood, she heaves a sigh and smiles, thus conveying ironically that she cannot believe she finally has the opportunity to interpret.

However, as she did not understand everything, she looks down while turning to Flor to tell her the information she understood ('*Esta vieja está rarísima. Que tiene dos niños...*'; back-translation: '*This woman is very strange. That she has two kids...*'). This utterance is clearly understood by the Spanish target audience and, although the original viewer will probably not understand Mónica's turn due to the lack of subtitles, Mónica's doubtful facial expression conveys, at a vertical level, the idea that Mónica did not understand what Deb had said before.

A few shots later, once Deb is convinced that Flor is suitable for the job, the fictional characters deal with the issue of Flor's salary. After Flor jokes about wanting a thousand dollars, the camera films Deb, Flor and Mónica bursting into laughter using a medium shot together with Evelyn, Deb's mother – who is in the garden but has, up until now, remained off-screen. While Flor and Deb continue laughing, Evelyn is shot in medium close-up, attracting Mónica's attention and gesturing for her to ask for 650 dollars. She indicates the number six with the five fingers of her right hand and the forefinger of her left hand. She then signals '50' by quickly moving one hand raised palm side up with the other hand in a fist (Figure 1), and finally she points at Mónica so as to convey to her that she should ask for that figure.

Figure 1: Non-verbal element later made explicit by the original linguistic code

This visually conveyed information is then reinforced by Mónica's turn suggesting such a price to Deb ('*650 dollars*'). Although Evelyn's gesture might convey its meaning clearly for a US-American audience, its sense – particularly the sign for 50 – is not as understandable for the Spanish audience. Therefore, its subtitle – which appears because Mónica utters this figure – is essential for the target audience's understanding. The use of digits for 'six hundred and fifty' follows the general subtitling rule that, for ease of reading, numbers (rather than words) should be used from eleven onwards (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007:134). In this case, the non-verbal element is made explicit in the film itself, thus reinforcing its meaning for the original audience, while explaining it to the target audience.

This scene reveals that at horizontal level non-verbal information is essential for the fictional characters to indicate that they cannot understand each other (particularly the disconcerted looks from Flor and Mónica). At a vertical level, both audiences can understand Deb's utterances (through the original dialogue or the subtitles), but Mónica, Flor and Evelyn mainly convey information non-verbally. Consequently, it is essential that the Spanish audience has time to catch the Mexican characters' reactions because, otherwise, important information would be lost and the scene would make no sense. Due to the presence of a fast-talking character and the continuous turns of the camera to catch other characters' reactions, the subtitles have been considerably reduced. In order to condense information, details have been sacrificed and the content has been brought into focus. Similarly, the meaning provided by non-verbal elements has helped to convey some of the omitted features and to carry out

trimming operations (e.g. the omission of '*I'm sorry*'). This, in turn, has allowed more time for the target audience to scan the screen in order to understand Mónica's, Flor's and Evelyn's reactions – which is essential for the understanding of the film sequence at a vertical level.

Analysis 2: scene without a fictional interpreter

The following scene involves Deb and Flor and again uses the shot-reverse technique. The context is as follows: Flor walks into the kitchen and Chum, the Claskys' dog, approaches her with a ball in its mouth wanting Flor to throw the ball. In the meantime, Deb and Bernice, Deb's daughter, are involved in a conversation about French toast, and Bernice leaves the room after Deb hurts her daughter's feelings.

The scene starts with a medium shot of Deb opening the fridge to take out a packet of coffee. The moment she closes the fridge, she realizes that Flor is about to throw the ball to Chum and suddenly yells a long '*No*'. What follows is a quick alternation of shots focusing on the two characters involved. The camera first focuses on Flor (medium close-up), who has her hand raised ready to throw the ball – clearly indicating her intention – when Deb's shouting catches her off guard. Flor's fright is conveyed visually to both Deb (at a horizontal level) and to the audience (at a vertical level). Her reaction is characterized by her opening her mouth and her eyes wide, together with her visibly laboured breathing. This shot is followed by several medium close-ups of Flor and Deb while the latter utters:

Example 4	**TCR**: 00.16.09-00.16.16
OV	**SV**
No, Flor! Never do fetch to Chum!	¡Nunca le tires la pelota a Chum!
Never! Just…	¡Jamás! [*Never throw* *the ball to Chum!* *Never!*]

'*No, Flor*' is pronounced with an aggressive intonation that is reinforced by Deb shaking her head and crossing her arms continuously to indicate that Flor cannot do what she is planning. Deb probably decided to strengthen her words with body language as she knows Flor does not speak English. Therefore, non-verbal information in this particular case is used to overcome communication problems at a horizontal level, whilst it reinforces Deb's utterance at a vertical level. As this interjection can be understood by the Spanish audience, subtitles have not been provided.

The subtitles given for the rest of Deb's speech use the objects of the fictitious situation provided by the visual channel (e.g. the mention of '*pelota*' (ball) because the verb 'to fetch' in Spanish (tirar) requires the mention of the object that is going to be thrown). The use of '*do*' to emphasize the fact that Flor is not allowed to throw the ball to the dog is reproduced by translating the second '*never*' as '*jamás*' – a stronger way of saying 'never' in Spanish – which helps to reinforce Deb's anger state, while '*just*', as an element conveying hesitation, is sacrificed for the sake of space. Additionally, at this stage both audiences (vertical dimension) already know that Flor is not allowed to throw the ball to Chum, but Flor (horizontal dimension) still does not, as the next shot indicates.

The camera turns and focuses on Deb (medium close-up). Deb's significantly more relaxed face indicates that she knows that she has scared Flor. Consequently she tries to explain

verbally that she is not annoyed. Since this information cannot be conveyed linguistically at a horizontal level due to Flor's lack of English knowledge, Deb tries to add visual and acoustic strength to her utterance by shaking her head and by using a much friendlier tone of voice:

Example 5	TCR: 00.16.16-00.16.23
OV	SV
I'm not mad, I'm not mad, I'm, I'm, I'm thinking of you. This is me being nice.	No estoy enfadada. Estoy pensando en ti. Ésta es mi manera de ser amable. [*I'm not mad.* *I'm thinking of you.* *This is my way of being nice.*]

While the subtitles of Deb's utterance are straightforward, the repetition of '*I'm not mad*' and '*I'm*' have been omitted, thus sacrificing the typical repetitions of oral discourse. In order to explain that she is thinking, Deb points to her head with her index finger and moves it in circles (Figure 2) and then points at Flor with both hands to let her know that the person she is thinking of is her. Deb does this in an attempt to communicate with Flor (horizontal dimension). At a vertical level, both audiences understand Deb's intention and therefore, body movements and, to a certain extent, paralinguistic elements – particularly intonation – help reinforce her linguistic statements.

Figure 2: Example of characters using non-verbal information in an attempt to communicate at a horizontal level

The camera now focuses on Flor (medium close-up), who smiles slightly and drops her eyes, even looking a bit annoyed. Both Deb and the audience know that Flor still does not understand what Deb is saying. The camera pans out to include both characters and the dog at the point when Deb takes the ball from Flor's hands. She does this in order to illustrate what she is not allowed to do:

Example 6	TCR: 00.16.24-00.16.34
OV	SV
Ok, this just… No taking the ball from the dog. Just don't… No fetch and no, never do fetch with this dog, ok? Never…	Nada de cogerle la pelota al perro. No se la tires. Nunca hagas eso con este perro. [*Nothing of getting the ball from the dog.* *Don't throw it to it.* *Never do that with this dog.*]

Deb's speech is accompanied by Deb moving her right arm as if she were about to throw the ball, while shaking her head and crossing her arms continuously to highlight the negation. Likewise Deb emphasizes all the '*No*s', which acoustically reinforce her words. The fact that poor Chum follows Deb's arm thinking that she is going to throw the ball clearly adds visual strength to her explanation. Similarly Flor, by nodding her head, clearly indicates at both horizontal and vertical levels that she now understands what she is not allowed to do.

The subtitles of Deb's speech are reformulated more concisely, thus omitting again the repetitions and unfinished sentences typical of oral discourse (such as '*Just don't*', '*No fetch and no*'). The phrase '*Ok, this just*' has not been subtitled possibly because it is an unfinished sentence. The visual-verbal cohesion of the scene (Figure 3) allows for the use of anaphoric references, i.e. a word referring to something mentioned previously (e.g. '*la*' refers to the ball or '*eso*' refers to the action of fetching). This case of intersemiotic cohesion allows for major reductions, while conveying the propositional dimension.

Figure 3: Example of visual and verbal cohesion

Several conclusions regarding subtitling and the role of non-verbal information can be drawn from this scene. On the one hand, since Flor and Deb do not speak the same language, information is conveyed through non-linguistic means at a horizontal level – despite Deb's attempt to communicate through verbal utterances. In relation to the vertical dimension, on the other hand, Deb's body movements and, to a lesser extent, paralinguistic features reinforce the meanings conveyed through her speaking. However, Flor only conveys information to the audiences through non-linguistic means, mainly facial expressions. Therefore, my first conclusion is that non-verbal information is essential to understanding the semantics of the sequence. Secondly, the analysis showed that the information conveyed by

non-verbal elements was used to subtitle this extract. Finally, bearing in mind the restrictions of the medium and the constant camera jumps between characters, two main strategies were followed to leave enough time for the viewer to catch Flor's reactions. The hesitations and repetitions of oral discourse were omitted for the sake of space, and verbal and visual cohesion allowed for condensation strategies. By doing this, the audience has time to roam the screen in order to understand the fact that there is a (humorous) clash between the Mexican and US-American cultures due to linguistic barriers.

Findings

The multimodal analysis clearly revealed that non-verbal information conveys and reinforces meaning both at horizontal and vertical levels. Regarding the role of non-verbal information at a horizontal level, the analysis illustrated that non-verbal elements were essential for characters to communicate across language barriers. This means that, although Mexican and US-American characters express themselves in their own language, it is principally through non-verbal information that characters understand each other.

In relation to the vertical dimension, non-verbal information mainly reinforces characters' turns as both audiences have access to their interventions in their respective languages through dialogue or subtitles. However, meaning was sometimes only conveyed non-verbally, such as in the kitchen scene in which Flor does not speak. It is in these scenes in particular that the role of non-verbal information turned out to be essential for the understanding of the film sequence. Therefore, there is clearly a need to leave time for the audience to scan the screen. Had this non-verbal information been disregarded, these scenes would not have made sense, the humour may have been lost, and the conflict between cultures would have been more difficult to perceive.

Non-verbal information played a more relevant role at both levels in those excerpts where no interpreter was present, as characters and audiences relied mainly on non-verbal information to understand each other. However, the analysis also illustrated the important role of non-verbal information in the scene with an interpreter, as it showed that the interaction between gestures or body language and linguistic utterances is strongly linked. As a result of this interaction, one of the signs may be added, explained, supported, highlighted or replaced (Poyatos 1997:258-259 in Chaume 2004:238). As verbal messages are always accompanied by non-verbal signs, polyglot films should be regarded only as an extreme example of a widespread phenomena and the importance of non-verbal information across all film genres cannot be underestimated.

The proximity between the US-American and the Mexican cultures allows the characters to understand each other through non-verbal signs. Similarly, the closeness between the cultures portrayed in the film and the Spanish culture of the target audience facilitated the translation of these non-verbal signs, although clarification was sometimes needed (as in the case of the 650 dollars where the gesture was not obvious).

The translation of these two extracts seems to have been affected by two factors. On the one hand, it has been affected by the presence of a fast-talking character and the need to leave enough time for viewers to catch the meaning conveyed non-verbally by characters. Bearing in mind the restrictions of the medium and the fact that non-verbal information is essential to understand the semantics of these extracts, the hesitations and repetitions of oral discourse were omitted for the sake of space and verbal and visual cohesion allowed for condensation

strategies. On the other hand, the scenes were also affected by the shot-reverse filming technique and the rapid and constant camera jumps, i.e. by extra-diegetic visual information. Therefore, this emphasizes the need to consider all the elements that constitute a film.

Although only two examples have been presented and commented in detail, many of the scenes from *Spanglish* are characterized by the same features. Thus, it could be stated that the challenge of subtitling this particular film lays in leaving the necessary time for the target audience to catch the body language and facial expressions that characters use at a horizontal level in order to convey cultural and communication problems at a vertical level. This is due to the fact that, if these elements are not perceived by the audience, part of the message and comedy of the film is lost.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the important role which non-verbal information can play in polyglot films at horizontal and vertical levels. As films belonging to this film genre often portray the misunderstandings that exist amongst cultures, they tend to include characters who speak different languages. In relation to this, and following Vanoye's division of horizontal and vertical dimensions, a multimodal analysis suggests that non-verbal components help characters to communicate at horizontal level, while reinforcing or clarifying meaning conveyed through dialogues (or subtitles in the case of the Spanish target audience) at vertical level. Furthermore, non-verbal elements are also used to convey information to the audiences in situations where fictional characters do not speak. It is in this latter situation where non-verbal information plays its most important role. Consequently, it is necessary for subtitlers to leave enough time for viewers to catch the non-verbal signs in order for them to understand the communication problems that fictional characters experience.

Moreover, the multimodal analysis stressed other important factors. Firstly, it highlighted the difficulties that the translation of this film genre entails. The presence of linguistic and cultural diversity may make it necessary to enlist several screen translators to successfully and appropriately translate each of the languages and cultures of the film, finding appropriate solutions for problems arising with regard to non-verbal information. Secondly, it brought into focus the important function that non-verbal information can play in the filmic diegesis and thus, the necessity of not overlooking information provided by semiotic codes other than linguistic. Thirdly, the semantic content conveyed by the visual and the acoustic channels help compensate for the unavoidable condensation strategies due to the temporal and spatial restrictions of the subtitling modality.

Furthermore, without entering into the obsolete debate of whether this film genre should be dubbed or subtitled, the decision to maintain both English and Spanish in the target version appears to have been well judged. While it is true that subtitling into Spanish all the original English parts decreases the feeling of alienation for the target audience and arguably does not let them experience the interlinguistic problems as clearly as the original audience does, the subtitles allow the target audience to perceive the interplay between the languages on an added level: they hear the original soundtrack in English while reading the subtitles in Spanish, which reminds them that the US-American characters are speaking in a different language other than Spanish. If the film had been entirely dubbed into Spanish, the Spanish target audience would not be able to notice the presence of different languages in the original. Thus, I maintain that also in the target version the interplay of both languages together with the non-verbal information provided by other semiotic codes helps to convey the communication problems present in the filmic diegesis at a vertical level. This seems to stress

the importance of maintaining the linguistic diversity of original polyglot films, as the intention of depicting a multilingual and multicultural world can, in some cases, be obscured by relying solely on dubbing. With regard to this, screen translators need to keep in mind that the strategies used to translate polyglot films can also reveal asymmetric power relations by giving more prominence to one particular language and pushing the other(s) into the background. This indicates that translators – as well as the rest of the agents involved in the translational process – should be aware of the impact of their decisions at a cultural, political and ideological level.

The important role that non-verbal information can play in polyglot films, and explored in this paper, highlights the need to consider these elements more closely. As some polyglot films tend to be dubbed in traditionally dubbing countries, the effect of dubbing on the role of non-verbal information could be an interesting route for further research. Likewise, as the meaning of non-verbal information is bound to culture, it is necessary to analyze the problems as well as the solutions that can be provided when meanings differ between cultures. Given the increasing production of polyglot films, greater awareness of their problems, restrictions and difficulties is necessary in order to convey the linguistic and cultural complexity of these films.

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