

Art or Industry?

Working conditions and quality in dubbing

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<sup>1</sup> Associazione Italiana Dialoghisti Adattatori Cinetelevisivi, Italian association for audiovisual translators and adapters.

<sup>2</sup> Association des Traducteurs Adaptateurs de l'Audiovisuel, French association for audiovisual translators and adapters.

<sup>3</sup> Wim Pel Productions.

<sup>4</sup> Dutch association for dubbing professionals. 'Samen' means 'together.' 'Stem' means 'voice' and 'vote,' and, incidentally, is also a common way to refer to a dubbing actor in Dutch.

<sup>5</sup> Nederlandse Publieke Omroep, Netherlands Public Broadcasting.

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## Introduction

Audiovisual translation, which is the translation of audiovisual material such as films and series, is now finally getting the scholarly attention it deserves. It deserves academic attention, because audiovisual translation is hugely important in terms of exposure. The public is far more exposed to translated films and series than to translated written material (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:10).<sup>6</sup> This makes audiovisual translation important from a political perspective, because what the public sees on TV and in cinemas has a large influence on their view of the source country. Audiovisual translators have a tremendous power to contribute positively, or negatively, to the image of the country where the product came from, which is in the case of the European public is usually the United States (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:11).

However, more important to the viewers themselves is the mediating function of audiovisual translation in entertainment. Entertainment, as one of the ways in which people attempt to create happiness in their lives, is a cultural phenomenon that merits research just like any other. People watch films and series first and foremost because they want to be entertained. “Watching moving images is associated with a sense of ease, relaxation and availability for distraction” (Karamitroglou, 2000:192). Therefore, an important task of audiovisual translation is, arguably, not to inhibit this entertainment. That is to say, audiovisual translation should allow viewers to be entertained as much as they would be if they did speak the same language as the characters on the screen.

Considering that audiovisual translation is of utmost importance to so many people who otherwise would only have access to all of these entertainment products in other languages than their own, an inspection of the workings of audiovisual translation could be sobering to anyone who expects such an important trade to have the status and sophistication that perhaps it should have. The world of cinema is associated with glamour and prestige, but audiovisual translation is hardly glamorous. In cinema, it is “often disparaged, at best tolerated as unavoidable” (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:9). This applies to both subtitling and lip-sync dubbing,<sup>7</sup> the two traditions of audiovisual translation that are most widely used throughout the world. Most countries in Europe clearly favour one of these two. The four biggest European countries that favour dubbing are France, Italy, Germany, and Spain. I will

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<sup>6</sup> Whitman-Linsen is only referring to lip-sync dubbing, but her argument applies to audiovisual translation as a whole. That also goes for the other instances on this page where I paraphrased her.

<sup>7</sup> Lip-sync dubbing is the most frequently used type of revoicing. Other types are voiceover, narration and free commentary. These types fall outside the scope of this thesis, although voiceover is mentioned briefly. Lip-sync dubbing will henceforth be referred to as dubbing.

henceforth refer to these countries as the FIGS. Dubbing, however, also occurs in countries that clearly favour subtitling. The Netherlands is one such country. This difference in national preference raises a question: could national preference for dubbing or subtitling have any influence on how dubbing takes place in dubbing countries, such as the FIGS, on the one hand and subtitling countries, such as the Netherlands, on the other?

There is a reason to think that the preference for dubbing or subtitling can have such influence, which is that this preference constitutes different positions for dubbing in the respective cultures. Within Dutch culture, dubbing has a very marginal position, whereas in the FIGS, dubbing dominates the audiovisual landscape, and can be the only option available. The position of dubbing in a culture is bound to have influence on its practice, and I aim to find out what this influence is. For this, I will compare dubbing in the FIGS to dubbing in the Netherlands.

The purpose of this thesis is twofold. First of all, the thesis functions as a comprehensive overview of dubbing in general, with a focus on dubbing in the FIGS in part I and dubbing in the Netherlands in part II. There are two reasons for making this an overview. Firstly, it introduces the predominantly Dutch readers to dubbing, which is needed, because the Dutch are not very familiar with dubbing. Secondly, it also serves to counter the tendency in scholarly literature on dubbing to focus on dubbings as objects instead of dubbing as a practice. It is very common for scholars to focus on how phenomenon X was dealt with in the translation of film or TV series Y, but this obscures the broader picture, and does not explain how this translation came to be that way. Moreover, because the most commonly cited overview of the practice of dubbing was written in 1992, it is time for some updating.

The second purpose of this thesis is to discuss one main issue in dubbing, which is the relation between working conditions and quality. Vöge argues that especially film dubbing constitutes a particularly unfortunate marriage. Dubbing is by its nature time-consuming and expensive, while the film industry is characterised by haste and commercial interests. As a result, he argues, well-dubbed films are rare (Vöge, 1977:121). In point of fact, scholars who write about dubbing in the FIGS complain that the clients of dubbing studios force them not to care for quality. The focus on profit-making rather than delivering good quality affects the way dubbing studios treat their employees. This results in working conditions that are not conducive to delivering good quality. Indeed, scholars say that the quality of dubbing is alarmingly poor. I aim to answer the question whether this mechanism also applies to dubbing in the Netherlands.

Vöge argues that a different position in society should result in a clearly discernible difference in the quality of dubbing. According to him, the quality of dubbing in a country that usually uses a different mode suffers due to the lack of expertise. He predicts: “In a country where subtitling is applied on a large scale, the quality [of dubbing] will be relatively low, and vice versa” (Vöge, 1977:122). Consequently, the quality of Dutch dubbing should be considerably lower than in the FIGS. We will see whether this holds true.

In the next section, I will explain how I did my research. In the one after that, I will define the theoretical context of this thesis. The rest of the thesis is dedicated to the research of dubbing in practice, and consists of two parts. The first chapter of part I concerns the preference for subtitling or dubbing. The preference for subtitling or dubbing is, of course, central to the thesis, because this is what causes the differences that will be discussed. The second chapter is primarily for those who are accustomed to subtitling, and discusses the advantages and disadvantages of dubbing compared to subtitling. The third chapter is about synchronisation, which is an important element of dubbing, and the one thing viewers immediately associate with it. The fourth chapter is about the parties involved in dubbing. The fifth chapter discusses the evolution of dubbing and the process itself. The sixth chapter is about the priorities of dubbing studios and the resulting working conditions. The seventh chapter revolves around the quality of dubbing. Part II contains chapters in the same order, but does not include a chapter on the advantages and disadvantages of dubbing, and it starts with an introduction of contributors.

## **Method**

For part I, I looked for scholarly sources on dubbing in university libraries in the Netherlands and Belgium. Unfortunately, I cannot guarantee that I managed to find every relevant source, although I did try. Also, to my dismay, there are many sources in German, Spanish and Italian, which are languages that I am not able to read sufficiently well, and therefore I could not include these sources in my thesis. Because I felt that my sources about the FIGS were not sufficiently up-to-date compared to my sources on the Netherlands, I sent questions by e-mail to a number of scholars and labour unions/associations in the FIGS to obtain more recent information on particular subjects, and I spoke with a number of these people on the phone.

Since I found very little scholarly literature on Dutch dubbing, I conducted interviews in person with people in the Dutch dubbing industry and asked some further questions by e-mail. The results of those interviews constitute the bulk of part II. I also contacted a number of clients of dubbing studios and executives of companies that run voice courses to obtain a more nuanced view.

I sent two questionnaires to dubbing translators, but because of the length and detail, I do not include the full results of the questionnaires within the thesis. A report of the results can instead be found in the appendix.

I gathered many Dutch press articles from the library of the EYE film Institute Netherlands, which is the largest film-related library in the Netherlands. The sources are freely available at the library in Amsterdam. However, the sources can only be retrieved on location, and are not digitally available. Unfortunately, some of the older articles had been copied from newspapers without notation of the sources, and retrieving their source information now is well-nigh impossible. I used the sources from the EYE film library for both part I and part II.

## **Theoretical context**

I aim to look at dubbing, a cultural and linguistic phenomenon, from a sociological perspective. My research is very much about practice, but it does use some key concepts in cultural theory. These are hegemony or the polysystem, and dominant and emergent culture or centre and periphery. Furthermore, my approach is to look at dubbing as a practice rather than dubbings as objects.

### *1 Hegemony and the polysystem*

The concept of the polysystem is well-known and commonly used within Translation Studies. However, there is a strikingly similar notion, coined by Raymond Williams, which he came up with at least five years before Itamar Even-Zohar presented the polysystem theory. Williams' idea is the concept of hegemony. I posit that these concepts are actually one and the same, and I will treat them as identical here. It is unclear whether Williams and Even-Zohar are aware of each other's accomplishments, but they do not give each other credit. Even Zohar's polysystem theory has been incredibly important in Translation Studies research. Raymond Williams, on the other hand, is known for his Marxist critique of culture, and has no connection to Translation Studies. However, Williams came first, and in my opinion, Williams is better at addressing the pervasive nature of the idea (regardless of whether you call it hegemony or polysystem).

The word 'Marxist' is immediately associated with communism, but it does not necessarily have to be. Hegemony is one of the concepts that Marx used in his critical analysis of capitalism that is also useful in cultural theory. It is mostly likely derived from the Greek word 'egemon,' which means "leader, ruler, often in the sense of a state other than his own" (Mastroianni, 2002). Marx, Lenin and Gramsci used the word 'hegemony' in a communist sense, but explaining their use of the word only serves to distract. Instead, I move straight on to Williams. Williams argues that all cultural phenomena are structured in a hierarchical system, which he refers to as hegemony. Culture consists of dominant, residual and emergent culture, and it is a hegemony in the sense that the dominant culture rules over the residual and emergent culture.

Dominant culture is "a central system of practices, meanings and values" (Williams, 1973:9). It is "a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move,

in most areas of their lives” (Williams, 1973:9). Any practices, meanings or values that do not belong to dominant culture belong to either residual or emergent culture. Residual refers to what was once dominant in that society, whereas emergent refers to something new (Williams, 1973:9-10). Polysystem theory, which Even-Zohar came up with in 1978, echoes Williams’ use of the word hegemony. The many systems in a polysystem (hence the word) “are not equal, but hierarchised within the polysystem. It is the permanent struggle between the various strata.” Some of these systems belong to the ‘centre,’ which corresponds to Williams’ dominant culture, and the rest belongs to the ‘periphery,’ which corresponds to Williams’ residual and emergent culture (Even-Zohar, 1990:14).

The hegemony, or the polysystem, is not static. “Its own internal structures are highly complex, and have continually to be renewed, recreated and defended; and by the same token, [...] they can be continually challenged and in certain respects modified” (Williams, 1973:8). Even-Zohar concurs: “phenomena are driven from the centre to the periphery while, conversely, phenomena may push their way into the centre and occupy it” (Even-Zohar, 1990:14). Even-Zohar goes further and implies that a polysystem may sometimes have to change if it is to survive at all. “On the level of the system, *instability* should not be identified with change, just as *stability* should not be identified with petrification. In other words, stability or instability of *repertoire* do not reflect, or necessarily generate, stability or instability of the *system*” [italics in original] (Even-Zohar, 1990:26). The ‘repertoire’ is what Williams refers to as a set of meanings, practices and values. “A system undergoing permanent, steady and well-controlled change may adequately be considered stable simply because it perseveres” (Even-Zohar, 1990:26).

This may sound very abstract, but I will now explain to the reader how I want to use these concepts. I submit to you that in dubbing countries, dubbing is a part of dominant culture. It is the type of audiovisual translation that the society in a dubbing country is raised with and familiar with. Subtitling, which is then arguably part of emergent culture in a dubbing country, is unfamiliar to the members of that society, which makes them inclined to distrust it. In subtitling countries such as the Netherlands, the exact opposite situation exists. Subtitling is part of the dominant culture and dubbing is part of emergent culture. As a consequence, the Dutch dubbing industry is a niche industry. Furthermore, the Dutch dubbing industry is in the unfortunate position that it aims to sell products that generate a natural distrust in the majority of the Dutch population. Presumably, in order to make a profit anyway, the task at hand for dubbing studios is to get consumers to somehow overcome this. The niche position of Dutch dubbing and this hurdle that the dubbing industry has to

overcome in the Netherlands will feature in part II. Of interest in both part I and part II is the notion that hegemony is not static. For audiovisual translation, this means that a country is not guaranteed to remain forever a dubbing or a subtitling country. It also means that there is no guarantee that dubbing will remain lucrative if dubbing studios continue to work the way they do. Change is possible, and sometimes needed.

## 2 Researching dubbing(s)

One could say that dubbings are works of art, in the sense that they are artistic creations. It may appear to the reader that I am giving dubbings too much credit. Surely, dubbing is just a low form of entertainment? Why should we research dubbings anyway? What is their ultimate significance in life? Even-Zohar argues that even a 'lower form of entertainment' merits research. In his opinion, using the polysystem approach necessitates rejecting "value judgments as criteria for an *a priori* selection of the objects of study" [italics in original] (Even-Zohar, 1990:13). He specifically addresses literature, and argues:

The historical study of literary polysystems cannot confine itself to the so-called 'masterpieces.' [...] This kind of elitism cannot be compatible with literary historiography just as general history can no longer be the life stories of kings and generals. In other words, as scholars committed to the discovery and the mechanisms of literature, there seems to be no way for us to avoid recognising that any prevalent judgments of any period are themselves an integral part of these mechanisms. No field of study, whether mildly or more rigorously 'scientific,' can select its objects according to norms of taste (Even-Zohar, 1990:13).

Williams and Even-Zohar take it one step further. They argue that instead of just researching objects, we should first research practices. Even-Zohar explains:

Obviously, for any individual, it is the ultimate product of any activity that matters: for any individual consumer, industrial products are the only target of interest rather than the factors which govern the industry making the products. Yet it is clear that for anybody interested in understanding industry as a complex activity, the latter cannot be exhaustively analysed by its products, even if products may seem the very *raison d'être* of its operations (Even-Zohar, 1990:19).

Williams argues: "As we discover the nature of a particular practice, and the nature of the relation between an individual project and a collective mode, we find that we are analysing, as two forms of the same process, both its active composition and its conditions of composition" (Williams, 1973:16). We need to know about the conditions for the practice of dubbing, and

ultimately, this will enable us to understand better how particular dubbings come to be the way they are.

## **PART I: DUBBING IN THE FIGS**

### **Chapter 1: Preference for subtitling or dubbing**

#### *1.1 National preference*

First we will look at the national preference for subtitling or dubbing. I use ‘national preference’ here to refer both to the usual type of audiovisual translation on offer and the actual preference of a majority of the population, although these are not necessarily one and the same. The reasons for national preference constitute the subject that is possibly the most widely discussed topic in literature on audiovisual translation. There are a myriad of factors that affect a nation’s preference for subtitling or dubbing, and it is not entirely clear which ones are most important in particular countries. There are economic, sociological, historical, political, cultural and linguistic reasons that cause countries to prefer one or the other. The most obvious and possibly the most important reason is economic. Subtitling is “10 to 20 times less expensive than dubbing” (Díaz Cintas, 2003:196). This means that small countries are less likely than bigger ones to become dubbing countries, because their small home audiences make dubbing unprofitable. However, economics by itself is not a sufficient explanation. One fact that makes this clear is that some small Eastern European countries prefer dubbing (Díaz Cintas, 2003:196).

History plays an important role. The introduction of the sound film caused a sudden influx of foreign-language films, primarily English-language films, which European countries commonly perceived as an invasion. Some European countries, including the FIGS, but also Czechoslovakia and Hungary, banned all films not in the native language (Dibbets, 1993:87). This desire to protect the native language was common, but in all but one of the FIGS, it also had a fascist tinge to it. Hitler, Mussolini and Franco, ruling Germany, Italy and Spain respectively, wanted to build strong nationalist states and spread fascist ideology. These leaders quickly “realised the appeal and impact films with sound could have on the masses” (cf. Danan, 1991:611). There were multiple reasons for this approach. Firstly, giving the actors a voice in the viewer’s language “is an assertion of the supremacy of the national language and its unchallenged political, economic and cultural power within the nation’s boundaries” (Danan, 1991:612). France has not been fascist, but it does have a long history of being a very nationalist country. Just as in Italy, Germany and Spain, “cinema was considered to be a vital part of the national culture. By evoking a glorious past, by portraying national

themes that spectators could relate to, films became an essential part of the nationalist rhetoric promoted by the state” (Danan, 1991:611). This is a reason why the French came to prefer dubbing, despite not having a fascist government.

A second reason for the fascist governments of Spain, Italy and Germany to prefer dubbing was that they wanted the entire population to speak one standardised national language. Therefore, they forbade minority groups to speak their own languages (Danan, 1991:612). Dubbing allowed the rulers to exclude all dialects and minority languages from the TV and cinema. Once again, despite not having been fascist, France joins in. France has historically used standardised French as an “instrument of political and cultural centralisation” (Danan, 1991:612).

The third reason for preferring dubbing from a nationalist point of view is that dubbing is a ‘covert’ mode of translation (cf. O’Connell, 1998:68). The fact that the audience has no access to the original version entails that censorship can be applied freely, because the audience has no way of knowing whether the translated text corresponds with what was actually being said. Germany, Spain, and Italy happily utilised the advantage this gave them.

A cultural reason that makes countries less likely to subtitle and more likely to dub (or to use voiceover) is easily overlooked, but self-explanatory. Countries with high illiteracy cannot use subtitles, because a large part of the audience would not be able to read them. This was the case in Italy, for instance (Paolinelli, 2004:176). In contrast, a linguistic reason encourages dubbing. Speakers of some minority tongues prefer to dub to ensure that “due emphasis is given to the respective national language.” In Spain, Franco’s policy was reversed. Dubbing is no longer just in Spanish, but also in Basque, Galician and Catalan (Agost, 2004:63). For minority language speakers, hearing their own language being spoken is “a more potent way of reinforcing a sense of national identity or autonomy than reading the subtitled text” (Kilborn, 1993:644).

## *1.2 Subtitling in the FIGS*

While subtitling countries have to dub for those who cannot read, there is no equally obvious reason why dubbing countries should also subtitle, but they do, and sometimes, subtitling is the only option. It has become a growing trend for cinemas in the FIGS, mainly in large cities, to offer a choice between dubbed and subtitled versions for a selection of films (Díaz Cintas, 1999:37, 2003:196). According to Meininger, there are very few cinemas in Paris that still show dubbed films. Even Hollywood blockbusters are subtitled. Some films

“from non-mainstream countries (mostly Asian or African)” are subtitled rather than dubbed, “probably because it is considered that a very reduced amount of people will be interested in that product” (Martínez). Viewers can often pick between dubbing and subtitling on satellite channels, and overwhelming majority of DVDs also provide original-language versions and subtitles nowadays (Antonini and Chiaro, 2009:97, Zabalbeascoa).

Subtitling is preferred by “people with a certain intellectual level, [...] open-minded people, people who study or want to improve their knowledge of foreign languages” (Martínez, Chaume). Also, the younger generation likes subtitling more (Martínez, Chaume, Díaz Cintas). The popularity of subtitling is rising, but this is not because viewers are discontent with the quality of dubbing (Martínez, Zabalbeascoa, Marianetti and Chaume). According to Martínez, subtitling is only more popular because more people are now able to understand the original versions, or want to understand them. According to Martínez, those who prefer to dubbing “usually do not even think of the quality of what they are watching,” and “they do not consider the possibility of choosing the subtitled version.”

### *1.3 Influence of English language and culture*

Regardless of the choice for subtitling or dubbing, all European countries have to deal with the large influx of American films and series. Hollywood reigns supreme. This brings with it a cultural threat, “variously perceived as the chimera of ‘global America’ or ‘wall-to-wall Dallas’” (Kilborn, 1993:642). Gottlieb adds: “Europeans are often more familiar with the workings of the Los Angeles Police Department, the streets of Manhattan and the sprawl of American suburbia than with their own continent” (Gottlieb, 2004:90) Furthermore, languages are threatened as well, in subtitling as well as in dubbing countries. Anglicisms are a common occurrence in subtitles (Gottlieb, 2004:90). Dubbing is not immune, however. Whereas subtitling transparently promotes English, dubbing introduces Trojan horses, so to speak, in the shape of morphosyntactic calques (Gottlieb, 2004:93). This will be discussed more thoroughly later.

## Chapter 2: Advantages and disadvantages of dubbing

Countries have traditionally had one type of translation on offer, which the viewer grows used to and comes to prefer. Subsequently, habit ensures that viewers will continue choosing this option. As we have seen in the previous chapter, it happens more and more often that both subtitling and dubbing are offered, which could eventually affect habituation to subtitling and dubbing and therefore preference. For now, however, it still applies that “people tend to prefer whatever form of translation they grew up with,” and in most European countries, this is either subtitling or dubbing (Nornes, 2007:191). In fact, they will not only prefer this mode, but also strongly believe it is better than the alternative (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:326).

In this chapter, I want to discuss advantages and disadvantages of dubbing. Ever since the introduction of films with sound, it has been heavily debated inside and outside scholarly literature whether dubbing or subtitling is better (Gottlieb, 2004:86). However, debating this matter is fairly useless if the point is to convince anyone to come to the other side, because the preference for dubbing or subtitling is a force of habit rather than a rational decision. Even scholars show their bias. This chapter is not about proving that either dubbing or subtitling is better, but about showing actual merits and drawbacks of dubbing as compared to subtitling.<sup>8</sup>

### *2.1 Facts*

Let us start with a few facts. Subtitling “constitutes a fundamental break with the semiotic structure of sound film” by using written signs (Gottlieb, 2004:87). This means that the screen is cluttered with text that was not originally supposed to be there. Dubbing, on the other hand, severs the link between the voices heard and the faces and gestures seen on screen, because they no longer belong to the same person. Subtitling, due to technical limitations, condenses the original dialogue by at least 20% and is subject to the norms of written language, whereas dubbed speech can last just as long as the original (or, in fact, it has to) and is subject to the norms of spoken language (Gottlieb, 2004:87).

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<sup>8</sup> This overview is not comprehensive. The reader is referred to the literature for more advantages and disadvantages.

## 2.2 Information processing

Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof present three categories for advantages and disadvantages.<sup>9</sup> These are information processing, aesthetics and learning effects. I am adopting their categories here. First, we turn to information processing. As was just mentioned, dubbing does not need to condense the dialogue, but it is still restricted by the fact that the translation has to fit into the amount of time allotted by the lip movements on screen (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:327). This can lead to two types of space problems. The translation may either be shorter or longer than the original line, which will lead to stretching or shortening the translation, respectively. However, the three authors note that this does not occur very often, because the speech rates of most languages do not vary so much, and because even if one language is more long-winded than the other, the difference is not big (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:328-329).

One thing that is obvious, but still very important to note is that dubbing removes the original soundtrack. This fits into both the information processing and the aesthetic category. All of the verbal information contained by the original soundtrack is lost. Also, “as the original voices of the actors cannot be heard, an important part of the acting performance is lost” (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:336). Of course, dubbing actors are hired to make up for that, but even if they do a passable job, it is only a substitute and not the real thing. That, however, is more of an aesthetic concern. When it comes to information, the important question is to what extent the dubbing actors actually do recreate all of the information that was supplied by the original soundtrack.

Non-verbal information is also lost. Non-verbal information is, for example, “the tone in which a subject answers a question, or a hesitation at a certain moment, [which] might be very important to the viewer’s interpretation” (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:336). However, there is much more to this matter than what these authors mention.

Although intonation patterns often vary from language to language, universal features such as the expression of pain, grief and joy should not be ignored: linked to pitch, stress, rhythm and volume, they contribute considerably to conveying information not only about the speakers, but also about the context of which they form a part. Voices reflect the mood and atmosphere of a situation, whether it is at a major sports event, the scene of an accident or the convention of a political party (Tveit, 2009:93).

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<sup>9</sup> This source is originally in Dutch, but an English adaptation was published a year later. I use the English version here. Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof will be referred to in this chapter as ‘the three authors’.

All of this also has to be recreated, and this may not always be done well.

The removal of the original soundtrack also means that, contrary to subtitling, even if the viewer knows the original language, the viewer has no way of judging whether the translation is accurate (unless, of course, the viewer goes through the troublesome experience of purchasing the product in the original language, which may not always be possible). The consequences of this for quality come to light later.

Because the viewer no longer has easy access to the original soundtrack, censorship of a dubbed product is much more likely to go undiscovered than that of a subtitled product (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:330). We have already seen that this has actually been taken advantage of in practice. This is a disadvantage for any viewer who prefers to watch a movie or series without it being tarnished by what someone else thought the viewer should or should not be allowed to hear.

An important advantage of dubbing is that it is easier to combine watching TV with other activities when the film or series is dubbed rather than subtitled. The viewer does not have to look at the screen to read subtitles, and the viewer can listen to the programme rather than watch it, and resume watching and look away again at will. While a viewer is listening to, rather than watching the TV, they may also be reading the newspaper or cleaning. Of course, in theory, subtitling can also be combined with other activities, but this is more difficult, “because viewers often do not have command of the foreign language as well as their mother tongue” (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:332). French, Spanish, German and Italian viewers could very well find themselves more troubled by this than Dutch viewers.

### *2.3 Aesthetics*

Now we will discuss aesthetics. Those who prefer subtitling to dubbing find subtitled films and series much more authentic, because the persons on screen are heard with their own voices (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:336). Tveit adds: “An essential part of a character’s personality is their voice, which is closely linked to facial expressions, gestures and body language. Authenticity is undeniably sacrificed when a character is deprived of their voice and instead the audience hears the voice of somebody else” (Tveit, 2009:92). However, it is important to note that matching a different voice to a certain character does not necessarily mean that the new combination comes across as unnatural or artificial.

On the whole, if the casting of dubbing actors is done well, the dubbing voice of a particular character seems to appear as natural to a TV or cinema audience as the voice of the original actor is to the audience seeing the film in the original. Dubbing voices only seem unnatural to people who are familiar with the real voices of a character (but, equally, the real voice seems unnatural to people used to the dubbing voice) (Herbst, 1997:292).

Vöge offers another reason why dubbing can make films and series come across as less authentic, and why this may be found so jarring. He notes: “The subject of a film is a specific situation intimately connected with a specific place and a specific time. The factors of place and time together determine what language is spoken in the specific situation” (Vöge, 1977:123). Dubbing is hampered by this, because the viewer can see that a situation is set in a particular place, and printed signs, dress, landmarks, and so on, keep visually reminding them of that. The more the film contains these visual reminders of the exact location, the more jarring the discrepancy between the location and the heard language becomes (cf. Vöge, 1977:123-124). “Instead of strengthening the illusion, dubbing tends to destroy it. And if perfect dubbing might possibly sustain the illusion, bad dubbing certainly destroys it” (Vöge, 1977:124).

Not only do viewers of dubbed films and series not hear the original voices, they often hear the same dubbing actors’ voices over and over again. Vöge calls this the “radio-play” effect, and it happens when the number of available roles exceeds the number of available actors and actresses (Vöge, 1977:121). This is often experienced as a disadvantage. It is compounded by time pressure, as dubbing studios prefer to work with experienced actors who need less time to do a recording right (Dries, 1995:11-12). This diminishes the pool of suitable actors.

Those who prefer dubbing to subtitling find it a blessing that actors speak the same language as the viewer. Viewers may be more easily able to identify with actors who speak the same language. If the viewer is not too strongly reminded visually of the actual setting, hearing the own language could create the illusion that the events on screen take place or could take place in the own environment, which might increase the viewer’s enjoyment of the film or series. Furthermore, hearing the own language could be even more pleasurable to speakers of minority tongues (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:336). In the same vein, Karamitroglou adds the argument that dubbing “protects and promotes the local language and culture” (Karamitroglou, 2000:243). He offers as a counter-argument that dubbing hardly protects the local language if it is full of anglicisms and other distortions of the local language (Karamitroglou, 2000:243).

Translations in dubbing are modified to a great extent for synchronisation, which is discussed in the next chapter. Translations may be altered so much that the quality deteriorates badly. Karamitroglou goes as far as to say that high quality is hard to achieve (Karamitroglou, 2000:243). To a smaller extent, however, translations for subtitling are also constrained, because they have to be appear on the screen when a character speaks. Furthermore, the condensation of translations for subtitling can also be done at the cost of quality (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:338). Karamitroglou adds the quality of subtitling can suffer from too much condensation just as much as dubbing can suffer from botched translations due to lip synchrony (Karamitroglou, 2000:243).

Another disadvantage caused by the need for synchronisation is that perfect synchrony is virtually impossible. There is always a chance that viewers are able to notice dyschrony to such a degree that this decreases their enjoyment. This is another reason, in addition to the lack of the original soundtrack, why those who prefer subtitling may find dubbing come across as unnatural. However, viewers who are accustomed to dubbing are less likely to notice dyschrony or to be troubled by it. Furthermore, it is easily overlooked that viewers who have been seeing films and series dubbed in their own language all their lives will find it incredibly unnatural to see films and series in a foreign language (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:339).

#### *2.4 Learning effects*

The arguments that the three authors discuss in this category revolve around the idea that subtitling benefits first and second language acquisition. I will not discuss this in further detail, because it is about subtitling only, but the drawback for dubbing is that it does not have such benefits. Vöge surmises that the French continue dubbing partly as a result of their dubbing tradition: “the audience is unaccustomed to foreign sounds *because it never hears any*” [italics in original] (Vöge, 1977:124). Vöge’s point is to warn against linguistic chauvinism, but a more significant point can be made that people in subtitling countries are exposed to the English language on television from a very early age, while people in dubbing countries are deprived of this exposure. It is a commonly accepted notion, even in traditional dubbing countries, that subtitling benefits second language learning. A study requested by the European Commission confirms that “subtitling helps to improve the mastery of foreign languages” (Safar et al., 2011:26). Luc Chatel and Ángel Gabilondo Pujol, Ministers of

Education of France and Spain, respectively, both suggested that their country should switch to subtitling to improve English-language skills (Van den Eynde, 2012; Homan, 2010).

## *2.5 Questions*

The three authors note that the significance of advantages or disadvantages depends on three questions: “For whom are programmes subtitled or dubbed?,” “How are programmes subtitled or dubbed?” and “Which programmes are subtitled or dubbed?” (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:345). We first discuss the first question. Blind and partially sighted people prefer dubbing, while the deaf and hard-of-hearing prefer subtitling, for obvious reasons. The young and the old have trouble with subtitles, because they cannot read very well if at all. Foreigners often prefer subtitling, because they might not be able to understand the language of the host country, which becomes a problem if everything on television is dubbed. However, they usually do understand English, and subtitled programmes allow them to hear the original language, which is usually English. Importantly, ‘normal’ viewers simply disregard all of the disadvantages of the type of audiovisual translation that they are accustomed to, and also find the disadvantages of the type they are not accustomed to much more grating (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:346-347).

With regard to the question how programmes are subtitled or dubbed, the manner of dubbing strongly determines the degree of certain disadvantages. A higher level of synchrony increases the illusion that the voice heard belongs to the speaker on screen, but may also lead to a more unnatural translation. Total disregard for synchrony, on the other hand, may make the translation sound more natural, but may make it much more clear that the person acting and the person speaking are not the same individual (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:348).

With regard to which programmes are subtitled or dubbed, whether certain advantages or disadvantages of dubbing are significant depends on the kind of programme. “For an educational programme, for example, that aims at effective information processing, pros and cons that pertain to information processing will be important, whereas possible aesthetic drawbacks can be put up with” (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:348-349). In other words, dubbing is more suitable here, because having to read subtitles could be too much of a distraction. Films or series with many close-ups may better be subtitled, because mouth movement is much more visible in close-ups. Therefore, dyschrony becomes much easier to notice (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:349). It does not appear that clients in the FIGS

ever assign their products to be subtitled instead of dubbed because of this consideration. However, “cult movies in which the original dialogues form an inseparable part of the movie are usually subtitled, even in typical dubbing countries such as Germany” (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof, 2002:349). Animated films and series are almost always dubbed, but I think the three authors misunderstand why. They say that imperfect synchrony is also present in the original language and that dubbing is characteristic for this programme type. They neglect to address that in Western culture, animation is usually targeted at children. Since children below a certain age cannot read, dubbing is an obvious choice.

## **Chapter 3: Synchronisation**

### *3.1 Definitions*

Synchronisation is a vital element of the dubbing process. The word synchronisation refers to the act of achieving synchrony between image and sound. Synchronisation is more than synchronisation in dubbing. Overall, synchronisation is short for either one of three different types. Pre-synchronisation involves recording the sound prior to the picture. Direct sound synchronisation refers to recording picture and sound simultaneously. Post-synchronisation involves recording the picture first and sound later, and then making the sound correspond to the image (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:56-57). Dubbing falls under the latter category.

Post-synchronisation consists of interlingual and intralingual dubbing. Intralingual dubbing means that actors, usually the original actors, rerecord speech in the studio and synchronise that with the earlier lip movements. Studio recordings of dialogues have the benefit that they are no longer troubled by sound-disturbances (Karamitroglou, 2000:8-9). For this reason, intralingual dubbing is very commonly used. Interlingual dubbing is the use of the same technology for the purpose of translation.

### *3.2 Kinds of synchrony*

Synchronisation in dubbing is a bit more complicated than just synchrony between image and sound. It is about achieving perfect harmony between the original film and the dubbing. The task is to make them appear as if they naturally belonged together, as if they had always been a whole. There are multiple aspects of achieving this harmony. These aspects are referred to as ‘synchronies.’ Scholars argue about what can and cannot be considered as synchrony. The kinds of synchrony that scholars tend to agree about are: lip synchrony, kinetic synchrony, and isochrony.

Lip synchrony “consists of adapting the translation to the articulatory movements of the on-screen characters, especially in close-ups and extreme close-ups.” Happy coincidences in lip synchrony are the cases where interlingual semantic partners are also much like each other phonetically (cf. Whitman-Linsen, 1992:25). Some languages have more of these than others. For instance, many languages are lost in the case of a clearly and distinctly enunciated ‘th’. Whitman-Linsen notes: “Castilian Spanish is the only commonly dubbed language which

can boast an equivalent – small comfort when almost all other semantic partners in English and Spanish are [...] ‘phonetic enemies’” (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:25-26).

Kinetic synchrony is the synchronisation of the translation with the actor’s body movements. Obvious movements that require attention are a shaking head indicating negation and a character raising his hands to his head (Chaume, 2004:44). Kinetic synchrony is quite a challenge, as “gestures and facial expression accompanying speech display vast cultural variations.” Whitman-Linsen goes as far as to say that a well-versed viewer would be able to “recognise a number of nationalities watching solely the people on the screen with the sound eliminated.” The Englishman barely moves at all, while Italians can carry out whole conversations without actually speaking (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:33). Another kind of kinetic synchrony has been called ‘nucleus synchrony’. Often, some key words are accompanied by a gesture, facial expression or stress on a certain syllable or word. Where this emphasis or nucleus falls may differ with each language. For instance, in English, the exclamation “I’ve had enough!” is accompanied by stress on the syllable /nough/ and a simultaneous gesture, for example, the stamping of a foot. The German equivalent is “Jetzt reicht’s mir aber!,” which obviously leads to problems (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:36).

Isochrony is “the synchronisation of the duration of the translation with the screen characters’ utterances” (Chaume, 2004:44). The viewer should hear speech when the actors are speaking and not hear speech when their mouths are visibly closed. Dyschrony occurs when viewers hear speech when an actor is not speaking, or hear silence when an actor obviously is.

### *3.3 Importance of synchronies*

Synchronisation, especially achieving lip synchrony and isochrony, is considered extremely important in the dubbing industry. Chaume even goes so far as to say that it is prioritised above all else. “The quality of a translation is judged in terms of whether or not ‘it matches the lips’” (Chaume, 2004:36). Synchronisation ought to be done well, in order to prevent “the viewer’s attention from being sidetracked from the story he or she is watching and engaged in” (Chaume, 2004:38). Fodor was the first to name and describe the various types of synchronisation. He wrote an extensive manual on the subject in 1976, which also dealt with the production of speech sound. His standard of synchronisation, however, was extremely high, and he appeared to think that “all that is needed for a satisfactory synchronisation is adequate lip synchrony, even to the exclusion of the film translation itself”

(Whitman-Linsen, 1992:22). Fodor proposed that sounds in the source and target versions should correspond (Chaume, 2004:38). Chaume protests: “Fodor’s standard of perfection is far removed from the situation professionals actually face at work, since the length of time required to carry out the dubbing process would make it financially unfeasible. [...] Neither is it viable for the translator, who would require an excessive amount of time and an almost utopian linguistic proficiency to achieve this kind of harmony” (Chaume, 2004:38). Also, Fodor suggests that “dubbing actors should perform exactly the same gestures as the actors on the screen [...] in order to achieve a more authentic impression, more congruence of movements, more convincing intonation, etc.” This probably helps, but it is rather impractical. For instance, to replicate the voice of a man in a hospital bed, the dubbing actor has to lie down in a studio (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:38).

The question is also whether perfect lip synchrony is absolutely necessary. According to research, viewers “cannot discern minor slips and discrepancies in lip movements” (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:21). As the audience becomes more involved in the story, it is even less likely to notice lip movement disparities or to be bothered by them. Nor can viewers read lips particularly well. They are not trained to make out words, like a deaf mute, or reading lips consciously. Any lip reading is a subconscious activity caused by “acoustic and visual stimuli evoking motor sensations,” as a result of which the viewer can only detect either synchrony or dyschrony (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:21).

Synchronisation is not the only issue at stake in dubbing. Dubbing professionals also have to pay attention to the accuracy of the translation and the level or register of language (Kilborn, 1989:424). They must not “succumb to the temptation to sacrifice all else to the god of lip synchrony. One cardinal rule of dubbing should be: One asynchronous, yet flowing, well-written line is worth three perfectly synched lines of clumsy or mediocre style” (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:24-25). Dubbing professionals may feel that a particular word or phrase establishes a better lip-fit, but “an accumulation of [...] linguistically inappropriate items [...] may result in unintentionally comic effects” (Kilborn, 1989:424). Paquin, a Canadian adapter, relates how he used to give lip synchrony more priority than it deserved:

My first adaptations were perfectly synchronous from a phonetic point of view, but the sentences were a bit twisted on the grammatical and lexical levels. I mean, no formal mistakes, but plenty of awkward constructions. I had to fit the word to the lips at all cost. I could do it. I experienced victory every time I managed to turn a phrase that would match the articulatory mechanisms of the source language, never mind if it sounded a bit weird in the target language. I figured the audience wouldn't notice. They'd be so caught up in the action and so impressed by the perfect phonetic synchronism [sic] of this version that they wouldn't

notice it was strange for a cop to speak of the “décédé” (deceased) for the “dead,” because it fit the lip movement better than “mort.” [...] This phonetic constraint can be overwhelming and can lead to being blinded to other constraints which should in fact have priority (Paquin, 1998).

Lip synchrony is most important in close-ups and extreme close-ups (Chaume, 2004:44). While viewers are not very good at noticing slip-ups, some articulatory movements do have to be taken into account, because they are extremely visible. These are “bilabials, /b/, /p/, and /m/, labio-dentals /f/ and /v/, and open vowels” (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:23).

### *3.4 Lip synchrony vs. natural dialogue*

How synchronisation is valued compared to other factors is subject to cultural preference. Spain, France and Germany consider lip synchrony of paramount importance, while Italy prefers “faithfulness towards the source language script and the original performances” (Díaz Cintas, 1999:33). Isochrony in Italy is regarded as a flexible restriction, to the extent that most of the product is out of sync (Chaume, 2004:47). Voices often start well before the original actor has a chance to part his lips (Nornes, 2007:203). Italians say they do this in order to create a more natural dialogue (Herbst, 1997:293). In addition, this allows dubbing directors to benefit from a wider pool of actors, actors who may not be very good at lip synchrony, but whose voices are a better match (Nornes, 2007:203). The lack of synchrony may also have something more to do with convenience than with a conscious preference for a natural dialogue, however. Intralingual dubbing of films produced in Italy is so poor that any synchrony between moving lips and speech appears to be little but sheer coincidence. If the Italians are used to bad synchrony in films that were originally produced in Italian, they can hardly object if synchrony in imported films is poor as well (Vöge, 1977:122).

## Chapter 4: Involved parties

Now we will look at the parties involved in dubbing. These are producers (as non-clients), clients, dubbing studios, labour unions, and viewers. The two most important parties are the clients and the dubbing studios. The clients assign their films and series to be dubbed by the dubbing studios. Clients are either producers or licensees. Licensees are usually broadcasters or distributors. The interests of clients, the interests of dubbing studios, and the balance of power between the clients and the dubbing studios all affect the quality of the final products. Both clients and dubbing studios have to balance making a profit with caring for quality. Ultimately, the client decides how much to pay for dubbing, which affects how much time and effort the dubbing studio can devote to taking care of quality. How much time they allot for making a production is not only affected by clients' deadlines, but also by how much clients pay dubbing studios. These fees determine how many productions the dubbing studio feels it has to take on at once to make a decent profit, and this affects how much time the dubbing studio can spend on each individual production. All of this raises the questions whether clients care about quality, and whether the relation and balance of power between clients and dubbing studios is a healthy one. I will answer those questions in chapter six. First we turn to a profile of the five involved parties.

### 4.1 Producers

Technically speaking, the creators of the original product can only truly be considered involved if they themselves are clients, but they often are not. When they are not, they tend to stay out of the dubbing process. Almost the only company that does try to control the target language versions of their productions is Disney. Otherwise, this kind of control happens only occasionally, such as in the case of the Spanish version of *The Shining* which Stanley Kubrick commissioned to Carlos Saura (Zabalbeascoa, Izard and Santamaria, 2001:107).

A consequence of choosing not to get involved, however, is that licensees and dubbing studios can do as they please. The result may be that producers “find the fruit of their creativity in a jumble, so distorted and disqualified that it cannot be corrected” (Patou-Patucchi, 2009:145). This may be the reason why some film directors, such as Antonioni, Polanski, Loach and Almodóvar have scoffed at dubbing (Paolinelli, 2004:176).

There is an alternative though, and the use of it is becoming more frequent. Producers can send a supervisory director to the dubbing studio, whose task is to monitor the entire

process. For the blockbusters, this happens more and more often (Schoonenboom, 2010). Whitman comments: “Seeing that the original film is reflected faithfully is their *raison d'être*.” Whitman, who has now been working as a supervisory director for 22 years, explains that she is responsible for the dubbed script, the interpretations of the actors, the casting, sound mix and the final version. In the case of differences of opinion, the supervisory director's opinion prevails (Van Bracht, 1998).

Since 1931, film producers in Hollywood have been taking account of the fact that films have to be dubbed later on. Therefore, they have been aiming at fewer close-ups and less culture-bound elements (Karamitroglou, 2000:9). Not only is it wise for them to adjust the content, they also have to consider costs. “Making decisions [about language transfer] too late or underestimating the costs, time and effort required [...] can become very expensive later” (Dries, 1995:4). Another possible consequence of bad planning may be that at the end of the production process, as “the money has run out and the first screening is too close,” only low quality dubbing is still feasible (Dries, 1995:18).

#### *4.2 Clients*

Whether the client is the producer or not, the client has the authority to supervise and comment on the work of the dubbing studio. They vary in the degree to which they actually do this. In Catalonia, a proofreader often checks the translation. This is only done for the minority languages and not for Spanish (Martínez). Even so, whether this double check takes place, depends on the client: “Some television stations and distributors have their own readers and language specialists and this revision phase is a *sine qua non*; others, however, may dispense with it entirely” (Martínez, 2004:4). Another way for clients to have influence is during the casting process. The client may ask for voice samples from a number of dubbing actors and pick the one they find the most suitable for a particular character (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:65). These voice samples can be previous recordings, or auditions with the translation that is to be used. The latter has become less common due to time pressure, except in the case of special circumstances, such as expected box-office hits with famous actors (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:39-40).

### *4.3 Dubbing studios*

Dubbing studios in the FIGS have become increasingly professionalised, which has enabled them to attain extremely high standards of lip synchronisation. To be more capable of meeting the high demand for dubbing, dubbing studios in dubbing countries have developed sophisticated techniques for dealing with a wide range of film and television material. The dubbing industry also profits from the scale of the operation. The sheer volume of material, for instance, has meant that certain studios have been able to specialise in particular types of programming, and that studios generally have access to a much larger pool of suitable actors than in countries where other modes of audiovisual translation are more dominant (Kilborn, 1993:644).

Dubbing studios profit from increased scale, but according to the literature on dubbing, they do so only in the country they are based in. The dubbing industry is heterogeneous and localised. In contrast, translation memories are used in the field of translation of Language for Specific Purposes. Free software and beta software are available for freelancers, companies and universities involved with subtitling. Professionals and teachers in subtitling follow a lot of the same guidelines all over the world. This is not the case in dubbing (cf. Chaume, 2007:203-204). Chaume's explanation is "a fear of industrial espionage, and a firm belief that dubbing [...] cannot be improved by anyone other than the professionals already involved in this industry" (Chaume, 2007:217). The differences between dubbing studios in different countries are so big that they "cannot easily take on work from outside their own countries" (Chaume, 2007:212).

### *4.4 Labour unions*

The professionalisation of the dubbing industry has also led to the creation of a third party: labour unions and professional organisations that aim to represent dubbing professionals, safeguard quality, and protect tariffs. The only organisation that features extensively in the literature is the Italian translators' and adapters' association AIDAC, but there are many others, such as AIDAC's French and Spanish equivalents ATAA and ATRAE (cf. Paolinelli, 2004:177; Martínez, Meininger). These unions and associations do not have much power, although Martínez argues that "some of them are working hard for their associates, and some others are pretty new and are already starting to get some results"

(Martínez, Meininger). According to Chaume, the unions and associations are poorly respected in Spain, but very much respected in Italy.

Paolinelli, who is the vice-president of AIDAC, claims that AIDAC “is already doing quite a lot” to improve the situation in the dubbing industry. The following is an excerpt from his list of AIDAC’s accomplishments: “[AIDAC] has established rules, a code of conduct to safeguard the professionalism and hence the quality of the dubbed versions. [...] It has established the quality of dubbing as one of the objectives specified in the service contract between the Italian State and RAI TV (the Italian public-service broadcaster). [...] It is working to fix UNI-ISO standards to certify quality” (Paolinelli, 2004:177).

Martínez reports that in Spain labour unions and associations are fighting for decent working conditions, but their struggles are undercut by people who “break the rules in order to get a job. Right now, with the present economic situation, it is sadly easy to find people willing to work for less than the minimum agreed by the associations” (Martínez). Moreover, Spain has two regions with big dubbing industries, namely Barcelona and Madrid, and these regions compete with each other. Therefore, some associations are regional, to “defend the industry in their region sometimes against other regions” (Martínez). Something similar occurs in France. Meininger confirms a claim by Pel that French dubbing actors sometimes travel to Brussels to record there so that French rules and regulations no longer apply.

If working conditions are less than satisfactory, one thing that labour unions can do is to call for a strike. However, the use of this instrument has proved not to be very successful in the past. In the mid 1960s, many German dubbing actors went on a six-week strike to demand higher wages. The dubbing studios, however, simply hired other actors, “and were not delayed or otherwise put out in the slightest. A pool of unemployed actors is always a ready reservoir of dubbing manpower” (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:96). Whitman-Linsen also mentions ‘recent’ strikes in Spain, France and Italy. Logically, those strikes must have been in the late 1980s or early 1990s. Dubbing professionals in France and Italy went on strike again in 2003 and 2004 due to “heavy workloads, poor wages and stressful working conditions.” While the strikes underscored that “better working conditions would be beneficial to consumers as well as to [dubbing professionals],” their strikes were to no avail (Chiaro, 2008:246). Martínez, Zabalbeascoa, Marianetti, Chaume and Meininger are not aware of any strikes occurring after that in their countries. According to Martínez, Spanish dubbing actors are still paying the consequences of an unsuccessful strike in 1993.

#### *4.5 Viewers*

It is not self-evident and very easy to overlook, but viewers have to be considered parties involved in the dubbing process as well. It must not be forgotten that in order to make a profit at all, clients and dubbing studios have to cater to viewers. Making a profit is impossible if the viewers refuse to watch dubbings. Viewers are not all-powerful, however. It is the clients who decide whether they enable dubbing studios to deliver good quality. It is possible for clients not to realise or to ignore what viewers want. In most markets, consumers have bargaining power that forces companies to consider what consumers want. If consumers think a product has poor quality, they will simply buy a different brand. The problem with dubbing is that viewers' bargaining power is very limited.

Firstly, as has been discussed before, viewers are limited in their ability to judge whether the translation is accurate, because they do not have easy access to the original soundtrack. This makes it hard for viewers to judge whether the quality of the translation is good or not. Secondly, if viewers think the quality of dubbing is too poor for whatever reason, they cannot simply switch to a different brand the way consumers can who do not like their toothpaste. This is because in the dubbing industry, there is just one brand for each product. Sometimes, films and series do get redubbed, but it is quite exceptional to have multiple dubbed versions of a film or series at the time of its release (Chiaro, 2008:247). Consequently, just one dubbing studio dubs a certain film or series, and if the viewer wants to watch that film or series, but thinks the dubbing is poor, they have to put up with the poor dubbing or not watch what they wanted to watch. However, viewers can only switch to different films and series that are dubbed better if there is such a thing. They are deprived of even this type of bargaining power if dubbing is poor across-the-board. "In such a no-choice situation, there appears to be little that consumers can do" (Chiaro, 2008:247).

## Chapter 5: The dubbing process

### 5.1 Evolution of dubbing

Dubbing is one of the solutions to a problem that arose when films suddenly were no longer silent. Before that, even though imported films were foreign, viewers were not as fully aware of that, because the inter-titles were translated, and viewers could easily imagine the actors speaking in their own languages. In fact, when the first movie with sound, *The Jazz Singer*, was released in 1927, European viewers were outraged that the actors were speaking a foreign language (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:12). This was a problem that needed to be solved somehow. It was especially vital to the American film industry that they could bridge the language gap. “The international film world, which had been dominated by the Americans for years, suddenly disintegrated into countless smaller language areas. Hollywood became a prisoner of the English language, with its power seemingly broken” (Dibbets, 1993:87).<sup>10</sup>

Between 1929 and 1933, a solution was found in Multiple Language Versions: producers would shoot entire films multiple times with different actors who spoke the desired languages.

Huge studios were built for this purpose in Joinville, France. The same set and scenario were used for each national group of directors and actors, and sometimes as many as fifteen versions of a film were made. This system, which soon proved to be uneconomical, inefficient and artistically poor (productions were even boycotted by the public in France), was quickly abandoned (Danan, 1991:607)

Interlingual dubbing was a by-product of new technology that allowed for post-synchronisation (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:12). Intralingual dubbing was useful for all films, because there would no longer be outside interferences in dialogues. From there, it was a small step to consider using the exact same technology to bridge the language gap. The first fully dubbed movie was *All Quiet on the Western Front*, released in German in 1930 (Karamitroglou, 2000:9).

Dubbing had a boost in the 1940s, when magnetic recording tapes were invented. This allowed for the separate recording of multiple sound tracks, which meant that dubbing studios no longer had to recreate the entire sound track, including the noise, sound effects, and music, but just the voice tracks. The quality of dubbing was also enhanced, as it was now possible to

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<sup>10</sup> My translation. Originally in Dutch: “De internationale filmwereld, jarenlang gedomineerd door de Amerikanen, viel plotseling uiteen in talloze kleine taalgebieden. Hollywood werd de gevangene van de Engelse taal; zijn macht leek gebroken.”

replace voice recordings without the need to replace the rest of the sound track (Karamitroglou, 2000:9).

Digitalisation introduced the digital recording of sound into dubbing studios. Before digitalisation, films had to be physically cut into takes. This means that a loop of film could have a length in yards rather than minutes. Because of this, dubbing was a technically complex, arduous and expensive process. Therefore, digitalisation is very significant for dubbing, but it is hardly if at all referred to in the literature. Most experts I asked did not dare to say when dubbing became digitalised. Marianetti claims it happened in 1980, while Chaume thinks it happened “somewhere in the past decade.” Anyhow, digitalisation made it easier to modify sound recordings, and played a role in speeding up the process, though not always in a good way, because the increased pace often causes distress to workers. (Zabalbeascoa, Marianetti, Chaume).

## *5.2 Production overview*

Now we will look at the actual dubbing process. The dubbing process consists of a number of phases with a set order and rhythm, almost like a production line. If problems occur in any of these phases, the entire line could be affected. Because there are so many phases and so many different people working in the process, problems do often occur (Martínez, 2004:3). The process starts when the client provides the dubbing studio with a copy of the film or programme. The translator usually has two copies to work from, the film itself and the written script (Martínez, 2004:4). In her book in 1992, Whitman-Linsen laments that translators usually have to work without a copy of the film, but according to Zabalbeascoa, this is no longer the case, although it “still happens sometimes, especially due to concerns of piracy” (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:205). Sometimes, the written script is a preproduction script and not what is known as the ‘as recorded’ script. The preproduction script is only a guideline, and a lot of modifications can occur during the recording. The ‘as recorded’ script contains all of these modifications, but even if the translator is sent the ‘as recorded’ script, it may still not be entirely accurate, because the modifications have not always been transcribed properly or completely (Martínez, 2004:4). The quality of the script is more likely to be poor in the case of TV films, TV shows, and old films (Martínez). Translation can, but is not always split in two tasks. If it is, the translator is asked to write a rough translation, and is required to translate as literally as possible, including translating obviously idiomatic expressions literally (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:61). The next

person who deals with the translation is known as an adapter. Their task is to domesticate the script to make it sound more natural, and synchronise the text with lip movements on screen. This involves moulding the text for synchrony or style, and not all changes may be equally justifiable (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:64). Germany splits the tasks (Whitman-Linsen). France no longer does (Meininger). Italy always splits the tasks in the case of translating non-European languages, but not always in the case of European languages (Marianetti). Curiously, Marianetti says the rough translation is often required to shorten delivery terms. Spain used to split the tasks, but it is becoming more common for translators in Spain to adapt as well (Martínez, Zabalbeascoa, Chaume).

In the meantime, the dubbing director casts actors for roles (Martínez, 2004:4). A successful casting requires the actor's voice to fit the character; that is to say, the combination of a certain character and a voice must be credible for the audience. The acoustic impression and exterior appearance must be harmonious. When we hear a voice, we associate it with certain aspects of the speaker, such as "size, weight, personality, and outward appearance" (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:39-40). This is partly because of physiological features. A big man cannot dub a small man, and someone with a big nose cannot dub someone with a small nose, because their voices sound different (cf. Kilborn, 1989:425). The director must be careful to prevent any mismatches.

Source language actors are often "pegged as a special type: the rough guys, the girlish type, the comic figures" (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:41). These roles are then given to the same few dubbing actors who have specialised in playing a certain type (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:41). Since the source language actors' actual voices may sometimes not fit the type their character is classified as, the actor's original voice and the dubbed version may sound radically different (cf. Zabalbeascoa, Izard and Santamaria, 2001:106).

Actors with a higher profile, such as Brad Pitt and Robert de Niro, are often consistently dubbed by the same dubbing actors, creating German, French, Spanish and Italian 'alter egos'. This is because their higher profile makes it more likely for viewers to notice and to object when a different actor is hired to dub that person. This practice can lead to problems. Szarkowska explains:

One Italian dubbing [actor] [...] dubbed the voices of both Robert De Niro and Al Pacino for a number of years until the two actors met on the set of *Heat* in 1995. For obvious reasons, another actor was needed to substitute for one of the stars. This, however, did not satisfy Italian audiences, who felt there was something wrong with Pacino's voice as it was not what they were used to hearing (Szarkowska, 2005).

Other dubbing actors are picked from a pool of local actors. An actor with one minor role can be given a few more in different scenes. The viewer usually does not notice that multiple minor roles are spoken by the same person (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:65).

When the adapter is done, the film is divided into 'takes'. This is done, because dubbing actors have to memorise the lines. This allows them to "concentrate fully on the screen actors' movements and mouths" (Chaume, 2007:206). Otherwise, actors have to look down at the translation and read their lines aloud. "This would result in their missing the screen actors' mouth articulation and kinetic movements and, eventually, in blatant dyschronies regarding isochrony or equal duration of utterances" (Chaume, 2007:206). When the takes are done, dubbing sessions are organised. Organising dubbing sessions can be complicated.

[It is] a sort of jigsaw puzzle, and calls for a distribution of takes and actors into general sessions as to complete the dubbing work in the minimum time and at minimum cost. There are many factors conditioning the dubbing session, including whether the recording room is available or not, whether the actors are available or not, the actual difficulty of the takes, etc. (Martínez, 2004:4).

Then it is time for the actual recording. Always present in a recording room are the dubbing actor or actors, the dubbing director and the sound engineer (Chaume, 2007:204). Sometimes, there is additional assisting personnel. The director informs the actors what characters they are going to dub and how they should do it (Martínez, 2004:5). The director is responsible for supervising the actors' performance and avoiding "all errors, especially errors of pronunciation or content" (Martínez, 2004:5). He must stimulate the actors so that they give their best performances. He determines how the dialogue should be conveyed to the audience (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:82). The director is at liberty to make minor changes to the dialogue. The director may change the text according to personal taste, or because there are errors (Martínez, 2004:6).

Dubbing actors have a possibility to watch the film themselves before they enter the studio, but they generally do not use this opportunity, and actors usually do not know what or whom they are going to dub until they enter the studio. They tend not to see any more than the loops that they speak themselves (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:65). Because of their crowded schedules, it is often impossible for actors occurring in a scene to all be present simultaneously when it is recorded (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:70). However, Gelderman notes that recording a scene with multiple actors at once is common practice in France. Dubbing

professionals no longer find it unusual to have to record their lines by themselves, and they insist that it does not harm ultimate credibility (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:70).

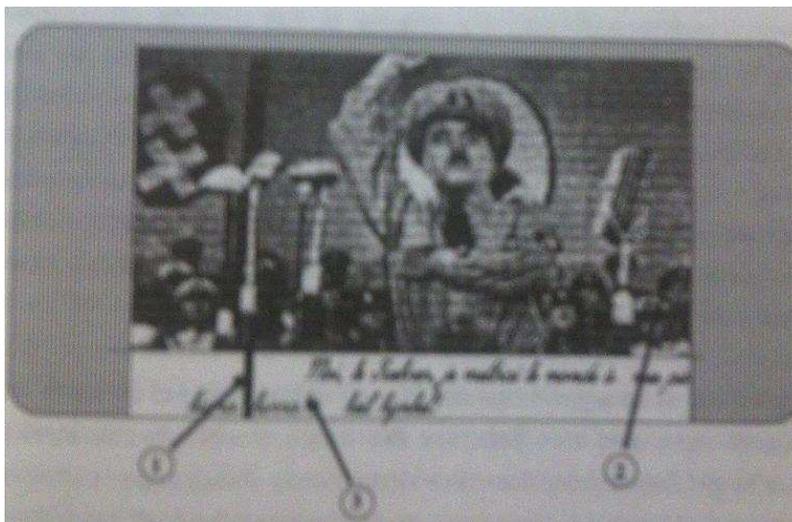
The sound engineer is in charge of monitoring the quality of the ultimate recording. He is present during the recording sessions and listens to the reproduction of the voices on his sound equipment (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:78). After the dubbing actors have finished recording their lines, he edits and mixes their work to create the final product. One task in editing is checking for isochrony and slightly modifying the sound in case of dyschrony. For instance, an actor might have been speaking too fast, in which case the editor can slow down the speed a little, or if the actor begins and ends too late, “the entire utterance can be staggered backwards and result in perfect isochrony” (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:81). Mixing involves putting everything together, modulating volumes and taking care of what is called the ‘atmosphere’ (cf. Whitman-Linsen, 1992:70-71). In dubbing, the word atmosphere refers to “the acoustic impression of special sound perspectives, modifications for voices heard over telephones, loud speakers, in tunnels, etc.” Also part of the atmosphere is the expression of distance (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:78). If characters are far away from each other on the screen, they should not sound as if they are standing really close to each other (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:78).

When the sound engineer is done mixing, the product is ready to be sent back to the client. According to Chiaro, the entire process of dubbing a film now takes just three to five days, which makes her doubt whether dubbing studios allow themselves enough time to deliver quality (cf. Chiaro, 2008:246). Also, Chiaro regards it as problematic that it happens quite often that one person carries out multiple steps in the process. Dubbing actors or dubbing directors may translate, translators may write the dialogue, dubbing directors may write the dialogue, and dubbing directors may dub roles themselves. Chiaro worries that dubbing professionals do not have the required psychological distance to oversee their own work properly, which becomes a problem if dubbing professionals carry out multiple tasks, because then there are fewer people to point out errors (Chiaro, 2008:247).

### *5.3 Bande rythmo*

In France, there is one thing about the dubbing process that makes it stand out from that in the rest of the FIGS. This thing is called the *bande rythmo*. Before digitalisation, this was a clear strip of celluloid film, which was placed over the original film. This involves transcribing the entire source language dialogue onto a strip. The translation is written onto

another strip, in complete synchrony with the source text (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:73-74). The line runs from right to left beneath the film. When the text crosses a vertical line in the middle of the track, it signals to the actors that they should begin reading (Chaume, 2007:205). Figure 1 shows how the system works (from Whitman-Linsen, 1992:75). The numbers indicate the vertical line (1), the bande (2) and the movie screen (3).



**Figure 1**

The bande rythmo means hard work for the transcriber and the translator, but makes work a lot easier for the dubbing actors who can see exactly what to do to make their lines synchronous. This contributes to making French synchronisation better than synchronisation in other languages. However, the ability to read along also encourages actors to resort to plainly reciting lines instead of acting them, and perhaps adhering too much to the word-for-word text instead of being more creative and coming up with better solutions. Except in Quebec, the bande rythmo is rarely or never used outside of France, because it greatly increases production costs (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:75-77; Paquin, 1998). Today, the analogue bande rythmo competes with four different digital versions (Meininger). The one Meininger knows has the image on top and a virtual bande rythmo underneath it.

## Chapter 6: Working conditions

### 6.1 Priorities

I raised the questions whether clients care about quality, and whether the relation and balance of power between clients and dubbing studios is a healthy one. Sadly, it appears that only few clients care about quality, and dubbing studios are basically subject to the whims of their clients. The dubbing studios depend on clients to give them enough time and money, but not all clients are willing to pay well enough for dubbing. Martínez states: “Quality is not an issue anymore unless the client says so. Price is more important.” Consequently, dubbing studios “will work according the low or high standards of their clients, while attempting not to compromise their own quality norms for good dubbing” (Dries, 1995:14). Competition can thus have a negative influence on quality, because clients may be more likely to “opt for cheaper solutions and not necessarily for high-quality solutions” (Chiaro, 2008:248). Marianetti remarks: “Most Italian dubbing studios are totally in the hands of their clients who always ask for heavy discounts and short delivery terms.” Zabalbeascoa concurs that clients have strict deadlines and poor budgets. Some clients do demand good quality, but still offer poor money anyway (Marianetti). The clients’ attitude often leads to poorer quality (Martínez, Zabalbeascoa, Marianetti). Meininger’s opinion, however, is in strong contrast with the above. According to him, saying that one does not care for quality is something that, in France, “no client in their right mind” would do, although he admits that distributors of low-quality TV programmes sometimes do not care about money. Going by Meininger’s comment, France either has clients who do pay well for dubbing, or clients who do not betray that they also pay poorly for dubbing.

The dubbing industry is oligopolistic. There is a small number of companies who constantly try to outcompete each other. Therefore, they are forced to “lower their prices and speed up their processes” (Dries, 1995:16). There is always the risk of a company willing to do the job for even less money. This has made the dubbing industry highly competitive. “The competition is always just around the corner waiting to offer clients a better deal” (Dries, 1995:13). This problem is aggravated, because there are clients “who are happy to send the product to anyone ready to agree to a low fee and a quick and dirty translation” (Chiaro, 2008:246). Paolinelli confirms: “some players [...], for the most disparate reasons, want to pay peanuts for dubbing jobs, so allowing unscrupulous non-professionals to undercut the market” (Paolinelli, 2004:177). These unscrupulous non-professionals are amateur dubbing

studios, small dubbing studios who try to conquer a part of the market by offering knockdown prices. According to Kospach, these studios are mostly involved in dubbing for TV, because they do not have the money to purchase the required equipment for dubbing cinema films. Dubbing those is more expensive, while it is less profitable (Van Bracht, 1998).

Paolinelli claims that for the audiovisual industry “dubbing is merely an irritating and unavoidable collateral cost” (Paolinelli, 2004:173). Clients spend the bare minimum. Nornes adds that “Hollywood filmmakers spend more on catering than on translation” (Nornes, 2007:230). Biocca, who is also a representative of AIDAC, says that executives at RAI and MEDIASET (two major Italian broadcasters) “are frequently overheard to say *della qualità non importa a nessuno*” (no one cares about quality) (Antonini and Chiaro, 2009:99). With such clients, dubbing studios are forced not to care about quality either. “Anyone who cares about quality is totally uncompetitive” (Paolinelli, 2004:178).

As a result of fierce competition and the lack of concern for quality on the part of the clients, dubbing is often said to have become “an industrial rather than an artistic process” (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:123). While the original venture of writing, directing and producing a motion picture might have taken more than a year to complete and could have cost millions of dollars, the process of transposing this creation to a different language is reduced to an assembly line process which costs a fraction of the domestic budget (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:123). Chaume even denounces dubbing as a mass production process (Chaume, 2002:4). Paolinelli laments: “Here we have a textbook example of a deregulated market in which the quality factor is both subordinate and directly proportional to the cost of production and the time spent on the job” (Paolinelli, 2004:173).

## 6.2 *Ideal situation*

I have asserted before that dubbing studios need enough time and money to take care of quality properly. The above shows that clients do not give them that. Before I discuss the consequences of this for working conditions, I want to sketch the conditions for an ideal situation. First of all, dubbing professionals have to be proficient at their jobs. This means that dubbing studios have to invest in the hiring process. They should hire only dubbing professionals with sufficient education, experience and skills. Decent education and training should be available for aspiring dubbing professionals, as well as for dubbing professionals who would like to improve on their skills. To prevent a lack of dubbing professionals that meet the demands, due to a lack of proper education and training, there should be decent

training at the dubbing studios, but preferably also degree programmes in dubbing at universities or trade schools. Dubbing professionals should be motivated to perform well, and they should enjoy their jobs at the very least enough to stay, so that dubbing studios can profit from their experience, and do not have to keep training newcomers only to see them leave. Also, the translation needs extra care, because the quality of it affects the pace of the rest of the process. If the translation is poor, it needs to be modified in the recording studio, which is very expensive because of the equipment and man-hours of all the present personnel. Keeping employees happy means their wages should be high enough, and enough time should be allotted for each phase to make sure that dubbing professionals are not stressed out. Also, for many people, the status of their trade affects their self-esteem. Workers are less likely to feel self-confident and to be happy if they are made to believe that their trade is insignificant or inferior. Self-confidence and enjoyment, or the lack of those, affect performance. Of course, dubbing studios can do little about how the outside world treats dubbing professionals, but they can make sure that they themselves do not spread a negative image of dubbing professions. Finally, the dubbing process requires a decent system of quality control, so that errors can be removed if they do occur and do not end up in the final product.

### *6.3 Reality*

In a nutshell, in order to obtain this ideal situation, qualified people should be hired, there should be training and education, employees should be treated well, and there has to be a quality control system. We will see what the literature says about these aspects. Multiple of the aspects are addressed in a report by Pavesi and Perego of interviews that they conducted with a number of Italian adapters. Regrettably, Pavesi and Perego were confused about the profession of the people they interviewed. Pavesi and Perego claim they set out to profile “film translators,” and they were mystified by the stubborn claim of their interviewees that they were not translators. Pavesi and Perego choose to adopt the labels “film translators” and “translator-adapters, shortened for convenience to adapters,” and conclude that there is “an unresolved issue, deserving further scrutiny” (Pavesi and Perego, 2006:100). They fail to realise that if they intended to interview translators, they were looking at the wrong profession.

### 6.3.1 Hiring

There is not a lot of specific information in the literature on how qualified the people are who are hired by dubbing studios, except the following about translators and adapters. Translators are often underqualified or inexperienced (Chiaro, 2008:247). Spanish translators are an exception though, as they often have a master's degree or have had training in audiovisual translation, and almost all of them have a degree, which is mostly in translation (Martínez). Without education in translating for dubbing, aspiring translators may enter the field after they have been trained as interpreters, received a university language degree, or simply because they “are ‘good at languages’ and happen to be working at a television station” that at some point requires their help with translating a production (Luyken et al., 1991:168). Other aspiring translators who are hired include:

local students of English with no specific translating background, dubbing directors and actors with some or poor command of English, native English speakers who may master their mother tongue, but not necessarily the art of translating, Germans who have spent a few years in English-speaking countries or who were once married to someone whose sister-in-law's neighbour used to go out with an American GI (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:115).

According to Zabalbeascoa and Chaume, Spanish aspiring translators usually have to do a test translation, but Martínez says they do not. According to her, the first job determines whether they do or do not continue working for that dubbing studio, which does sound akin to a test translation. Aspiring translators do not have to do a test translation in France (Meininger).

Pavesi and Perego report that aspiring adapters enter the profession “thanks to acquaintances, family relations,” or because they had been working in related areas (Pavesi and Perego). Moreover, only one fourth of the respondents held a university degree, and this is usually not a degree in translation (Pavesi and Perego, 2006:104).

### 6.3.2 Training and education

Specialist education used to be rare for dubbing professionals, and in fact it still is for all of them except translators. In Spain, there is a growing number of postgraduate and master's degrees in audiovisual translation (Zabalbeascoa). In Italy, there are many Italian master's degrees in dubbing, as well as “private dubbing schools that have to be very

carefully evaluated” (Marianetti). France and Germany “are beginning to launch a couple of MA courses” (Chaume).

Adapters in Italy are usually self-taught, unless they were so lucky to have an experienced colleague who is kind enough to teach them (Patou-Patucchi, 2009:140). The adapters interviewed by Pavesi and Perego actually think that their profession should best be acquired by working side by side with “a senior, expert professional” (Pavesi and Perego, 2006:104). In Spain, adapters, dubbing actors and dubbing directors are not required to have degrees. It used to be the case that adapters often started out as dubbing actors, but now, they usually started out as translators. Dubbing directors usually start out as dubbing actors. Sound engineers do have to have had education for it, although it is not a university degree in Spain (Martínez). For all of these professions goes that those who want to enter it or to receive more prestigious jobs rely on dubbing studios to give them a chance. Meininger argues that degrees are useless, because “‘making it’ is all about talent and networking.” Because of the lack of specialist education, almost all of the recruits have to learn ‘on the job’, but they are trained by dubbing studios “in a haphazard, hit-and-miss type of way” (Luyken et al., 1991:168). Learning occurs by trial and error (Patou-Patucchi, 2009:140).

The degree programmes for translating for dubbing are very popular, but Meininger regrets this, because he does not think they are good (Martínez, Marianetti, Chaume, Meininger). He actually refers to them as a joke (Meininger). Luyken et al. argue that teachers would be hard to come by, because those who managed to become experienced dubbers without it would be “suspicious of anything which smacks of theory or formal course work.” Because they acquired their position without formal training, many of them would not see the need for a specialised training for others (Luyken et al., 1991:168-169). However, this does not seem to hold true. Martínez states: “The teachers are either university translation teachers that can offer a (good) theoretical knowledge about screen translation or professional translators that have been asked to teach from a professional’s viewpoint.” Zabalbeascoa also thinks that Spanish translation teachers tend to be well-qualified. According to Marianetti, Italian universities “often rely on the help of professional adapters, dubbers and dubbing directors.” In contrast, Meininger complains that most French translation teachers have never adapted anything. He laments: “Yes, that’s the French education system!”

### *6.3.3 Treatment of employees*

The following will be discussed in this section: stimulating good performance, paying decent wages, offering job security and benefits, and minding status.

#### *6.3.3.1 Stimulating performance*

Rather than being encouraged to do their job well, dubbing professionals are asked not to be too concerned with quality. Instead, the focus is on finishing the work as quickly as possible. Delivering quickly is important, because it means clients are more likely to give the dubbing studio new assignments, but this may be to the detriment of quality (Van Bracht, 1998). Paolinelli complains that rather than wanting adapters to be magicians with language, dubbing studios want adapters to only be concerned with avoiding the creation of hold-ups in a system with very tight deadlines. “The dialogue-writer most in demand is the one who will work for any figure, who works at a hectic pace, and delivers an average, standardised product, without frills and without bothering about the subtleties of language” (Paolinelli, 2004:173). Stress affects actors too: “In the recording studio, the tight schedule turns some dubbing actors - usually polite people - into Jekyll and Hyde types with wild and ravenous attitudes” (Patou-Patucchi, 2009:142).

Whitman-Linsen argues that dubbing professionals with talent flee the dubbing sector because of the focus on keeping the costs low, with the ensuing consequences for quality (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:123). However, Martínez, Zabalbeascoa, Chaume and Meininger deny that talented professionals flee from low quality standards. According to Zabalbeascoa, what keeps people away is poor pay.

#### *6.3.3.2 Wages*

Translation “is the most poorly paid step in the process” (Chiaro, 2008:247). The translator usually gets a much lower fee than the adapter, “the proportional difference in fees being something of the order of 5 to 1” (Luyken et al., 1991:97). Patou-Patucchi mentions that a few years ago in Italy, the fee was split fifty-fifty, but the practice was abandoned (Patou-Patucchi, 2009:142). Fees of adapters vary. The lucky few who only adapt big screen films “set their own (usually very high) wages,” but the wages of other adapters are much lower (Pavesi and Perego, 2006:102). Fees of dubbing actors also vary. ‘Alter egos’ of famous actors are paid considerably high fees (Luyken et al., 1991:172). If the actors have to be

brought in from far away, “this further increases travel expenses and can put up their fees even more” (Dries, 1995:15). According to Dries, these high fees give cause for concern, because they can cause dubbing expenses to rise dramatically (Dries, 1995:15). Fees of other dubbing actors are considerably lower. Most dubbing actors who get a decent income do so by having steady and numerous minor roles (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:96). Many others use the work to support their acting careers elsewhere, stage or screen (Nornes, 2007:201). Luyken et al. suggest that the high fees of some actors depress the fees of those with less experience (Luyken et al., 1991:172).

### *6.3.3.3 Job security, benefits and status*

Career prospects for many dubbing professionals are limited, because of the lack of continuity in the amount of work and the absence of a professional ladder to climb. Most of them are freelancers, setting money aside for sickness, unemployment and retirement (Luyken et al., 1991:171). This entails a pretty insecure job position. In Spain and Italy, dubbing professionals do have more security through collective agreements with dubbing studios that guarantee certain rights, although according to Martínez, the agreement is not always respected. Also, Spain and Italy have national laws concerning royalties and repeat fees for translators, adapters and dubbing actors (Martínez, Marianetti). Repeat fees are paid every time a production reappears, on TV, in cinemas or on DVD. French adapters also receive repeat fees (Meininger).

Credits of films rarely mention the dubbing studio, let alone the dubbing director, dubbing actors, or translators (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:97). Zabalbeascoa, Izard and Santamaria argue that because the viewers never get to see the names of dubbing professionals, they never become household names (Zabalbeascoa, Izard and Santamaria, 2001:107). This argument does not apply to the ‘alter egos,’ who are famous in Italy, and some of the German ones, such as the ‘alter ego’ of Robert de Niro, also acquire fame (Kieckens, 2001; Schoonenboom, 2010). Italian adapters also have a subgroup of individuals with more status, namely, adapters who work on films and high-quality television products. A small subgroup of that group only adapts films. “Adapting films is considered the highest professional achievement for any adapter” (Pavesi and Perego, 2006:103). Cinema adapters “can afford to choose what they work on” (Pavesi and Perego, 2006:102). Most adapters rarely work on films and experience much more competition (Pavesi and Perego, 2006:103).

Translation is not only the most poorly paid step, it is also the most undervalued one. An inherent part of translation for dubbing is that translators have to come to terms with the idea that their work will be heavily modified in the recording room. Whitman-Linsen surmises that the translators' knowing that their translation is going to be modified anyway could "stifle their ambitiousness right from the start" (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:113). Nothing much can be done about that, but insult is added to injury by other dubbing professionals who are all so concerned with lip synchrony that they consider translation a minor step. They all work as a team, while the translators are left alone to work at home, and face accusations when things go wrong (Zabalbeascoa, Izard and Santamaria, 2001:108).

In this regard, AIDAC, which presumably should protect the interests of translators, is presented in an especially unfavourable light: AIDAC actually denies translators all credit. The following is Patou-Patucchi's translation of a paragraph in an official document published by AIDAC: "The script that the actor has on the reading desk is exclusively the fruit of the work of the dialogue adaptor [sic], who has sole responsibility for it. [...] The mere translator is not directly connected with the 'operation generically defined [as] dubbing'. The translator, in this productive cycle, is simply - and in most cases - an advisor to the dialogist" (Patou-Patucchi, 2009:144). Even an organisation that is supposed to represent the interests of translators lets them down. It does not seem an exaggeration to conclude that "the audiovisual translator's social and professional standing is quite low" (Zabalbeascoa, Izard and Santamaria, 2001:107).

#### *6.3.4 Quality control system*

According to Chiaro, dubbing "has managed to avoid certification and thus escape any kind of quality control" (Chiaro, 2008:245). Chiaro proposes several models that could serve to improve quality in dubbing studios. One model she discusses is Total Quality Management, which was developed in the 1940s by W.E. Deming and J. Juran, among others. "TQM implies that quality is monitored throughout an organisation at every stage of production so that problems are stopped before they can develop any further" (Chiaro, 2008:249). It seems this model could be particularly useful to the dubbing industry, because the dubbing process is so incremental.

According to Whitman, dubbing studios do not have quality control. Supervisory directors are quality control on behalf of the producers, but not all productions have a supervisory director. Chaume claims that some dubbing studios do have their own quality

control systems. Marianetti says they do so in Italy. According to Meininger, French dubbing studios do not have quality control systems, but they do perform a phase he calls “vérification,” which entails that the adapter reads the whole script while the dubbing director and a representative of the client attend and make remarks.

## Chapter 7: Quality

Scholars argue that quality suffers because of poor working conditions, but they do not offer direct evidence for this. Direct evidence constitutes, for example, research into the working conditions and the resulting quality of a particular dubbing. However, scholars do offer a lot of circumstantial evidence. We have already established that working conditions are less than ideal. What is also clear is that there is at least something that is hurting quality. Before we can judge quality, we need to know the purpose of dubbing, and what could be considered to be a good dubbing. Previous chapters have contained some foreshadowing of this topic, and because of that, some of the things in here will be a repetition of what I said before. However, the following section serves to put all of this into perspective.

### *7.1 Purpose of dubbing*

The purpose of dubbing, in its broadest sense, is to make films and series accessible to a much wider public by means of translation. Just like in any other type of translation, important concepts in dubbing are equivalence and adequacy. Equivalence means that the information in the source text is conveyed well in the translation. Adequacy means that the translation should not betray the fact that it is a translation. In the target culture, it should function as a separate, stand-alone, independent text. Also, unless the client desires otherwise, the translation ideally functions in the same way in the target culture as it did in the source culture.

In terms of equivalence, a dubbing should recreate all of the verbal and non-verbal information that was supplied by the original soundtrack. The translation should be accurate. This also involves solving translation problems caused by (in)formality of language, accents and dialects, and songs and jokes (Chiaro, 2008:251). Acting in dubbing should convey the emotions and drama of the original performance, but do so in a way that corresponds to the way such emotions are conveyed in the target culture (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:48).

According to the principle of adequacy, dubbing should not betray the fact that it is a translation. Also, the function of films and series in the source culture is to entertain, and scholars in dubbing agree that the best way not to inhibit entertainment is to make dubbing go unnoticed. Dubbing should create the illusion that the characters really do speak the viewer's language. "Any irregularities can destroy this illusion and will bring the audience back to reality" (Dries, 1995:9). It may be understood that achieving this is a tall order. Therefore, the

quality of dubbing is very much a matter of not whether, but to what extent it succeeds in doing this.

Important in making dubbing go unnoticed is good synchronisation and natural dialogue. Lip synchrony, kinetic synchrony and isochrony are all important. However, these should not harm the accuracy of the translation, or cause the dialogue to become unnatural. There should be overall coherence between image and sound. Therefore, the dialogue should make sense in correspondence to what is seen on screen, and the voices heard should sound like they could emanate from the bodies of the characters they are matched to.

Natural dialogue means that dubbing should deliver “a smooth, easily digestible text,” and the text should be “identifiable and free of turbulence of any sort” (Antonini and Chiaro, 2009:100). The translation should sound “realistic, credible and plausible” in order to prevent that the viewer is distracted from the storyline (Marzà i Ibàñez and Chaume, 2009:33). The translation should have “an oral register that can be defined as *false spontaneous*” [italics in original] (Marzà i Ibàñez and Chaume, 2009:33). This means that written language must somehow “sound as though it has not fact been written” (Marzà i Ibàñez and Chaume, 2009:33). Of course, this is only important to the degree that films and series that were actually produced in the viewer’s own language also achieve this ‘false spontaneous’ register. If a country’s film producers for one reason or another tend not to do very well with this register, dubbings may ironically come across as too natural. In any case, the translation should try to mirror the language of a home production (Chiaro, 2008:243).

One thing that may distract the viewer from the storyline is grammatical and lexical errors. To the extent that spoken language is grammatically correct, dubbed language must also be. In addition, as one motive for dubbing is the protection of local language and culture, it is especially important that dubbed language is not contaminated by influences of foreign languages. This is not only because incorrect language may sound hideous to viewers. It is also because of a very real possibility of overexposure to incorrect language on TV. Viewers just might start to use incorrect language themselves. This would defeat the purpose of dubbing to protect one’s language.

## 7.2 Reality

Now we will look at the actual quality of dubbing. Scholars, on their part, are not very happy with it at all. They especially denounce German and Italian dubbing. Whitman-Linsen states: “[Dubbing] is today repeatedly denounced as corrupting artistic intent, perverting

original purity, and debasing quality” (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:13). Moreover, even a number of dubbing professionals themselves think the quality of dubbing is poor. Dubbing actor and director Kurt E. Ludwig even denoted dubbing as “Germany’s revenge on the allies” (qtd. in Whitman-Linsen, 1992:13). Bucaria reports that a lot of dubbing professionals find that time restrictions have a detrimental effect on the quality of their work (Bucaria, 2008:162). Martínez argues that Spain does have “all the necessary ingredients for an excellent quality dubbing,” e.g. well-qualified workers, but because of the low budgets and time restrictions, “dubbing is not as good as it could be.” Marianetti states that “the clients’ policy on cutting costs can now jeopardise the whole process.”

Dubbed Italian is so notorious that it is commonly acknowledged to be different from everyday Italian. It is described as a separate language that does not even attempt to obey the rules and norms of everyday Italian. Bucaria argues that dubbed Italian only uses itself as a reference (Bucaria, 2008:162). It even has its own, commonly used, nickname, which is ‘dubbese.’ The word ‘doppiagese,’ or ‘dubbese’ in English, was originally coined by Italian dubbing professionals to denote disparagingly “the qualitatively poor translation of an utterance on screen in terms of either equivalence, functionality or both” (Chiaro, 2008:251). Italian dubbing professionals also use it to describe the language as a whole, “the linguistic hybrid that over the years has emerged as the ‘standard’ variety of Italian spoken by characters in dubbed filmic products both for TV and cinema” (Antonini, 2008:136). Italian scholars adopted this use of the word. They acknowledge dubbed Italian as “a sort of Italian for Special Purposes,” and use the word dubbese “without any value judgment” (Chiaro, 2008:251; Bucaria, 2008:150; Antonini, 2008:136).

According to these scholars, the main characteristics of dubbese are “shifts between formal and informal register,” anglicisms and unnatural lexical expressions (Bucaria, 2008:150). Bucaria remarks: “Although cultural references, examples of humour, and social and geographic varieties remain among the most widely recognised difficulties for the translator of audiovisual texts, apparently less important features in the target text are those that give away a film, sitcom, etc as a dubbed product” (Bucaria, 2008:150).

Romero Fresco also detects dubbese in Spanish, and calls dubbed Spanish “stilted and contrived” (Romero Fresco, 2006:134). In his attempt to find out whether dubbed Spanish could be said to contain dubbese, he explores to what extent idiomatic language is translated well in Spanish. With this in mind, he compiled a corpus of Friends episodes, identified idiomatic units (which he refers to as phraseological units or PUs), and examined how these were translated. He concludes that dubbese in Spanish “is not reflected in flawed

phraseological translations or anomalous collocations,” but that it shows in “a shift and inconsistency in register, and, probably as a result of this, the loss of swiftness in [translation] PUs” (Romero Fresco, 2006:146-147).

The common recognition of dubbed language as something different than actual used spoken language is about as far removed as one could possibly imagine from what should be the dubbing studios’ quality standards. Clearly, something went wrong. We will now look at the aspects of accuracy, register, unnatural lexical expressions, and contamination separately.

### *7.2.1 Accuracy*

Accuracy is especially at risk due to the practice of dividing translation into two tasks carried out by two individuals. There is an inherent risk to this, which clearly manifests itself when translators and/or adapters do not have enough time to do their jobs well. In an industry with tight deadlines, this is a recipe for disaster. Due to lack of time, neither the rough translator nor the adapter can see the text as a text or consider equivalence at any stage (cf. Herbst, 1997:305). The rough translation is often reduced to “an act of simple lexical transfer,” without considering whether the text is still intelligible or whether semantic fields in the source and target languages actually match (Patou-Patucchi, 2009:141). This would not be a problem if the adapter took care of improving the accuracy of the translation, but the adapter is mostly concerned with synchronising the translation of individual sentences or takes with the screen. Because of the lack of overview on the part of the adapter, “a considerable amount of the actual phrasing of the rough translation seems to find its way into the final televised version” (Herbst, 1997:305). Consequently, “either unconventional idioms and expressions result, lexical items are collocated in violation of standard usage, register and/or style are stilted due to uncommon use of grammar and syntax, or semantics is distorted” (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:113).

In the worst cases, the above can result in a translation that is simply wrong. In one instance, “one man insults another by calling him a homosexual, a ‘fairy’. The translation ‘Du bist ja eine Fee!’ does not seem to justify for the target audience the rage of the first man, who turns around and slugs the name-caller on the nose” (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:115-116). Another mishap occurred when the following had to be translated: “‘Idea for a film, wealthy, high-profile builder, who’s always trying to realise grandiose dreams à la Donald Trump. To be shot in New York’. The rough translator had other, more drastic plans for this builder and

translated the last sentence, indicating film location (“wird in New York gedreht”) as follows: “Wird in New York erschossen” (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:116).

Martínez remembers one dubbed film in which characters kept saying “Love sucks.” The translator translated this literally as “El amor chupa,” which makes no sense. It is one thing that the translator did not come up with a different translation, but neither did anyone else. Martínez is amazed that the error managed to slip by the adapter, the dubbing director, the sound engineer and the dubbing actors.

In the case of censorship, the translation is of course deliberately inaccurate. Scripts can be subjected to censorship for multiple reasons. Censorship may remove social and political criticism, alter moral judgments, take the sting out of criticism of the church, and make intellectual passages easier to understand. In the Hitchcock film *Notorious*, an evil nazi scientist was turned into a Russian bad guy who dealt in narcotics (Nasynchronisation wird grobe industrie, 1973). Van Walsum gives more examples of censorship: German terrorists in *Die Hard* change into soldiers with no fixed residence, the arrival hall of an airport in Berlin in *The Saint* is instead situated in Copenhagen, and the nazis in *Casablanca* change into Russian smugglers. Some scenes are simply deleted. The first German version of *Casablanca* did not last more than 80 minutes, although the original lasts 102 minutes (Van Walsum, 2005).

Kospach, executive at Berliner Synchron, claims that they do not apply censorship. He argues that at most, they use somewhat tuned down versions of the original expressions (Van Bracht, 1998). German dubbing director Nana Spier says that for a long time, there used to be a list of how to translate certain expressions. “Fuck you” became “Mist” and “Oh my God” became “Ach meine Güte.” She says this is still the case with some broadcasters such as MTV (Schoonenboom, 2010). According to Martínez, clients sometimes request translators to reduce the quantity of swear words if they want to broadcast a film in children’s programming hours.

Acting can also be inaccurate, or put more correctly, inappropriate. Actors are hampered by short takes. Herbst argues that they make it “very difficult for the dubbing actors to achieve natural intonation and exploit the pitch range to the full” (Herbst, 1997:294). As a result, actors’ delivery is monotonous. Also, because actors lack overview of the content, and have to guess what intonation would be accurate, “voices often sound off the mark, inappropriate to character and situation, resulting in standardised, over-acted, cookie-cutter role interpretations” (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:89).

### 7.2.2 Register

The register of language can pose a problem. Dubbing into German is especially complicated. Herbst explains that all German films are dubbed into standard German (Herbst, 1997:294-295). Strictly speaking, this is not entirely necessary, but it is a convention. However, the strict adherence to standard German leaves dubbing at a disadvantage, because Hochdeutsch is never used in informal conversation, and it “is not so much a social accent as a variety of German whose use is mainly determined by situational factors” (cf. Herbst, 1997:295). Since German productions do use regional and social accents, this enables German viewers to tell from the soundtrack that a production was dubbed and not homemade (Herbst, 1997:295). Dubbed Italian has a similar problem. Pavesi and Perego note that the Italian dubbing industry for cinema is based in Rome, where local dialects are non-existent (Pavesi and Perego, 2006:104). Standardised language results in members of US street gangs and their lawyers “speak[ing] in the same way, i.e. using the same register, vocabulary, [and] accent” (Antonini, 2008:136).

Dubbed German sounds formal due to the use of standard German, but it sounds even more formal due to the common use of features of written language (cf. Herbst, 1997:296-299). Listed underneath are some examples:

I just hope I'm around to see it.  
Und ich wünschte, ich könnte dabeisein. (in Herbst, 1997:296)

If that's it, Krystle...  
Sollte das die Wahrheit sein, ... (in Herbst, 1997:296)

So I did what you suggested. I went to Fallon and I asked her to bring the child to me.  
But she wouldn't agree.  
Deinem Vorschlag folgend hatte ich Fallon gebeten, das Kind zu mir zu bringen, aber das wollte sie nicht. (in Herbst, 1997:296)

I saw how my father looked at you. You frightened him.  
Ich hab' gesehen, wie mein Vater Sie angeblickt hat, Sie haben ihm Angst eingejagt.  
(in Herbst, 1997:298)

What is possibly more striking than the use of formal language, however, is the lack of consistency, because more formal elements occur quite randomly throughout the text. This means that “dubbed language is typically characterised by a large number of unmotivated style shifts” (Herbst, 1997:299). The following is an example of this:

La, la, la ... Fallon, would you wind down for a minute please? We go back to the house, with your brother there and Krystle and all that confusion and may not get another chance to talk.

Okay, okay, Fallon, würdest du bitte mal einen Moment die Luft anhalten? (*colloquial*) Bevor wir jetzt ins Haus kommen, wo dein Bruder ist und Krystle und all das Durcheinander (*colloquial*), sollten wir die Gelegenheit zu einem Gespräch nutzen (*formal*) [*italics in original*] (in Herbst, 1997:299; in Luyken et al., 1991:159).<sup>11</sup>

Mistakes in register are also Romero Fresco's main issue in Spanish dubbese. He found many examples of that when he researched the Spanish dubbing of *Friends* episodes. One such example is the translation of "you bet" as "desde luego," which is too formal. Romero Fresco instead suggests using "venga," "vamos" or "pitando" (Romero Fresco, 2006:144). An example of inconsistency in register is the translation of "I can't believe" as "Es inconcebible" (formal), quickly followed by "having sex with" as "tirarse" (informal). He argues that no speaker of Spanish would ever use both expressions in a matter of seconds the way Rachel does (Romero Fresco, 2006:146).

As a tentative explanation for shifts in register in Spanish, Romero Fresco refers to *español neutro*, a standardised variation of Spanish that was used in dubbing for both Spanish and Spanish American audiences between 1960 and 1975. *Español neutro* was arguably not only devoid of dialectical features, but also more formal. Since 1975, dubbing for Spain is Castilian only. Romero Fresco argues that dubbed Spanish has become more modern, but an inappropriate use of the formal register could be a vestige of the old *español neutro* (Romero Fresco, 2006:148).

### 7.2.3 *Unnatural lexical expressions*

As has been described in earlier chapters, it is important in dubbing both to achieve synchrony and to maintain a natural dialogue, two goals that are binary opposites. Luyken et al. argue that rather than pinpointing specific instances where the principle of either lip synchrony or natural dialogue has been violated, a much more severe objection can be made against a lot of dubbed television programmes, which is that "the necessary compromises have often been taken in the wrong directions and that the factor of text quality has been drastically neglected in favour of lip-sync fidelity" (Luyken et al., 1991:161). This happens even in dubbed Italian, while dubbed Italian is notorious for being badly out of sync. Scholars

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<sup>11</sup> The same example is used in Luyken et al. (1991) and Herbst (1997). This is less strange than it seems. Herbst is one of Luyken's co-authors.

were able to compose a list of common unnatural lexical expressions that arise due to a desire for synchrony (Bucaria, 2008:155). The list is as follows:

tesoro	<i>honey</i> as a term of endearment, even between female friends
amico	<i>man</i> as a term of address
lo voglio	<i>I do</i> as pronounced at weddings
già	<i>yeah</i> as an affirmative answer
dannazione!	<i>damn!</i> or <i>damn it!</i>
fottuto bastardo	<i>fucking bastard</i>
sono molto spiacente	<i>I'm very sorry</i>
rammenti?	<i>do you remember?</i> [italics in original] (Bucaria, 2008:154)

Bucaria explains that ‘tesoro’ and ‘amico’ “have a different frequency and use” than their counterparts in English. Terms of address are much more commonly used in English than they are in Italian (Bucaria, 2008:155). Italian brides and grooms do not say ‘lo voglio’; instead they usually say ‘sì’. ‘Già’ is similar in articulation to ‘yeah’, but was not actually used like that in real life. It is mostly used as an adverb that means ‘already’, and was hardly ever used on its own (Antonini and Chiaro, 2009:110). ‘Dannazione’ and ‘fottuto bastardo’ are literal translations of English curse words, and are not actually used by the average Italian. ‘Sono molto spiacente’ reproduces the syntactic structure of ‘I’m very sorry’, but ‘mi dispiace molto’ is what is actually used (Bucaria, 2008:156). ‘Rammenti?’ is a more formal equivalent of the commonly used ‘ti ricordi?’, and is evidently preferred because it contains an /m/ just like ‘remember’ (Bucaria, 2008:156).

#### 7.2.4 Contamination

The word ‘contamination’ can actually mean two things: the influence of foreign languages upon dubbed language, and the influence of incorrect dubbed language upon actual spoken language. Both occur. Dubbed German is characterised by particular types of anglicisms:

It is not the use of English words in German text, [...] [but] a high proportion of loan meanings where the German word takes over meaning components from an etymologically related word in English (such as *kontrollieren* – *control*, *lernen* – *learn* or *sehen* – *see*), loan translations (*Küstenlinie* for *coastline*, loan idioms (*der frühe Vogel fängt den Wurm* – *the early bird gets the worm*) or anglicisms at the level of grammar (*reden über* used in situations where *reden von* would be appropriate) or at the level of pragmatics, which is particularly noticeable with greetings or phrases of the type *Mir geht es gut*, which are used in inappropriate contexts [italics in original] (Herbst, 1997:303).

Luyken et al. elaborate on the inappropriate use of the phrase ‘*Mir geht es gut*’. It is a perfectly appropriate answer in case one is asked about their health, but it is inappropriate in many other contexts where ‘I am fine’ could be used.

If, for example, a girl falls off her horse into a river (as in an episode of *Dynasty*) or if someone almost breaks his leg because he loses his balance in the back of a lorry (as in an episode of *Magnum*), they may be able to say ‘*I’m fine*’ or ‘*I’m okay*’ in English but not ‘*Mir geht es gut*’ in German. ‘*Nichts passiert*’ or ‘*Alles o.k.*’ would be much more likely” [italics in original] (Luyken et al., 1991:159).

Whitman remarks that one thing she sees a lot in French, German and Spanish translations these days is errors with English expressions containing the word “town.” “Out of town,” “in town” and “leave town” are translated literally, while they should not be. “I know a lot of people in town” becomes “*Je connais beaucoup de gens en ville*,” while here, “*en ville*” conveys “in town as opposed to in the countryside.” “To leave town” could be translated with “*abhauen*,” which means “to leave quickly,” but she often sees “*von der Stadt*” added, which is completely unnecessary. The same happens in Spanish, where “*lagarse*” would be enough, but “*de la ciudad*” is added.

In 1996, dubbing professionals expressed the concern that dubbese might contaminate everyday Italian (Antonini, 2008:136). Bucaria notes that “translational clichés and calques from English have been creeping into original Italian-language productions, such as TV series and soap operas” (Bucaria, 2008:150-151). Antonini and Chiaro noticed that the word ‘*già*’ is being increasingly used as an affirmative answer in Italian homemade programmes, even though this is actually incorrect, or at least, it used to be (Antonini and Chiaro, 2009:111).

### 7.3 Reception

Scholars think the quality of dubbing is poor, but ultimately, what really matters is whether viewers share that opinion. Luyken et al. give the indication that the Germans know when they are watching a dubbing. Experiments with German students who were asked to comment on whether pieces of dialogue resembled genuine conversational German revealed that they considered passages from dubbings much more unnatural than those from films produced in German (Luyken et al., 1991:160). Bucaria argues that the discrepancy between formulaic expressions in dubbed Italian and everyday speech is so big that even the least attentive viewer should notice (Bucaria, 2008:150).

Bucaria also carried out experiments. She used the aforementioned list of unnatural lexical expressions to determine how likely viewers thought it would be that these expressions would be used in everyday Italian. Low scores indicate that the participants did not consider it likely that the expressions would be used. Her experiment included three groups of participants: (1) “the general audience,” (2) “experts in the field of TV and cinema, journalists and linguists/translation scholars” and (3) “professionals from the dubbing and subtitling industries” (Bucaria, 2008:153). The TV experts, journalists and scholars gave lower scores than the general audience, and the dubbing and subtitling professionals gave even lower scores (Bucaria, 2008:159). This is surprising and slightly unnerving, since dubbing professionals themselves are responsible for perpetuating the use of formulaic expressions in dubbed language. It appears that they are fully aware of what they are doing, but that does not prevent them from using formulaic language. “Overall average scores for each of the eight examples of formulaic language were generally quite low” (cf. Bucaria, 2008:157). Antonini and Chiaro also conducted a study to test how acceptable viewers think certain characteristics of dubbese are (cf. Antonini and Chiaro, 2008). They found that their expressions scored average, not low, not high (Antonini and Chiaro, 2008:111).

A different question is whether the viewers would use these words themselves. Bucaria asked this in relation to ‘già’ and ‘sono molto spiacente’ (Bucaria, 2008:160). The participants were given a number of phrases that they could pick one from, and offered the possibility to suggest a different phrase. A surprising one-third actually did say that they would use ‘già’, but most of the remaining two-thirds selected either one of two more expected words, namely ‘certo’ and ‘sì’. Antonini and Chiaro found that viewers who know perfectly well that *già* is only used in dubbed language “are willing to accept it on screen but admit to not using it themselves” (Antonini and Chiaro, 2008:111). Bucaria found that in the case of ‘sono molto spiacente’, half of the participants chose ‘mi dispiace molto’, while the scores of other options, including ‘sono molto spiacente’ (at 9%) were much lower (Bucaria, 2008:160-161).

Given the quality standards that dubbing should aspire to, the fact that viewers themselves are capable of discerning that dubbed Italian is different from everyday Italian is sad. Dubbed Italian could not be further off the mark. This raises the question whether viewers are bothered by its poor quality. It appears that they are not. In a study done by Antonini, “75.5% of the sample expressed a positive attitude towards the quality of dubbing in Italy by rating it as adequate (26%), good (37%) or excellent (12.5%). Only 25% of the respondents expressed a negative opinion by rating it mediocre (18%) or poor (7%)” (cf.

Antonini, 2008:144). Apparently, the Italian audience is either blissfully unaware, or merciful. The Germans seem to share this attitude. “The German viewing public (and film reviewers) do not seem to be very critical of the quality of the dubbing. If any shortcomings of dubbed dialogue are noticed at all, they are probably seen as the inevitable outcome of the constraints of lip sync” (Herbst, 1997:306). In contrast, Agost remarks that there have been debates by Spanish viewers, in real life and online, about the quality of dubbing (Agost, 2004:69).

Romero Fresco argues that accepting dubbese can function as an additional layer of suspension of disbelief:

If we agree that cinema is a big lie that attempts to tell truths, dubbing could then be defined as a manipulation of that big lie that usually attempts to tell the same truths. To enter the first illusion (or believe the lie), we suspend disbelief in order to see the characters on screen as real, although we know better. To enter the second illusion (and give in to the manipulation), we accept, for example, that everyone speaks Spanish in New York. If we accept these rules to play the game and enjoy the film, why should we not accept one more, that is, one to do with the kind of Spanish used in dubbing? In other words, although we know that it is not real, we believe and accept that Rachel exists, that she speaks Spanish in New York and, finally, that what she says is not exactly what is more natural or what we would say in a given situation.

As Romero Fresco also realises, this argument could be an accurate description of who viewers actually treat dubbings. “Indeed, the presence of this dubbese in other TV series or films would paradoxically explain why TT viewers do not seem to find it off-putting. Perhaps by now they are used to suspending linguistic disbelief as part and parcel of the dubbing experience” (Romero Fresco, 2006:148, 149). This would be an interesting question in and of itself to explore in further research. However, arguing that this should be the way that viewers treat dubbings absolves dubbing studios of the responsibility to deliver good-quality dubbing. Romero Fresco also realised this and addresses this problem in a later article:

By suspending linguistic disbelief, the dubbing audience may also be accepting a condition, the lack of naturalness of dubbed dialogues, that does not necessarily have to be part of the filmic experience and that, most importantly, may change or even impoverish the experience (for instance, by turning colloquial dialogue into formal dialogue, thus creating a considerable distance between TT characters) (Romero Fresco, 2009:69).

## *7.4 Suggestions for improvement*

Scholars offer some recommendations for dubbing studios to improve practices. These concern the rough translation, plot-oriented translation, databases, and collaboration with scholars.

### *7.4.1 No rough translation*

The first recommendation is not to divide translation into two separate tasks. I have explained before that this can become problematic due to time restrictions, but there is another reason, which is that the arguments of dubbing professionals to split the two tasks do not hold. Dubbing directors expressed to Whitman-Linsen their opinion that what was in the original could best be packaged in a denotative rough translation (cf. Whitman-Linsen, 1992:113-114). This does not work in the case of idiomatic language, because the adapter is frequently unfamiliar with the source language, and therefore unable to interpret the source text (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:114). In such cases, the adapter is left with the unenviable task of deciphering garbled idiomatic language translated literally in an attempt to figure out what it is supposed to mean.

Another argument that dubbing directors raised is that there is a difference between the skills demanded from the translator and the adapter. In other types of translation, however, it is common that one individual performs both tasks. Even in translating poetry, the translator both determines the literal meaning of the line as well as how to convey this in poetic verse (Whitman-Linsen, 1992:122). The underlying message is that translation in other disciplines does not just require good comprehension skills. Reproducing the intention of the source text well also requires good writing skills, and there is no reason why dubbing studios should accept that their translators are less proficient.

### *7.4.2 Plot-oriented translation*

Luyken et al. think the main issue with the translation is that the text is both translated and synchronised sentence by sentence. Luyken et al. and Herbst argue that the translation should be plot-oriented instead (cf. Herbst, 1997:305-306). Exact wording is irrelevant; the translator only needs to identify the “plot-carrying elements of meaning” and convey these in

the target language. Moreover, the order of plot-carrying elements does not have to be exactly the same as in the original (cf. Luyken et al., 1991:162-163). This approach allows for translated bits to be shuffled around a bit. Consequently, not only would the dialogue be more natural, it might also be easier to synchronise the text with the screen than in the case of sentence for sentence translation.

#### *7.4.3 Databases*

Bucaria argues that the unnatural lexical expressions of dubbese could be caused by lack of time. She suggests that this type of dubbese could be prevented by the creation of “constantly updated databases of formulaic expressions, where equivalents could be offered for the most common examples of dubbese” (Bucaria, 2008:162).

#### *7.4.4 Collaboration with scholars*

Patou-Patucchi suggests that scholars and dubbing professionals should collaborate to “develop a cross-disciplinary professional consciousness in order to set up some kind of standard” (Patou-Patucchi, 2009:145). Both scholars and dubbing professionals would benefit from this collaboration and the resulting exchange of knowledge. Scholars would learn more about the actual practice of dubbing, whereas dubbing professionals would be more aware of the theories in Translation Studies about what constitutes and contributes to good translation. This knowledge could help them strengthen the case to the executives of dubbing studios, and ultimately to the clients, for requesting more time and money to do their jobs. Also, scholars could help facilitate degree programmes for dubbing at universities and trade schools, which would make it much easier for dubbing studios to find qualified personnel.

## Summary

The FIGS became dubbing countries, because they had special reasons to want to protect their languages, in addition to a common fear of English. Also, the size of these countries means they could afford dubbing. Viewers nowadays often have the possibility to choose subtitling. Some population groups gladly do, but the majority still prefers dubbing. Dubbing has myriad advantages and disadvantages compared to subtitling, but viewers do not rationally decide whether they prefer dubbing or subtitling. Instead, they are used to one or the other, and are convinced that this mode is superior. Being used to a mode of translation entails that viewers do not notice or are willing to accept its shortcomings, whether they are inherent or marks of poor quality.

Even if viewers disapprove of the quality of dubbing, there is little that they can do about it, because there is usually only one dubbed version of every product, and viewers cannot force improvement by not buying the product, because clients are the ones who buy the product. Clients can only be persuaded to care more for quality if audience ratings decline, but then viewers would have to care enough to stop watching a programme altogether, which is a sacrifice they may not be willing to make even if they think dubbing is poor. This puts clients in a very powerful position. The fact that producers tend not to interfere does not help. Labour unions do their best, but they struggle, and strikes do not work. Some clients do care about quality, and for them, there is a lot of opportunity for clients to influence the production process. The production process is very complicated, containing many steps and many different trades. It is made increasingly complicated by a common habit to split the tasks of translating and adapting. Synchronisation is an important goal in dubbing, although it should not come at the sacrifice of a natural dialogue. Both are needed to accomplish the prime goal in dubbing, which is that it goes unnoticed, and does not interfere with entertainment.

Circumstances in the dubbing industry are unfortunately not very conducive to achieving a high-quality dubbing. Powerful clients and heavy competition between dubbing studios result in low budgets and tight deadlines. There is only specialist education for translators, training is on-the-job, but haphazard, workers are under a lot of stress, the wages are often low, workers are freelancers, translators have a low status, and there is little or no quality control. Although there is no direct evidence that all of this causes poor quality, flaws in dubbing are well-documented. Viewers can tell when something is dubbed, and dubbed language even affects everyday language. Still, viewers do not seem to mind. That leaves the

clients with only ethical reasons to pay dubbing studios better: doing justice to the originals, improving working conditions and giving viewers better quality.

## **PART II: DUBBING IN THE NETHERLANDS**

### **Introduction of contributors**

A number of people contributed to this part of the thesis who have different and sometimes conflicting interests. With every claim and argument being made, it is important to note what party this person represents. For this purpose, I introduce all contributors here, and mention to which involved party they belong if that is applicable, or otherwise, how else they have a significant role.

The party of the dubbing studios can be subdivided into two groups that can also have conflicting interests. These are the executives of dubbing studios who try to run their business on the one hand and their employees, the dubbing professionals, on the other. Wim Pel runs WPP, Ronald Nadorp runs Bob Kommer Studios, and Patrick Ulenberg runs Creative Sounds, with his wife Charlotte.<sup>12</sup> Jan Nonhof is a dubbing director at WPP, and Eudia Winter works at the planning department of WPP. Arnold Gelderman, a former dubbing director, is nicknamed the godfather of Dutch dubbing due to the large quantity of Dutch dubbings of Disney films that he directed. Ewout Eggink is a dubbing actor. Christa Lips is a dubbing translator. Ronald Nadorp also works as a sound engineer, dubbing translator and dubbing director, to the benefit of his own company. Also part of this group are of course the translators who participated in the questionnaires.

The clients of dubbing studios are either commercial or public. Jean-Loeck van Kollenburg works for Netherlands Public Broadcasting, while Koen Robroek (Nickelodeon) Victor Coolman (Nickelodeon), Marieke Rovers (Disney) and Monique Koch (Telescreen) all work for commercial companies.

In addition to his work as a dubbing actor, Ewout Eggink is the chairman of Samen1Stem, an organisation that belongs to the party of labour unions, although strictly speaking, it is not a labour union, but an association.

Barnier Geerling runs a company that gives voice courses to (aspiring) dubbing actors.

I use the phrase “my interviewees” to refer to the people that I interviewed in person. Those are Pel, Nonhof, Winter, Nadorp, Ulenberg and Eggink.

The phrase “the participating translators” refers to the translators who participated in the questionnaires.

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<sup>12</sup> I did not include quotes from Jeroen Nadorp (Ronald’s son) or quotes solely by Charlotte Ulenberg (e.g. without Patrick saying it too). Therefore, I always use the name Nadorp to refer to Ronald Nadorp and Ulenberg to refer to Patrick Ulenberg.

## Chapter 1: Preference for subtitling or dubbing

### *1.1 Economics and cosmopolitanism*

The Netherlands is a subtitling country, and there are two main reasons to explain why. Some think it is either the one or the other, but in fact, they interact. We already saw that the literature most commonly identifies economics as the cause for a preference for dubbing or subtitling. Dutch journalists and my interviewees do the same. Nadorp even argues it is wishful thinking and a bit naive to think that the Dutch preference for subtitling could have come about in any other way. Pel says that the Dutch basically never really had a choice. We did not have the money for dubbing, so subtitling was all there was.

There is, however, a second factor, which is the internationally-oriented nature of the Dutch. Immediately after Nadorp says that money is the only reason, he adds that foreign-language education also plays a role. The Dutch receive language education in two, three or even more foreign languages.<sup>13</sup> Because of that, Nadorp reckons, the Dutch gained more appreciation for other languages and had grown more used to other languages, which made the Dutch quicker to accept subtitling. Foreign-language education, however, is not a factor in and of itself, but only a result of an open-minded attitude towards foreign languages. Pel argues that because the Dutch language area is relatively small, the Dutch have always been internationally oriented, with both trade and tourism. He says that many centuries ago, the Dutch were already travelling further away and more frequently than other nations. It became a natural Dutch trait to be open-minded towards other languages. Ulenberg concurs: “The Netherlands is just the home base, but beyond that, the whole world is ours, and when you want to do business abroad with a nation, the first thing you do is that you make sure you speak that language. That is the Dutch mentality.”<sup>14</sup>

Is it really true that the Dutch are so open-minded towards foreign languages? Pel thinks that everyone, including the Dutch, prefers to access entertainment products in the native language. He argues that if there had been enough money from the start, the Netherlands would also have been a dubbing country, because everyone is naturally inclined to want entertainment products in their own language. This directly contradicts the findings of Toeplitz, a Polish historian. According to Toeplitz, when countries were still trying to figure

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<sup>13</sup> The most commonly taught languages are English, French and German.

<sup>14</sup> “Nederland is alleen maar de thuisbasis, maar voor de rest is de hele wereld van ons en op het moment dat je in het buitenland handel wil drijven met een volk, dan is het eerste wat je doet, is, je zorgt dat je die taal spreekt. Dat is de instelling van Nederlanders.”

out how to address the language gap caused by sound film, there were no viewers anywhere who wanted to settle for a substitute. Everywhere, viewers desired to see the original films (qtd. in Dibbets, 1993:87). Pel is right, however, to say that despite our knowledge of English, books tend to be translated into Dutch. Pel also notes that no Dutchman would read the bible in English because they can speak English so well. It is probably fair to say that both Toeplitz and Pel have a point, in the sense that viewers have both a desire to watch products the way they were intended, as well as a desire to watch products in the native language. Foreign-language films and series present viewers with a dilemma, and this dilemma can be resolved in multiple ways.

In any case, the Dutch were not so open-minded towards English that they did not fear the influence of this foreign language. The Dutch government did not respond by banning or restricting the import of foreign-language films like the FIGS, but this is not because there was no weariness of English. On the contrary, the advent of the sound film fuelled an already existing debate in the Netherlands about Dutch as an endangered cultural heritage (Dibbets, 1993:89). There was no such thing as a Dutch film industry yet, which entailed that the Dutch could only watch sound films in foreign languages (Dibbets, 1993:90). This caused some Dutch to be very concerned about the future of the Dutch language. On the 28th of February, 1930, *De Telegraaf*, a Dutch newspaper, published an article with the title “Our language is in danger.”<sup>15</sup> The author of the article and playwright Henri van Wermeskerken, as well as many others, feared that sound films would cause Dutch to gradually become more like German or English, and that the Dutch would lose a sense of pride in their language and country. Van Wermeskerken argued: “Language is the soul of a nation and the spine of national awareness”<sup>16</sup> (Dibbets, 1993:89). De Dietsche Bond, a cultural organisation that wanted to protect the Dutch and the Dutch language from foreign influences, sent a letter to the Minister of Education, Arts and Sciences in 1930, in which they argued that a healthy national awareness required that Dutch should be spoken “not just in the family, but everywhere, in church and at school, in the theatre and locations for entertainment”<sup>17</sup> (Dibbets, 1993:90). De Dietsche Bond wanted the Dutch government to step in. They proposed that the Dutch government subsidise Dutch film production (Dibbets, 1993:93). This subsidy could be financed by a special tax on the screening of foreign-language films. The Dutch government refused (Dibbets, 1993:94).

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<sup>15</sup> “Onze taal is in gevaar.”

<sup>16</sup> “De taal is de ziel van een volk en de ruggegraat van het nationale bewustzijn.”

<sup>17</sup> “niet slechts in het gezin, maar overal, in kerk en school, in schouwburg en inrichting van vermaak”

## 1.2 Bridging the language gap

If the Dutch were not going to ban foreign-language films, they had to find some way to bridge the language gap. There were a number of different ways that could be done. One way producers avoided the language gap was by releasing films with a lot of singing and dancing rather than dialogue. Hollywood excelled in such films (Dibbets, 1993:90). However, this was not really a solution as much as an evasion of the problem.

It may surprise the reader that in the Netherlands, between 1929 and 1932, films were often not screened in English or Dutch, but in German. The import of American films decreased from 62% to 43% of the total import, and the import of German films rose from 21% to 44%. Distributors assumed that the Dutch audience preferred to hear German rather than English. This is not because the Dutch hated English or loved German, but simply because the Dutch understood German better than English (Dibbets, 1993:88). The American film industry responded by releasing their films in German-language versions in the Netherlands. *A Lady to Love*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Atlantic* and *Murder* were just some of the films that were originally released in German in the Netherlands. This means that the number of German-language films is higher than the import numbers suggest (Dibbets, 1993:89). After 1933, this advantage of German over English disappeared, because Hollywood stopped producing Multi Language Versions in 1932, and the Dutch were less inclined to watch German films because of Hitler's rise to power in 1933 and the subsequent nazi influence on films (Dibbets, 1993:96).

Before 1933, the release of German-language films rather than English-language films in the Netherlands did not solve the problem entirely, but it did make the language gap seem less wide (Dibbets, 1993:91). When producers were still making Multiple Language Versions, they could also make Dutch versions, but there were very few producers who did so, because it was much too expensive (Dibbets, 1993:94). Already in 1919, the *Bioscoopcourant*, a film newspaper, held that foreign producers would not take Dutch into account. It argued: "The Netherlands will have to provide its own films or it will not have Dutch-language films"<sup>18</sup> (qtd. in Dibbets, 1993:93). This was still true ten years later. However, the first Dutch home-made film did not appear until 1934 (Dibbets, 1993:91).

Danan explains what the advent of sound film did to the home production of smaller countries:

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<sup>18</sup> "Holland zal moeten zorgen voor zijn eigen films of zal geen Hollands-sprekende film hebben."

All the smaller countries suffered from the introduction of sound into movies. The production of movies started to require much higher budgets than most of these countries could afford. These countries were also limited by a small home market, and they could no longer easily export movies to larger countries because of language barriers. Therefore, home production declined and importation dramatically increased (Danan, 1991:607).

It was expensive for the Dutch to make their own films. However, it was expensive for Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania too, but those countries basically had to, because they had been banning or discouraging foreign-language films in 1929 and 1930. The governments of Czechoslovakia and Hungary dealt with this by protecting and subsidising their respective film industries (Dibbets, 1993:95). For that matter, all of the FIGS actively supported their film industries as well (Danan, 1991:609). A table in Danan's article shows that the share of domestic films compared to imported films between 1951 and 1962 was 30.3% in Italy, 19.6% in West Germany and 23.7% in Spain (Danan, 1991:609). In that same period, the Netherlands had no domestic films at all (Danan, 1991:609). An important and as yet unanswered question is why the Dutch government decided against subsidising the Dutch film industry.

There was of course one more way to create Dutch-language films: dubbing. 1932 saw the first attempts to introduce dubbing in the Netherlands. These were *Der Geheimagent* [the secret agent] (released in the Netherlands as *De Onbekende Passagier* [the unknown passenger]) and *Fünf von der Jazzband* [five of the jazz band] (released in the Netherlands as *Vijf van de Jazzband*) (Dibbets, 1993:92). These attempts were not very successful. This was not just because dubbing is expensive as well, but also because the attitude of the Dutch audience towards dubbing was negative from the start. Viewers did not consider dubbed voices credible, because the viewers had already become familiarised with the phenomenon of foreign-language films, and it certainly did not help the credibility of dubbings that Dutch dubbing did not yet prioritise natural acting. New attempts to introduce dubbing in 1936 and later on were also received badly (Dibbets, 1993:95). If the response had been enthusiastic, companies could have tried to make it financially feasible to continue to dub, but there was no point to that now, because viewers had had a taste of original films and were not prepared to let go.

The question remains what would have happened if they had not grown used to hearing foreign languages in cinemas. What if the Dutch government had also banned foreign-language films? Why had the Dutch government not done that? Dibbets replies that

“the Dutch government [...] never wanted to close the borders for films in another language; no one had asked them for that”<sup>19</sup> (Dibbets, 1993:95). Neither the population nor the government felt the need to keep foreign languages out. This shows that economics is not a sufficient explanation, and a cosmopolitan attitude definitely played a role.

Subtitling was introduced in the Netherlands in September 1929. This eventually became the mode of choice in the Netherlands, and much-needed technological innovations in subtitling between 1929 and 1937 helped to reinforce this position. Nadorp adds that a relatively high literacy rate in the Netherlands made subtitling a viable option. Literacy rates were lower elsewhere, especially in Spain and Italy. Subtitling was not the most obvious solution. In fact, it was the least favourite. No one really liked or recommended subtitling as a solution. Rather, subtitling became the solution only after all other options had been ruled out (Dibbets, 1993:93). Multiple Language Versions had disappeared, German had lost its appeal, there was no Dutch film industry to speak of, and the audience disliked dubbing. Economics and a cosmopolitan attitude interacted to make the Netherlands a subtitling country.

### *1.3 Dubbing in the Netherlands*

Two newspaper articles from the EYE film library with unfortunately very little source information reveal some interesting tidbits about Dutch dubbing in the early days. One of these articles, from the newspaper *De Nieuwe Eeuw* [the new century], declares that ‘soon,’ subtitling will disappear in the Netherlands, and will be replaced by dubbing. “This method spells a new era in the Dutch film history”<sup>20</sup> (Nederlandse filmtitels verdwijnen). It can be deduced from the article that it was most likely published in 1955. The article mentions the oncoming dubbing of *Din fortid er glemt*, a Danish film which was released in 1949. It was released in Dutch as *Vrouwen zonder toekomst* [women without a future] in 1955. Subtitling was, of course, never replaced by dubbing in the Netherlands, but it is striking that a newspaper in 1955 could be so sure it would be that it would publish an article declaring that. At the very least, we have to conclude that as late as 1955, it was still considered possible that the Netherlands would become a dubbing country.

This expectation was shared by a company called Haghefilm. An article reports that Haghefilm modified the bande rythmo, and expects this system to be very successful. An

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<sup>19</sup> “de Nederlandse regering heeft [...] nooit de grenzen willen sluiten voor films in een andere taal; daar had ook niemand om gevraagd.”

<sup>20</sup> “Met deze methode wordt een nieuw tijdperk in de Nederlandse filmgeschiedenis ingeluid, ...”

indication of the date of the article is its mention of the Dutch dubbing of *Hokus Pokus*. *Hokus Pokus* is a German film, which was originally released in 1953. The article mentions that Haghefilm expects they will be able to dub 30 films a year. They could dub only a limited amount of films with their new procedure, and the Dutch audience still has to become used to dubbing, but the company owners are not worried about that, because “the majority of French and Italian films is also dubbed”<sup>21</sup> (Buitenlandse films, Nederlandse stemmen).

Dubbing never became very popular in the Netherlands, but that is not to say that there was no dubbing at all. After all, that would not be fair to young children. For decades though, illiterate children were mostly neglected. For a long time, only a few major films were dubbed each year, and these were usually Disney films (Pel). Beyond that, there was a small but increasing number of domestic children’s programmes, and subtitling, and children just had to deal with it. Even as children became more popular as a separate target audience, broadcasters and distributors continued to use subtitling. In an article in the magazine *Studio* in 1970, Vasen refers to a reader who remarks in a letter to the magazine that foreign films and series should be made more accessible for the children that they are targeted at (Vasen, 1970:16). The first dubbed children’s series appeared on Dutch TV in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Ulenberg). Some of these were *Vicky the Viking* (*Wickie de Viking*), *Arabian Nights: Sinbad's Adventures* (*Sinbad de Zeeman*) and *Maya the Bee* (*Maja de Bij*). However, dubbed children’s series still only appeared every now and then (Pel).

The situation had become only marginally better as late as 1995. According to Nikken, who wrote a report on the broadcasting of children’s programmes in that year, both Kindernet [children’s channel] and Nederland 3 (a public TV channel) were dubbing nearly all of their programmes for young children. However, six other channels still subtitled some or all of the programmes of which they themselves indicated that they were targeted at children below the age of eight (Nikken, 1997:13). This is despite the fact that according to research, children below the age of nine are not able to read subtitles. Spinhof explains: “Those children make mistakes while reading. If you ask them questions about what they saw, they make up their own film”<sup>22</sup> (Beekveldt, 1991).

In 2000, commercial broadcaster Veronica did an experiment with Dutch dubbing. Kees Gerritsen, Veronica’s programme director at that time, was interviewed about this in 1999. In the interview, he says he found that German crime series had high audience ratings

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<sup>21</sup> “Het merendeel der Franse en Italiaanse films is eveneens nagesynchroniseerd.”

<sup>22</sup> “Die kinderen maken fouten bij het lezen. Als je vragen stelt over wat ze gezien hebben, verzinnen ze hun eigen film.”

on all channels, except on Veronica, which targeted teenagers. This led him to conclude that young viewers probably do not like hearing German (Veronica maakt, 1999). Veronica decided to dub the pilot episode of a German crime series called *Helicops*, and continue to dub it if it would catch on. In the article, Gerritsen says he realises that the Dutch are used to hearing the original language, but he argues this habit arose out of necessity and frugality. He adds: “And as far as I'm considered, the wrong type of frugality”<sup>23</sup> (Veronica maakt, 1999).

Both Pel and Ulenberg relate to me the story of *Helicops*. Its pilot episode was broadcasted on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January, 2000. Holland Media Groep, parent company of Veronica, ordered NIPO to do “research among police and action series enthusiasts to determine how the [series] and in particular the dubbing was received”<sup>24, 25</sup> (Kuijpers, 2000:1). It is important to note that while Veronica’s target group is teenagers, most of the participants in the experiment are actually aged 20-49. The researchers found that teenagers do not watch action series so much, and they felt that the episode was broadcast at too late an hour (20:30 - 22:00). Some conclusions from the research were as follows: a majority of the participants were not satisfied with the quality of the dubbing; if the participants could have decided whether they would finish watching the episode, the dubbing would have made 58% of the participants stop watching before the end; 52% did not get used to the dubbing; and 70% would have preferred to watch the episode with subtitling (Kuijpers, 2000:11). Veronica purchased the series, but decided to air it in a subtitled version. They cancelled the series within a year. Ulenberg says the experiment with *Helicops* was a reason for the Holland Media Groep (now RTL) never to try something like that again.

In the meantime, children’s channels started to appear on Dutch television. Kindernet was founded in 1988. It was the first commercial broadcaster in the Netherlands, as well as the first broadcaster for children on Dutch TV. It was joined by Cartoon Network in 1993, Fox Kids (which became Jetix and is now known as Disney XD) in 1997 and Nickelodeon in 2002. Kindernet was eventually incorporated by Nickelodeon. These channels paved the way for three developments. First of all, dubbing replaced subtitling as the default mode of choice for children. The children’s channels responded to the need of their target audience for dubbed instead of subtitled programmes. Pel relates that WPP dubbed some series that were first aired subtitled. Because of the dubbing, the child audience increased fourfold. The

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<sup>23</sup> “En wat mij betreft een verkeerd soort zuinigheid.”

<sup>24</sup> “... onder liefhebbers van politie- en actieseries onderzocht hoe de film en met name de nasynchronisatie ontvangen is.”

<sup>25</sup> Holland Media Groep, a broadcasting company, is now RTL, and NIPO, a market research agency, is now TNS-NIPO.

channels' choice to dub was so successful that nowadays, subtitling is hardly or never used anymore for films and series that are targeted at children who cannot read, because this results in low audience ratings and sales figures (Pel).

The second development, as described by Pel and Ulenberg, is that dubbing is increasingly being used for children who can already read (Pel, Ulenberg). WPP and Creative Sounds dub series targeted at children aged 12 to 14, such as *Victorious*, *iCarly* and *True Jackson*, of which Pel and Ulenberg claim that they would attract a significantly smaller audience if they had been subtitled instead. The way Pel and Ulenberg phrase it, it sounds as if the channels made a conscious decision to target older children, but it turns out this is not the case (Rovers). Nickelodeon and Disney decided to dub to reach a wider audience by attracting children who cannot read (Rovers, Robroek). The fact that older children who can already read watch those programmes too is simply a fortuitous coincidence (Robroek). Coolman relates that Nickelodeon does not even do research on how many older children watch the dubbed programmes, because they are targeted at children aged six to twelve, and the advertisers do not care whether children outside of that target group are watching as well.

A third development is that live action children's series are also dubbed, while dubbing live action used to be totally unheard of in the Netherlands, because live action is much harder to dub credibly than animation. It was standard practice until five or six years ago to subtitle a live action series for children (Ulenberg). Coolman claims credit for being the first person in the Netherlands to decide to dub children's live action series. Coolman explains that Nickelodeon was having trouble to find new good children's series, so they had to make better use of the series they already had. They realised that subtitled live action was not getting very high audience ratings, and they wanted to investigate the possibility that dubbed live action would do better. The first series that Nickelodeon decided to dub was *Ned's Declassified School Survival Guide* (*Ned's SurvivalGids*) in 2008, which promptly received such high audience ratings that Nickelodeon decided to switch to dubbing all live action children's series. Disney and the NPO followed suit (Coolman).

Coolman relates that at social occasions, the fact that he is responsible for the trend to dub live action children's series is always a hot item. One argument that he hears time and again is that the rise of dubbing for children will lead to poorer English skills, which he thinks is nonsense. He argues that many children who watch dubbing now would not benefit from watching the original version with subtitles, because they do not understand the subtitles, and therefore, he thinks this is not beneficial to learning English. Also, he points out that all

programming for adults is still subtitled. The fact that there is dubbing for children does not entail that children are no longer exposed to subtitling.

Today, the large amount of children's programmes and the preference of broadcasters to dub rather than subtitle for children have caused dubbing to acquire quite a respectable share in Dutch TV programming. In August 2010, Eggink counted the number of hours of dubbing on Dutch TV, which is 205 hours. According to Eggink, this is the biggest share on TV: drama series, the news and even sports have a smaller share. This is no mean feat in a subtitling country. Dutch dubbing studios dub films (for cinemas, on TV or DVD), series, documentaries, audio books, commercials, games and toys (Pel, Ulenberg, Nadorp, Eggink). Children's programmes amount to 90% or 95% of the total of dubbed productions in the Netherlands. The remainder consists of programmes for adults where subtitling would be too distracting, such as educational and instruction videos such as fitness videos (Pel).

While the needs of those cannot yet read very well are finally being met, people who can no longer read very well are being left behind. Gelderman predicted in 2002 that broadcasters would have to start commissioning dubbing for the elderly, but as yet, this has not happened (De Jong, 2002:24). Perhaps Omroep MAX, a public broadcaster with a target audience of people aged older than 50, could follow the example of the children's channels.

#### *1.4 Dutch sentiments towards dubbing*

Dutch news articles on dubbing generally have an extremely negative view of dubbing, perhaps more negative than one might expect considering the fact that Dutch dubbing has traditionally been very rare, and has only recently become not so rare. Teunissen remarks: "Dubbing is generally experienced as an indigestible infringement on authenticity"<sup>26</sup> (Teunissen, 1981:1). Van Bracht adds that dubbing is considered "a crime against Good Taste, [...] an inferior occupation that makes feature films and TV series completely unenjoyable"<sup>27</sup> (Van Bracht, 1998). Hans de Witte refers to dubbing as cultural murder, because works of art are "presented to the audience in a mutilated fashion"<sup>28</sup> (Proper, 1982).

However, all of this fury towards dubbing is not so much directed at Dutch dubbing as it is at German dubbing. When considering what the Dutch think of dubbing, it is important to consider that their views are to a large extent influenced by antipathy towards German

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<sup>26</sup> "Nasynchronisatie wordt in het algemeen ervaren als een niet te verteren inbreuk op de authenticiteit."

<sup>27</sup> "... een misdad tegen de Goede Smaak, als een inferieure bezigheid die speelfilms en tv-series definitief ongenietbaar maakt."

<sup>28</sup> "... in verminkte vorm aan de kijkers gepresenteerd."

dubbing. Because the Dutch are used to subtitling, they are likely to be biased against dubbing. This bias is aggravated by exposure to German dubbing, because this means dubbing is presented in a much more unfavourable light. If the language viewers hear is not just dubbed, but also foreign, this may exacerbate any feelings of disturbance and alienation that were caused by the severed link between characters and voices and incorrect use of language for the purpose of synchrony. Worse than that, the dubbed language is not just any foreign language; it is German. This aggravates the problem, because some Dutch still carry anti-German sentiments.

Research showed that in 1974, 63% of the Dutch population preferred subtitling, while in 1977, this climbed to 70%. Teunissen suggests this is due to improved reception of German TV channels in the Netherlands (Teunissen, 1981:3). Stam explains: “Ever since the Dutch could receive German channels on TV in the border areas, German dubbing has been a source of annoyance and entertainment”<sup>29</sup> (Stam, 1996). Van Bracht adds: “In the top ten of annoyances of Dutch viewers, dubbed films on German channels take a top spot. Apparently, nothing evokes so much irritation as a German-speaking Hollywood star”<sup>30</sup> (Van Bracht, 1998). Van Walsum thinks German dubbing helps to maintain Dutch prejudices about “the Germans,” such as the idea that the Germans do not have a sense of humour, and that they are unable to open up to foreign cultures. In fact, some Dutch who consider emigrating to Germany might decide not to because of dubbing (Van Walsum, 2005). Van Bracht dares to say that the Dutch may have overcome the traumas of World War II and losing the football World Cup to Germany in 1974, but we will always resent the Germans for dubbing (Van Bracht, 1998:1).

In the earlier days, the Dutch attitude towards Dutch dubbing was ambivalent rather than hostile. In 1936, a French film was dubbed that was called *Les Mutinés de l’Elseneur* (released in Dutch as *Muiterij op de Elseneur*). A film critic who reviewed the Dutch dubbing approved of how well lip synchrony was achieved, but warned that perhaps lip synchrony was given too high a priority. Also, he thought the acting was much too sober, which did not match well with the acting on screen, and said the actors enunciated too well. The reviewer felt that this dubbing did a great service to the Dutch audience, although he cautioned dubbing professionals to try harder to preserve the character of the original work (Nederlandsch-sprekende Fransche Film, 1936). The Dutch press was not sure what to make of the dubbing

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<sup>29</sup> “Al sinds in de grensgebieden van Nederland de Duitse tv-zenders goed zijn te ontvangen, is de nasynchronisatie in het Duits een bron van ergernis en vermaak.”

<sup>30</sup> “In de ergernis-toptien van Nederlandse televisiekijkers staan de nasynchroniseerde speelfilms op de Duitse zenders op een hoge plaats. Niets wekt kennelijk zoveel irritatie als een Duitssprekende Hollywood-ster.”

of *Snow White* [Sneeuwvitje] in 1938. They acknowledged that dubbing was better for children, but felt that the dubbed Dutch sounded dull. Nevertheless, the viewer would have no time to pay attention to such shortcomings, because the imagination of the creators took the viewers to a different world (Van Beek, 1994:37). When *Jungle Book* was dubbed in 1969, the verdict of the Dutch press was that Dutch dubbings always lost a lot of the atmosphere, but made the films more accessible to children (Van Beek, 1994:37).

De Jong argues that nowadays, the Dutch press sincerely dislikes dubbing. In his article, he quotes what various reviewers have said about dubbing. Van der Put argues that having actors speak with other voices breaks the spell and harms the film. Beerekamp says parents should boycott dubbed cinema films, because dubbing does not fit the Dutch tradition. He is afraid that eventually, even Eddie Murphy and James Bond will speak Dutch. De Jong remarks that the press is more lenient on dubbing for animation. For example, Van Bueren comments that the Dutch dubbing of major Disney films is done quite well (De Jong, 2002:24). Usually though, De Jong argues, dubbing is ignored in reviews altogether, or only mentioned briefly and dismissed without further explanation. Live action dubbing does not escape as easily. Reviewers denounce that too, but with a bit more motivation. Beerenkamp acknowledges the efforts in the dubbing of *Stuart Little*, but still does not buy it. De Jong argues that reviewers have to start taking dubbing more seriously “if dubbing really crawls out of the margins to start becoming a part of the Dutch film practice”<sup>31</sup> (De Jong, 2002:24).

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<sup>31</sup> “Als nasynchronisatie daadwerkelijk uit de marges kruipt om deel te gaan uitmaken van de Nederlandse filmpraktijk, ...”

## Chapter 2: Synchronisation

### 2.1 Importance of synchronies

My interviewees all consider synchrony, especially lip synchrony, very important. Eggink says the goal is to achieve lip synchrony as much as possible. The more synchronous it is, the better it looks. Ulenberg holds that lip synchrony is virtually impossible to achieve, because there is no way to get around words being mouthed differently. Eggink more or less agrees. He says there are some features of speech on screen that are almost impossible to do exactly right, no matter how hard dubbing professionals try. He mentions the word “fool” as an example of phonetic enemies, because there are no translations in Dutch with equivalent mouth movements. However, he reckons that dubbing professionals can go a long way in achieving synchrony if sufficient time and attention is put into the process. Also, if there is a lack of isochrony, Eggink says that proves that the job was done poorly.

My interviewees argue that it is easy to achieve 95% lip synchrony, but achieving more than that takes a lot of effort, which takes time, which makes the project more expensive. Therefore, that little bit of extra effort can only be put into the dubbing when the budget is high, for example, with big screen films (Pel, Ulenberg, Nadorp, Eggink). Projects with lower budgets receive much less focus on lip synchrony (Eggink). Lip synchrony is, however, also much more important in big screen films, because of the large size of the screen. Live action also receives more attention to lip synchrony, because synchronisation is more important and more difficult in live action than in animation. Sound engineers are able to improve lip synchrony to a certain extent, but in practice, most of the work to ensure lip synchrony is done in the recording studio (Pel).

Eggink raises the matter that sometimes the originals also are not lip-synchronous, because the producers were sloppy. This gives the dubbing studio the opportunity to have better lip synchrony in the dubbed version than in the original. Also, animation is always easier than live action, but animation can differ in difficulty. Some animation series have characters with mouths that hardly move, or do not move visibly (Pel). Those series are easier to dub and to translate for. During my interview with him, Nadorp showed me a fragment from *Woezel en Pip* (a Dutch series, dubbed in Flemish) as an example (see figure 2 for an image of *Woezel en Pip*). One of the characters has visible mouth movements when it talks, but the other one has a big moustache, which obscures mouth movements. This makes lip synchronisation a lot easier.



Figure 2<sup>32</sup>

Kinetic synchrony is important according to Pel, but he assumes that the translator can simply copy the original in that respect, because the original would also not have a person shake his head when confirming something. No interviewee mentioned any cultural differences that made it necessary to pay special attention to kinetic synchrony. Eggink, however, explained to me the concept of “lijfsync” [body sync] which he considered very important. The word “lijfsync” is also mentioned by dubbing director Maria Lindes (Van 't Groenewout, 1997:14). Body sync is basically also kinetic synchrony, but then adapted to animation. Eggink argues that translators have to pay close attention to what happens on screen. If the character moves fast, his speech should not just be fast, but consist of short words. Eggink explains:

A character in an animated film sometimes just experiences an awful lot, and is, of course, able to do all kinds of things that we as humans are not physically capable of doing. [...] If the character trips and falls a lot or shatters into a thousand pieces and then is suddenly coagulated again or whatever, [...] and there is a sound or text that goes with that, well, if a translator can take that into account...<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.onlinegeboortekaartjeswinkel.nl/fotos/kaart/ad3180462413565d6e0e77ca1c299188.jpg>

<sup>33</sup> “Een karakter in een tekenfilm maakt soms gewoon geweldig veel mee en kan natuurlijk allemaal dingen die wij fysiek als mensen niet kunnen. [...] Als die heel veel valt of in duizend stukjes uiteenspat en dan weer ineens samengeklonterd is of whatever [...] en daar zit ook iets van klank of tekst bij, nou ja, als een vertaler daar rekening mee houdt...”

## *2.2 Lip synchrony vs. natural dialogue*

When asked to pick between lip synchrony and natural dialogue, Nadorp immediately chooses natural dialogue, but then he proceeds to add nuance. He argues that both can be achieved to a certain extent. According to Nadorp, there are so many different solutions that it is usually possible to find some way not to have to prioritise lip synchrony or dialogue. There are limits, however. Nadorp says the Dutch also prefer natural dialogue to lip synchrony. If the Dutch did not dislike dubbing so much, Nadorp thinks they would prefer lip synchrony to natural dialogue. Ulenberg picks natural dialogue, but he adds that what he finds more important than having natural-sounding language is that characters really converse with each other. Interaction is what makes children get into the story. According to Ulenberg, children immediately lose interest if lip synchrony is prioritised instead. Eggink thinks lip synchrony and natural dialogue have equal priority. Pel agrees with Eggink and reiterates what Nadorp said: ideally, no compromises should have to be made. In case a choice has to be made for one of the two, sometimes lip synchrony is prioritised, and sometimes natural dialogue is prioritised. That depends on the situation. Pel does not think either one is more likely to be prioritised. Put shortly, there is perhaps a slight preference for natural dialogue in the Netherlands.

### **Chapter 3: Involved parties**

When it comes to involved parties, the Netherlands is no different from the FIGS. The same five parties are involved, e.g. the producers, clients, dubbing studios, labour unions, and viewers, and an important issue is the balance of power between clients and dubbing studios. The clients may or may not care about quality, and the dubbing studios may or may not get enough time and money from their clients to provide decent quality. Let us now look at these Dutch parties in further detail.

#### *3.1 Producers*

Producers treat Dutch dubbing of their products the same way they treat dubbing of their products into any other language. They largely stay aloof. Ulenberg says producers do not interfere with the dubbing of their products at all. He does remark, however, that Creative Sounds once heard from the producer of a series that he was absolutely thrilled that the negotiation of a deal with Creative Sounds had run so smoothly, because it had been very difficult with other languages. Nadorp does have to deal with producers sometimes. He says it sometimes occurs that the actual client is a distributor, but the producer wants to have influence in a way that can be helpful or harmful to Nadorp. Like the FIGS, the Netherlands also knows some control freaks among producers. Disney is commonly recognised as one, by my interviewees as well as journalists. Pel says they want the dubbed voices in all language versions to sound exactly like the characters in the original version.

#### *3.2 Clients*

Eggink explains that producers sell licence fees to exploit their products as much as possible. These licence fees can then be resold multiple times. This allows the products to appear in cinemas, on TV, on DVD, and appear on DVD again, for example, five years later, in the 1-euro-tray at the Kruidvat (a Dutch chemist's chain). Eggink says store chains such as Blokker (a Dutch home appliances store chain) and Kruidvat may also be clients, but Blokker denies that they ever commission any dubbing.<sup>34</sup> Blokker and Kruidvat do sell DVDs though, but clients who commission dubbings for the DVDs that store chains such as Blokker and Kruidvat sell are probably distributors and not the store chains themselves. In any case, the

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<sup>34</sup> Kruidvat did not respond.

company that commissions the dubbing retains the rights, and in most cases, this company has the final say in the quality, price and casting. Pel mentions one exception: sometimes, the client is a distributor, but the product will eventually be broadcast on Dutch or Belgian TV. In that case, the distributor may leave it up to the broadcaster to supervise the dubbing.

As in the FIGS, clients may differ in the degree to which they care about supervising the dubbing studio's work. Clients who care a lot may send dubbing studios style guides, dubbing bibles or creative letters. Creative letters contain directions for the dubbing (Ockhuysen, 1996). Style guides and dubbing bibles contain information about things such as the use of names, descriptions of characters, and frequently used expressions (Ulenberg). Some clients, such as NPO, want to check the translated script before the recording (Van Kollenburg). One of the things that influences how much influence the client wants is the type of product. In the case of a big screen film, the client is right on top of it (Eggink). The degree of supervision may also simply depend on the corporate culture of the client (Nadorp). Nadorp sometimes does the translation for his productions. Some of his clients who do not know Dutch trust him to do his job well, because he has a good reputation, but others have his translation translated back to English to allow them to check the translation. Also, some of his clients prefer to do the mixing themselves, but others allow Bob Kommer Studios to do the mixing.

It is standard procedure for WPP and Creative Sounds that the client picks the dubbing actors from a casting selection made by the dubbing studio, which Ulenberg refers to as a voice test kit. If the client really does not think it is necessary to invite actors to the studio to let them audition, WPP sends them previous recordings (Winter). In contrast, some clients care so much about that they include directions for casting in the creative letters. For instance, Disney insisted that Woody in *Toy Story* had to be dubbed by someone with the voice of a born leader with a tinge of sincere innocence (Ockhuysen, 1996).

### *3.3 Dubbing studios*

Since the Netherlands is a subtitling country, the Dutch dubbing industry is small compared to the dubbing industries in the FIGS, and can be said to occupy a niche position. However, opinions differ among my interviewees whether this niche position means that the Dutch dubbing industry is not sufficiently professionalised to refer to it as an industry. Nadorp asserts strongly that there is no such thing as a Dutch dubbing industry. He calls it a hotchpotch, a professionalised hobby. It should not be considered an industry because of its tiny scale. Ulenberg is unable to say whether the Dutch dubbing industry is big or small. He

calls it a small tiger. Pel, Nonhof and Eggink argue that the Dutch dubbing industry is no longer tiny. Pel and Nonhof just say it is big enough to call it an industry, but Eggink is more outspoken. While he does acknowledge that the Dutch dubbing industry has a niche position, and says it used to be a very small industry, he argues that the industry has dramatically increased in size since he started working as a dubbing actor fifteen years ago. Especially in the past eight years, he says the scale of the Dutch dubbing industry has become “gigantic.” Eggink describes the success of the Dutch industry by noting that *Dora* sold more than a million DVDs, and *Toystory 3* grossed four million euros in its first month. He also repeats the number of 205 hours of dubbing on TV per day.

There are six big dubbing studios in the Netherlands. These are WPP, SDI Media (which acquired Sun Studio), Creative Sounds, CineMeta (formerly known as MetaSound), Hoek & Sonéponse, and FBS Studio. Another important name is U-TRAX, for the dubbing of computer games. At any given moment, there are about fifty companies that are involved in dubbing (Nadorp). There at most fifteen dubbing studios that make a profit, including amateurs (Ulenberg). On the bottom side of the market, dubbing studios have a very short life span. For people who do not know the market and want to start up a sound studio but not a music studio, dubbing is the first thing that comes to mind. It is also, however, the quickest way to go bankrupt (Nadorp).

The Dutch dubbing industry is, of course, much smaller than its siblings in the FIGS, but even some Dutch studios have one benefit that they can chalk up to their size. Films and series often have very small supporting roles, and it is way too expensive to hire a different actor for each role. Studios that are big enough can ask their main actors in one series to dub supporting roles in others. This enables them to have a wide range of voices in every series (Pel). WPP and Creative Sounds do it (Pel, Ulenberg). Also, according to Ulenberg, there is nothing that Creative Sounds would like to do that they cannot do at present because of lack of size. Bob Kommer Studios is too small, so instead, they make voices of main characters sound different in supporting roles by digitally altering the pitch (Nadorp).

Bob Kommer Studios is involved in more areas of film and sound than just dubbing, but with regard to dubbing, Bob Kommer Studios specialises in dubbing 3D films and films for IMAX dome theatres. The increased size of the screen in a dome theatre makes lip synchrony even more important than it is for a regular big screen film. Concerning 3D films, Nadorp explains that having to locate subtitles in 3D films is harder, and can lead to head aches. This makes dubbing a more logical option. This does not mean, however, that 3D films have always been dubbed. In fact, according to Nadorp, it is only a recent trend that 3D films are

dubbed instead of subtitled because people find it annoying to have to read subtitles with 3D films.

In part I, we saw the argument that the dubbing industry in the FIGS is heterogeneous and localised. Chaume even argued that dubbing studios could not take on work from outside their own countries. A lot of what my interviewees tell me shows that at the very least, the Dutch dubbing industry is not localised, and, as they argue, not heterogeneous either. SDI Media is an international dubbing company that dubs in dozens of languages. Independent studios form partnerships with other foreign studios, so that they, too, can dub into multiple languages (Pel). WPP is in a partnership with a company with studios in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Germany, which allows WPP to offer clients Dutch, German and the Scandinavian languages. With such a package deal, the client only has to negotiate with a dubbing studio once for those languages, whereas otherwise, the client may have had to find a different dubbing studio and negotiate for each of those languages. This greatly simplifies matters. Creative Sounds also supplies Scandinavian languages in the same way. Bob Kommer Studios also sometimes collaborates with German dubbing studios.

Because of the digitalisation of audio, everyone pretty much works with the same systems. Any differences are in software that is or is not purchased or self-developed (Nadorp). Differences between studios in the production process are rendered irrelevant, because all language files are sent to one studio that takes care of mixing the recorded dialogues with the sound effects that were supplied by the client (Pel). Therefore, WPP's sound engineers do not just mix Dutch dubbing, but also Danish, etc.

This makes it sound like Dutch dubbing studios are not very different from each other, but Eggink tells me something different. He repeatedly complains about things that make dubbing studios heterogeneous in ways that make them more inefficient. This fits into his broader idea that dubbing studios could function better if they could get their act together. Eggink argues that if dubbing studios agreed on some common standards, they could greatly simplify the process and save a lot of time. One thing that they should change is that scripts are often formatted in different ways, printed one-sided or double-sided for example, which is confusing to translators and dubbing actors. Eggink also suggests that dubbing studios should keep records of the desired pronunciation of foreign names in TV series, so that no valuable time is lost looking for them during recording sessions or having to rerecord all lines that contain mispronounced names.

Eggink and Nadorp are strong advocates of dubbing studios' working with computers rather than paper, for three reasons. Firstly, both Eggink and Nadorp think the common

practice of dubbing studios to work with scripts on paper is wasteful. Nadorp indicates with his hands the size of the huge piles of paper that result from printing a copy of the entire script for every single dubbing professional at a recording session. He remarks: “You’d almost plant a tree.”<sup>35</sup>

Secondly, Nadorp argues that having to alternate between the image on screen and the time codes on paper makes it hard for dubbing actors to speak synchronously. If they begin too late, they try to catch up, which is impossible to repair with editing. Nadorp comments: “That’s a serious problem and it has been like that for years and I still don’t get why it should be done that way, why everyone does it in such a complicated fashion, so we said, well, for the large screen, that’s not going to work.”<sup>36</sup> It is unclear to what extent actors really experience this problem. Eggink says he has no issues with it.

Thirdly, having the script on the computer makes it possible to enter changes into the script immediately. Eggink wonders why it is not already standard practice for dubbing studios to equip their recording studios with computers for the directors. WPP and Bob Kommer Studios do, but elsewhere, it depends on the preference of the dubbing director (Eggink). Ulenberg thinks it is cheaper to write down the changes on paper and work them out later, because recording hours are expensive. This argument seems flawed to me, because correcting the script on paper takes time just as well. Moreover, whoever modifies the script on paper is motivated to do this quickly, which means the handwritten changes are possibly not complete and less legible, which increases the likelihood of errors in the ‘as recorded’ script.

### *3.4 Labour unions*

In the Netherlands, there are labour unions that represent dubbing professionals, but they are not very well-known. Pel simply states there are none. I asked Nadorp and Ulenberg whether they had heard of the association Samen1Stem, and they had, but did not know of the existence of any other labour unions or associations. There are, in fact, two more unions that are somehow involved. These are FNV KIEM and the NTB. FNV KIEM is a labour union for the arts. NTB is a labour union for musicians and actors. There is also Norma, which is an organisation involved in neighbouring rights. Norma collects the fees related to the rights and pays them to all writers and performing artists who are entitled to such a payment (Eggink).

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<sup>35</sup> “Je gaat bijna een boom planten.”

<sup>36</sup> “Da’s een ernstig probleem en zo werkt dat al jaren en ik snap nog steeds niet hoe dat moet, waarom iedereen dat zo ingewikkeld doet, dus wij hebben gezegd, nou, voor het grote doek wordt dat niks.”

Eggink explains that FNV KIEM technically represents the dubbing actors, but because dubbing actors constitute just a small subgroup of their membership, FNV KIEM let them down multiple times. In fact, according to Eggink, they never interfered with dubbing matters at all. Eggink finds this thoroughly disappointing, because the wages have not been increased in fourteen years, and he argues that some labour union should have addressed this at some point. Because the Netherlands never had a labour union that stood up for dubbing professionals powerfully (or at all), clients never had to take any regulations into account, and could deal with each of the dubbing studios separately. Also, dubbing studios could treat their employees any way they wanted.

When ACT and Samen1Stem were founded, FNV KIEM and NTB responded with joy, and expressed interest in learning more about the issues that ACT and Samen1Stem deal with (Eggink). ACT, which was founded in 2008, is an actors' association that represents actors for films, TV and on stage. Inspired by ACT, a number of dubbing professionals decided to found Samen1Stem. Samen1Stem was founded, because dubbing professionals were worried about a mounting pressure of work, declining budgets, stagnant wages, and about quality being under pressure because of rising stress and declining budgets (Eggink). Samen1Stem has been an official association since June 2010. Eggink has been the elected chairman of Samen1Stem since July 2011. He wanted to join Samen1Stem because of wage reductions "which we really found quite bizarre in these economically rough times,"<sup>37</sup> and also because the film and games businesses still make a lot of money, and he thinks this wealth should be more adequately reflected in the wages of dubbing professionals.

Samen1Stem unites translators, dubbing actors, sound engineers, and dubbing directors. This distinguishes them from other associations that only represent one trade. Samen1Stem now counts 180 members. Nadorp says this is not a lot, since he figures there is a total of one thousand dubbing professionals in the Netherlands. Eggink, however, thinks the hard core of dubbing actors numbers one hundred, of which he says eighty are members of Samen1Stem. Eggink says the objective of Samen1Stem is:

an improvement of everything that is important about this trade. So, the working conditions, wages, division of rights and the working conditions in the studio. For everyone. So, also for the studios, because the studios are of course in the predicament that the producers play the studios off against each other, as is commonplace in the free market.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> "wat we toch echt wel vrij bizar vonden in deze verder economisch op dit moment lastige tijd."

<sup>38</sup> "een verbetering van alles wat in dit vak van belang is. Dus de arbeidsomstandigheden, de honoraria, de rechtenverdelingen en de arbeidsomstandigheden in de studio. Voor iedereen. Dus ook voor de studio's, want de studio's zitten natuurlijk weer in de spagaat dat de producenten de studio's tegen mekaar uitspelen, zoals dat gaat in de vrije markt."

Eggink stresses that Samen1Stem is not a labour union, but an association. He argues that there is an important difference between these two. First of all, there are already two labour unions that are supposed to represent dubbing professionals. Samen1Stem has no interest in becoming the third. Secondly, Eggink feels that the connotation of the term “labour union” does not adequately reflect what Samen1Stem wants to do. Samen1Stem does not just want to defend workers’ interests. They want to work on improving the quality of dubbing, which involves communication with a lot of parties. For this, they have to be not just an advocate, but also a point of contact, and a source of information for any party that is somehow involved in or connected to the field of dubbing. Thirdly, while members of Samen1Stem have definitely felt angry about bad circumstances in the industry, Eggink does not think anger is persistent or constructive. “How long does anger last? It has a very limited shelf life.”<sup>39</sup> Eggink defines letting a labour union represent you as paying someone to be angry on your behalf. Eggink thinks it is more constructive to try to communicate rather than be angry. Samen1Stem would not have a lot of support if it decided to be angry all the time while a lot of the people it represents are not angry, or they are, but not angry enough to go on strike.

None of my interviewees recall strikes occurring in the Dutch dubbing industry. Eggink does feel that there should be. He would specifically like actors to strike, not just in the dubbing industry, but in general. He says that should be “fun.” I asked Eggink whether strikes would also be necessary. Eggink thinks a strike would be a good way of showing that actors mean business, to show how much they object to decreased budgets and stagnant wages. However, at this point, he does not consider a strike likely to happen, or to succeed if it does happen. Perhaps in five or ten years, Samen1Stem would want to go on strike after all, but if push comes to shove, solidarity among dubbing professionals is very low. A strike can only be successful if it is supported by a sufficient number of dubbing professionals, and Eggink wonders to what extent dubbing professionals are willing to risk their jobs for one another. Also, Eggink says the number of attendants at Samen1Stem’s meetings is only thirty. If members will not even attend the annual meeting, Eggink reckons they can hardly be expected to join a strike. Still, Eggink recalls the 2007–2008 Writers Guild of America strike, which was ultimately successful. This gives him hope, because he says dubbing professionals are in a position of power comparable to the writers in the United States. During one of Samen1Stem’s meetings, one of the members argued that if everyone present were to go on

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<sup>39</sup> “Hoe lang duurt boosheid, he? Dat heeft toch maar een kleine beperkte houdbaarheid.”

strike the next day, work would come to a standstill at all major dubbing studios. However, at that point, no one thought it was necessary (Eggink). Eggink says that maybe a strike could occur in the case of a dramatic event.

### *3.5 Viewers*

Viewers of dubbing in the Netherlands are mostly children. It turns out children are a much wanted, but elusive target audience, sparking many conflicting opinions among dubbing studios and clients. On the side of the dubbing studios, Pel argues that children claim they prefer subtitling, while actually, they much rather watch dubbed series. Pel says children who can read find dubbing more comfortable, because it allows them to multi-task. He says: “A child aged about twelve is not just watching TV. In the meantime, the child is texting and gaming. Multi-tasking is impossible if they also have to read subtitles”<sup>40</sup> (Van Hal, 2010:39). On the side of the clients, Van Kollenburg agrees that children do not do what they say, but he thinks it is the other way around: older children claim they do not like reading subtitles, but they watch subtitling anyway. He argues that they watch subtitling, because they want the programmes they watch to be exclusively theirs. They feel better if their younger siblings cannot follow (Van Kollenburg).

As for multi-tasking, Van Kollenburg mentions this with regard to a perceived contrast between the NPO and commercial channels. Van Kollenburg claims that children treat programmes broadcast by the NPO differently than programmes broadcast by commercial channels. For instance, if the weather is sunny, audience ratings for the NPO go down, because the children go outside to play. He argues that having a commercial channel on positively affects the children’s image. Children who watch commercial channels leave the TV on regardless what they are doing, whether this is homework or chatting, but in any case, they are spending more time behind the computer than in front of the TV (Van Kollenburg). Coolman, representing Nickelodeon, dismisses this. He argues that multi-tasking should not show in audience ratings, because the organisation who researches audience ratings is only supposed to count children who are actually watching the programme and not doing something else.

In order to serve the needs of children better, children are subcategorised into groups, so that every group can get a different treatment. Ulenberg mentions the age categories pre-

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<sup>40</sup> “Een kind van een jaar of twaalf is niet alleen bezig met tv kijken. Die zit ondertussen te sms’en en te gamen. Dat multitasken gaat niet als ze ook ondertiteling moeten lezen.”

school, six to twelve and twelve to sixteen. He argues that while this subcategorisation does have consequences in terms of use of language, it does not do so in terms of whether to dub or subtitle, because dubbing caters to pretty much all categories these days anyway. He says that in practice, it turns out that younger children watch programmes for older children and vice versa. My interviewees make much of the fact that the target group of dubbing has now come to include children who can already read. For Pel and Eggink, it is reason to doubt the assertion that the Netherlands is a subtitling country. They think it is now much less so because of this new trend. The Ulenbergs perceive the change as a rise in the age at which children prefer dubbing. They argue that the oldest children who watch dubbing now are children who grew up being used to everything being dubbed for them. Because of that, they do not have the prejudices that today's adults have who did not grow up with dubbing. They could, theoretically, grow older and older without becoming accustomed to subtitling. If that is the case, and if more and more children grow up with dubbing instead of subtitling, the Netherlands could evolve to become a dubbing country (Eggink). This would of course be wonderful news for Dutch dubbing studios.

Van Kollenburg does not agree with Ulenberg that subcategorisation no longer matters because all children watch dubbing. He argues that dubbing attracts children aged six to eight who otherwise would not watch because they cannot read subtitles, but it deters children aged eleven to thirteen who find the dubbing childish. Van Kollenburg thinks that dubbing is only useful if the characters are ten years old at most. The NPO dubs all the animation series, dubs live action targeted at children aged up to nine, and subtitles live action for children aged older than nine (Van Kollenburg). He claims that Nickelodeon and Disney made a principled decision to dub rather than subtitle everything, but this is not true. Both Nickelodeon and Disney broadcast children's series in a subtitled version in the evening hours for older children (Coolman, Rovers). This shows that despite what Ulenberg said, there is still a market for subtitling for children who can read. It also puts paid to the idea that the Netherlands could be on the road to becoming a dubbing country. Older children still eventually come to prefer subtitling, and in all likelihood, they will continue to do so as long as dubbing in the Netherlands is associated with childhood, and watching programmes for adults, which are all subtitled, is associated with growing up.

Now that we have discussed who watches dubbing, we will discuss whether these viewers have bargaining power. Ulenberg presents an argument that is perfectly in line with what I said earlier in the theoretical section. He argues that Dutch viewers are so sceptical towards dubbing that the quality of dubbing has to be high, because Dutch viewers will refuse

to watch films and series if the quality is anything less than good. Audience ratings are very important to clients, because they are important to advertisers. Lower audience ratings means less revenue, and Pel argues that broadcasters therefore watch audience ratings like hawks so that they can intervene if they decline. Nickelodeon, Disney and the NPO (Nederlandse Publieke Omroep, Netherlands Public Broadcasting) do in fact watch audience ratings closely, and conduct research to find out the reason if audience ratings are disappointing (Robroek, Rovers, Van Kollenburg). Ulenberg argues that in order to prevent audience ratings from declining, clients make sure that they pay dubbing studios well enough to provide good quality. However, he says Creative Sounds was never blamed for low audience ratings, so he has not seen this mechanism work out in practice. Also, the argument only holds if the target audience is or is perceived as sceptical towards dubbing. Whereas adults are sceptical towards dubbing, the target audience mostly does not consist of adults, but of children.

Ulenberg appears to think children are very fickle. He mentions numerous things that he claims would cause children to change channels, such as the use of standard language in *Rocket Power*, which is a series with children on skateboards, and inaccurate translations of names in *Harry Potter*. However, Ulenberg also says that in practice, Creative Sounds never experienced a drastic decline in audience ratings of any of the series that they dubbed, so again, Ulenberg has not seen his theory work out in practice. In any case, representatives of clients do not think children are very critical at all. Koch thinks children are too young to disapprove of the quality of dubbing. Rovers says children treat dubbing differently than adults. Children are unfamiliar with the original English-language programme, and therefore, they are not annoyed by the dubbing the way adults are. According to Van Kollenburg, children will watch all dubbing, even if the quality is poor because it was done cheaply. Sometimes, he sees dubbed programmes that the commercial competitors broadcast, and he thinks the quality of the dubbing is really bad, but it does not matter for the audience ratings. Coolman thinks children are not aware when something is dubbed. This goes so far that when *Ned's Survivalgids* was dubbed, the feedback Nickelodeon got was not "Oh, it is dubbed," but rather "Where can I find that place in the Netherlands where yellow buses come to pick up children for school, because I want to go there" (Coolman). Coolman does add, though, that bad dubbing may still cause children not to watch, but only because it makes the whole series less fun to watch. Coolman argues that a bad translation is generally not a funny translation, which means the whole series is not funny, and children do not want to watch it. This may become apparent through lower audience ratings for a series that does just fine elsewhere (Coolman).

When it comes to TV programmes, children do have bargaining power in the sense that if they switch channels because they do not like what they see, broadcasters are bound to notice and to do research so that they can cater to their audience better. However, children are not likely to use this bargaining power, because they are not likely to be even aware of the dubbing, never mind considering it poorly done. The only exception is when the dubbing was done so poorly that the entire programme is no longer enjoyable, but I received no indications of this actually happening. When it comes to DVDs and big screen films, the consumers are usually not the children themselves, but their parents. Nadorp argues that customers can simply decide not to buy DVDs if the dubbing is poor. However, they can only judge the quality if they have seen the product on the DVD in advance. Ulenberg deduces from the fact that children's DVDs sell well that viewers must think the quality of the dubbing is good. He says that no one would buy anything that they considered annoying or not done well. However, if they buy the DVD, that does not necessarily mean that the parents think the dubbing was done well. They could also not care about the quality of the dubbing, or not think that bad dubbing is sufficient reason not to buy DVDs for their children. There are hardly any home-made or subtitled children's DVDs, which means there are few other options.

## Chapter 4: The dubbing process

### *4.1 Evolution of dubbing*

The Netherlands witnessed the evolution of dubbing in much the same way as the FIGS, with one exception. While the switch from analogue to digital recording is hardly mentioned at all in even the most recent literary sources on dubbing in the FIGS, it is hard to overstate just how important this was to the dubbing industry in the Netherlands. According to my interviewees, it changed the face of the Dutch dubbing industry. According to Eggink, in the analogue age, Dutch dubbing was a specialist trade, a relatively small field, with no time or expenses saved. Nadorp relates that analogue recording was incredibly hard work and therefore also really expensive. It required a lot of technical know-how. Eggink adds that actors had to rehearse the takes, because they basically had to be done just right in one go. In an interview in 1987, Gelderman remarked that if a dubbing actor screwed up even once, an entire page of script had to be redone (Boekelman, 1987:31).

Nadorp interestingly argues that during the analogue age, dubbing was so arduous, complicated and expensive that one either dubbed well or did not dub at all. He says that the possibility of slacking off did not enter one's mind, if slacking off was at all possible, for that matter. This argument clearly does not apply to analogue dubbing in the FIGS, because sources from both the analogue and the digital age feature complaints about the poor quality of dubbing. Perhaps, Nadorp is right about analogue dubbing in the Netherlands, or it could be that his picture of analogue dubbing is too rosy for the Dutch industry as well. In any case, his story does show that dubbing was considered something really special.

Nadorp says the Netherlands started to switch from analogue to digital in the early 1990s. Dubbing studios continued to use both analogue and digital technology side by side for a while. At first, the digital system was the back-up, and later, the analogue system became the back-up, before dubbing studios phased out analogue altogether, save for a few exceptions. Ulenberg thinks the switch occurred later. He places it in the second half of the 1990s, and says it happened within a few years. However, Ockhuysen reports in an article that MetaSound, which was the most important Dutch dubbing studio in those days, was no longer using analogue recording as early as 1996 (Ockhuysen, 1996).

Digital recording set off a chain of developments that had a massive impact on the Dutch dubbing industry. Pel argues that digitalisation made Dutch dubbing lose its special status, while that status was the reason why dubbing studios could ask a lot of money for dubbing.

Eggink notes that the improved technology sped up the pace of dubbing. Digitalisation also entailed much cheaper equipment, as both Pel and Eggink note. The switch to digital recording coincided with a huge increase in the quantity of dubbing in the Netherlands. Digitalisation perhaps did not cause an increase in the demand for dubbing, but the fact that digital dubbing could be done much faster and cheaper than analogue dubbing did make it feasible for the dubbing industry to satisfy an increase in demand. To do so, dubbing studios needed more equipment and had to use it more frequently, which made the production of dubbing equipment more common, and that made the price of the equipment decrease even further. Because there was more dubbing going on, dubbing professionals could acquire much more experience, which made them faster and more skilled. According to Eggink, Dutch dubbing professionals have been acquiring more of a routine in dubbing since 2000. Pel agrees that the Dutch dubbing industry has become more professionalised.

According to Nadorp, improved technology had one negative effect on the quality of Dutch dubbing. Nadorp argues that because digitalisation made dubbing much easier, it gave dubbing studios the possibility to slack off, a possibility which Nadorp argues that dubbing studios did not have before. He says that digitalisation gave rise to “quick-and-dirty” dubbing. While other interviewees agree that amateurish dubbing exists, it is not clear that this should be attributed to digitalisation, because analogue dubbing in the FIGS could also have poor quality. Eggink argues that improved technology actually had a positive influence. He says that because of the professionalisation caused by digitalisation and the increase in dubbing assignments, the quality of Dutch dubbing has been improving over the past ten years.

#### *4.2 Production overview*

The dubbing production process in the Netherlands is much the same as in the FIGS. Instead of discussing the whole process again in full, I will briefly touch upon the more interesting tidbits that my interviewees told me about the Dutch dubbing process. In the Netherlands, the tasks of translating and adapting are usually not divided. The translator is expected to hand in a lip-synchronous translation (Pel, Nadorp, Ulenberg). Nadorp does sometimes receive rough translations that have to be adapted, but he much prefers it if the translator already took care of that. Translators are supposed to hand in translations that are ready to be used, but in practice, translations almost always have to be modified during the recording process, and that is fine, as long as the text does not require too many changes (Ulenberg).

My interviewees tell several stories about ways in which translation assignments can go horribly wrong. In half of the dubbings that Bob Kommer Studios does, the responsibility to hire a translator is the client's, and the client then sends it to Nadorp so that he can proceed with the rest of the dubbing process. Clients, however, do not always know what demands a translated script for dubbing should meet. Nadorp sometimes receives translations that are more like rough translations than lip-synchronous translations, while Nadorp was expecting a lip-synchronous translation. He then proceeds to fix the translation himself and charges the client for that. It also happened once or twice that a client promised to send him a suitable translation, but what Nadorp ended up receiving was a subtitling script. A subtitling script is of course useless for dubbing, because it is not lip-synchronous, and the dialogue is condensed by at least 20%. Nadorp also once received a Flemish script, because the client figured Flemish was Dutch too, and had underestimated just how much editing it would require to make the language acceptable to viewers north of the Belgian border. Eggink says it sometimes happens that during the recording process, it is discovered that a translator translated a text by putting it into a translation program, and sent it to the studio without correcting it or improving synchronisation. Translation programs have been improved a lot these days, but they still produce botched translations, and they certainly cannot deliver lip-synchronous translations.

In casting, a dilemma that often occurs is whether or not to pick someone who has a voice that is close to the original, because that does not necessarily mean that this person also has the required acting skills. Nadorp finds good acting skills more important than having exactly the right timbre, but clients are likely not to pick the actor with the best acting skills, but to go for the one with the voice that resembles the original actor's voice most closely. Nadorp objects to this, and argues that it does not matter at all to the viewers, because they will not hear the voices of the original actors anyway. Ulenberg, however, likes staying close to the original timbres, because he argues that the producers of the original had to match the voice to the character too. This argument, of course, only works with animation.

Whereas in the FIGS, big actors such as Robert de Niro and Jennifer Aniston have German, French, Spanish and Italian counterparts, this practice does not exist at all in the Netherlands. One reason for this is that a lot of the dubbing is animation, which takes away the need for such consistency in casting, because viewers do not see the big actors on screen (Pel, Nadorp). Also, Dutch dubbing studios do not use type casting, although the versatility of the dubbing actor's voice does affect how many different kinds of roles they can play (Pel, Eggink).

Dutch dubbing scripts are not meticulously divided into takes. Instead, scripts are lists of entries, whereas each entry (“inzet”) begins when an actor starts to speak and ends when they finish speaking. Exceptions are made if entries are so long that is hard for the actor to keep speaking synchronously, in which case the entry is divided into takes ad hoc. The decision of how to divide an entry into takes is based on logic, pitch, and sometimes the emotions in the entry.

Dutch dubbing does not always involve a dubbing director. In such cases, the sound engineer assumes directing duties (Nadorp, Eggink). The absence of a dubbing director is a tell-tale sign for Eggink that the budget is very low, and that the bar is not set very high.

Bob Kommer Studios is unusual compared to WPP and Creative Sounds. As said before, it is specialised in dubbing for especially large screens. For this purpose, the studio has a recording room with the size and feel of a small movie theatre hall, with two short rows of movie theatre chairs in the centre right part of the room. In front of the chairs, there is a big open space and a large screen covering the wall. There is a lot of room for the actors to move around. This is necessary, because surprisingly, Nadorp believes in Fodor’s idea that actors should perform all movements that the original actor carries out, in order to improve both lip synchrony and performance. That includes lying on the floor in case the actor is lying down, and pretending to be suspended in case the actor is hanging onto something. Nadorp is absolutely convinced that this is necessary to make the voice mesh well with the character on screen. However, Nadorp only accords this high standard of perfection to films. The requirements for dubbing non-large screen productions are a lot less stringent. The actors sit down, the monitors are small, and the dubbing actors do not have to imitate the movements of the original actors.

Bob Kommer Studios is also different compared to other Dutch dubbing studios in another way. While other dubbing studios tend to have recording sessions with just one actor at a time, which is common practice in the FIGS too, Bob Kommer Studios sometimes schedules sessions with multiple actors simultaneously. This is a lot more expensive, because it requires actors to be in the recording studio while merely waiting for someone else to record their lines. Clients never ask to have multiple actors scheduled at once, but Nadorp recommends it to them, and it is only done with films with particularly interactive dialogues, if the budget is big enough, and scheduling succeeds. It is often not possible to schedule multiple actors simultaneously. Nadorp says it makes dialogues sound more natural. He argues that sometimes there is “friction” if dialogue has been recorded with each actor separately, and he claims that some people are sensitive to such friction. However, Nadorp

does not describe this friction in more detail. Ulenberg and Eggink do not consider recording with multiple actors at once necessary. When I ask Eggink whether the absence of the communication partner interferes with the quality of the dubbing, Eggink replies: “I don’t know. I hope I dare to say that by now we have become so experienced with that that the viewer doesn’t notice.”<sup>41</sup> Eggink feels that not having the communication partner physically present is just something dubbing actors have to learn to deal with, and aspiring dubbing actors realise very quickly whether they can deal with it or not. If they cannot, they should just stick to stage acting. Also, both Ulenberg and Eggink surmise that actors would be too caught up in pleasant social interaction to do their job.

Bob Kommer Studios does not always mix their products, because the client often wants to do the mixing themselves (Nadorp). Big screen films and productions for special large screens are usually mixed abroad, while productions for TV or DVD or series can usually be mixed by Bob Kommer Studios. Nadorp finds it quite logical that a producer would not want to outsource the mixing. They did the mixing of the original production, and they can just use the same settings when mixing the dubbed versions. That is much easier than having some studio in the Netherlands rediscover where to put the voices. If the client wants to do the mixing, the project is sent abroad in the desired format (Nadorp).

As in the FIGS, it is not unusual for dubbing professionals in the Netherlands to perform multiple tasks in the dubbing process. Actors and directors sometimes translate. Some actors translate a series in which they then act, and some directors translate a series which they then direct (Eggink). Directors also often work as dubbing actors. There are few cases of sound engineers who double as dubbing actors. Nadorp is an unusual case even for Dutch dubbing. He is not only executive of Bob Kommer Studios; he is also a sound engineer, translator and dubbing director. He thinks being able to perform multiple tasks makes work a lot more fun. He also argues that carrying out multiple steps in the process is a way of saving costs, because having three people perform three tasks can entail a lot of miscommunication, which takes time to resolve. Lips does not think quality is harmed by the practice of having people perform multiple tasks. In fact, she argues that it comes with several advantages. It is cheaper for the studio to have a dubbing actor who also translated the script, because they can record their lines twice as fast. A director who translated the film knows the film very well, and is able to convey the story well to the actors. Moreover, there are three people in the recording

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<sup>41</sup> “Ik weet niet. Ik hoop dat ik de stelling wel aandurf dat we dat inmiddels, dat wij daar zo ervaren in zijn dat je dat niet merkt.”

studio: the actor, the director and the sound engineer, so together, they can look at the dubbing script fairly objectively.

#### *4.3 Bande rythmo*

Pel, Ulenberg and Nadorp are all familiar with the *bande rythmo*, but it is not used anywhere in the Netherlands (Ulenberg). Gelderman says that he would have liked to introduce the *bande rythmo*, but the dubbing studios did not consider it worth the money and effort. Ulenberg says Creative Sounds has not adopted, nor will they adopt the *bande rythmo*, because it is very labour-intensive, makes it hard to modify the script in the recording studio, and clients would never care. Pel also does not like the amount of work involved with getting the *bande rythmo* to work, and adds that actors are not familiar with the system. Interestingly though, Bob Kommer Studios developed software that is reminiscent of the *bande rythmo*. Their software makes the translated script appear on screen instead of on printed paper, just like the *bande rythmo*, but instead of placing the text underneath the screen, it places text right next to the mouth of the character. Beeps and a countdown on screen indicate when an actor has to start speaking. If the actor follows the rhythm of the countdown and starts speaking right after the last beep, they are right on time.

The software also includes a script program, with everything needed to make schedules and quotes, and allows for the possibility to sign entries off when they are recorded and modify entries for an instant 'as recorded' script. Bob Kommer Studios developed this software for large screen projects, but they also use it for TV projects. The software does entail that there are conversion problems sometimes, because the material that clients send is not always in a format that the program can easily deal with. Nevertheless, Nadorp feels that working with the program pays off in the end, because it makes the whole process much smoother, making it cost less time and therefore money.

## Chapter 5: Working conditions

### *5.1 Priorities*

The balance of power between dubbing studios and their clients is as important in the Netherlands as it is in the FIGS, and unfortunately, dubbing studios in the Netherlands also draw the shortest straw. According to Eggink, dubbing studios do have a position of power, but he thinks they are not currently using it, because they feel that the customer is king. Do their customers care about quality, and are they willing to pay for it? Ulenberg claims they do, but he also says that smart clients always try to have something dubbed as cheaply as possible. Sometimes, he says, they expect more while paying the same. Van Kollenburg, as a client, echoes this picture. On the one hand, he claims that the NPO makes sure that they give the dubbing studios enough time and money to do the job properly, because they want the best quality imaginable. On the other hand, Van Kollenburg also says that business acumen entails that the NPO looks for the most competitively priced product. Note that this comes from a supposedly well-paying client.

There are differences among clients. How well they pay is partly determined by the type of product. Big screen films, especially 3D films and dome theatre films, have the highest budgets; cheap DVDs at the Blokker or Kruidvat the lowest (Nadorp, Eggink). Broadcasters are somewhere in-between. Concerning the lower end of the scale, Nadorp repeatedly makes negative comments about distributors. He calls them the weakest link. He says they pay poorly, they are unscrupulous, and do not care about quality at all. They only care about one thing: the product has to enter the market and be dubbed as cheaply as possible.

However, dubbing studios are not always willing to go as low as the client wants. Dubbing studios have minimum prices, a base level below which they are no longer able to deliver good quality (Pel, Nonhof, Ulenberg, Nadorp). If a client wants the dubbing studios to work for less than that, the dubbing studio declines, and asks the client to look elsewhere (Ulenberg). With elsewhere, he means amateur dubbing studios, which exist in the FIGS as well as in the Netherlands. My interviewees refer to them in various disparaging ways: quick and dirty dubbing, attic studios, and cowboys, and they claim not be scared of them, because they could never deliver the same quality as the main dubbing studios, and my interviewees trust that clients care enough about quality not to go to an amateur (Pel, Ulenberg, Nadorp). However, Pel says WPP rarely dismisses clients for not paying well enough, which raises the question how often dubbing studios deem budgets too low, and how often it happens that

dubbing studios end up accepting assignments that perhaps, they should not have, because there is no way that they can still deliver decent quality.

Pel, Nonhof, Winter, Nadorp, and Ulenberg all think that their respective studios are dedicated to delivering good quality, and they all stand for the quality they deliver. However, Pel and Ulenberg both acknowledge that lower budgets must have some influence on the quality somehow. Ulenberg argues that if Creative Sounds still kept the quality high on a low budget, this could cause clients who did pay well to complain. To explain the difference in standards, Pel and Ulenberg both use metaphors involving cars. As Pel argues, one may buy a car for 8,000 Euros or 80,000 Euros. They are both decent cars, but they meet different requirements. However, they claim that even a low-budget production still meets a minimal standard of care and quality. The question is whether their minimum is still good enough.

As in the FIGS, the dubbing industry in the Netherlands is oligopolistic. According to Nadorp, the competition between the main dubbing studios is killing, but he considers himself an outsider because of his niche position with 3D films and films for dome theatres. Pel thinks the competition is not too bad. Every studio has its own regular clients, and the studios fight for the loose assignments that remain (Pel). Both Pel and Nadorp stress the importance of establishing trust and long-lasting relationships with clients. Eggink confirms that such relationships exist, but he adds some nuance:

But also every studio has to deal with fickle clients or clients who suddenly tighten the screws on, [say] that the price definitely has to be lower, and then threaten to switch to a different studio. And that happens, and studios between themselves also try to steal each other's clients sometimes. So they call clients that they don't have, to, 'could we talk?' That all happens. They all think that's, they'd rather not talk about it, but it is true.<sup>42</sup>

Both the NPO and Disney say they commission dubbing to two different dubbing studios (Van Kollenburg, Rovers). The NPO does so even though Van Kollenburg acknowledges that dubbing studios complain that low budgets and tight deadlines have an adverse effect on quality. Eggink, too, has heard complaints from dubbing studios about clients' lack of loyalty, low budgets and having their backs against the wall. He thinks competition is definitely fierce, but also points out that if studio A is willing to work for 40% less than studio B, that says something about the margin that dubbing studios apparently still have. Also, he thought

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<sup>42</sup> "Maar ook elke studio heeft te maken met wispelturige klanten of klanten die ineens dus de duimschroeven aanzetten, dat het voor beslist een lager bedrag moet en dan dreigen over te stappen naar een andere studio. En dat gebeurt ook en ook studio's onderling proberen elkaars klanten af en toe af te pakken. Dus die bellen naar klanten die ze niet hebben om, 'kunnen we niet eens praten?' Dat gebeurt allemaal. Dat vinden ze eigenlijk allemaal, willen ze het er liever niet over hebben, maar het is wel waar."

at least one of the main competitors should have gone bankrupt by now, but none of them have.

Pel, Ulenberg and Nonhof claim that competition does not lead dubbing studios to lower their prices, but Eggink disagrees. In fact, one of the purposes of Samen1Stem is to end the vicious cycle of budgets declining further and further (Eggink). Even Nadorp lets it slip that budgets are actually always too small, although he later on denies that he said that. He agrees with Eggink that there has been a decline going on in budgets, and he does not expect this to end soon.

Eggink cautions against the trend that budgets become so tight that dubbing studios have to speed up the pace and compromise the quality. Nadorp claims that he does not have to rush, but he considers this a luxury position that other dubbing studios cannot afford. Nonhof denies that dubbing professionals have had to work increasingly faster. The increase in pace should be attributed to digitalisation, and as such, is a delight rather than a discomfort (Nonhof). Nonhof does admit that the pace is pretty high sometimes, but he thinks that is the way it should be. Sometimes, the budget does not allow for as much scrutiny as one might wish, in which case, the recording is simply done faster (Nonhof). Eggink confirms this. To Eggink, an easily satisfied dubbing director betrays a low budget. Nonhof argues this is fair trade and the way it should be done. He thinks a good director is able to keep both quality and profit in mind. A director might desire four more days to dub a film, but that is impossible if it results in zero profit. Damningly, Nonhof argues that if one wants to make art, one should not work for a commercial company. However, Nonhof also acknowledges that the pace of production can be really high. At one point, it got so hectic that he thinks the quality WPP delivered was less high, not across the board, but some of the productions were rushed jobs. Tellingly, Nonhof argues that it is only natural that when things get that hectic, WPP is sometimes lucky not to receive complaints from clients. According to Nonhof, it happens sometimes that employees at WPP have to work in such a fashion that they find the work no longer lives up to their own quality standards.

Gelderman, the so-called godfather of Dutch dubbing, thinks the Dutch dubbing industry has changed for the worst these days. He says it has become more industrial and factory-like. An increased focus on cutting costs made him decide not to direct again. The last dubbed film Gelderman directed was *Finding Nemo* in 2003. He surmises that even if he did want to continue directing, he probably would not be hired, because he is too expensive and too perfectionist. People often called him a nitpicker. He claims that because the budget is so much lower these days, the second or at most third recording of an entry is expected to be

good enough. Gelderman thinks dubbing studios are much more easily satisfied than they used to be, and sometimes, he wonders how a dubbing director could have signed off on what he hears in a dubbing.

## *5.2 Reality*

Of course, in order to achieve an ideal working situation that is conducive to high-quality dubbing, the same conditions have to be met as in the FIGS. Qualified people should be hired, there should be training and education, employees should be treated well, and there has to be a quality control system. We will again look into each of these aspects in further detail.

### *5.2.1 Hiring*

Ulenberg tells me that translators who want to work for Creative Sounds often already have experience with translating animation or live action for dubbing. If they do, they can expect to receive assignments immediately. If they do not, Creative Sounds asks them to do a test translation. WPP does this too (Nonhof). The test translation is for an episode that is currently recorded. The director compares the test translation with the actual translation to see how well the aspiring translator did. Ulenberg argues that this test translation prevents Creative Sounds from hiring poor translators.

As Nonhof points out, many translators are also dubbing actors. Nonhof and Ulenberg think it is a good thing that dubbing actors translate, because they know how the system works. A disadvantage for the dubbing studios, however, is that translators who also work as dubbing actors or directors can translate fewer episodes a week than a full-time translator can (Ulenberg, Winter). Five of the participating translators think experience in acting for dubbing influences translation skills in a positive way. They think it makes translators more proficient in many ways, for example, with lip movements and syllables and formatting the scripts, and translators who also work as dubbing actors are much more aware of what happens to their scripts in the studio. Of these five, one says he believes there are also plenty of excellent translators who do not work as dubbing actors. Three say they can imagine some positive influence, but they are not convinced it really makes a difference, because translating and acting are two separate trades. One translator sees no benefit at all.

Dubbing studios are flooded with applications from people who would love to work as a dubbing actor. Eggink says he can imagine that dubbing studios grow tired of receiving so

many applications, and he suggests that perhaps Samen1Stem could take over the task of checking these out and creating a pool of new actors. He says that what happens now is that dubbing studios do not really bother with checking the applications. Instead, if they look for someone new or an actor with a timbre that would be suitable for a particular role, they just ask the dubbing actors who work that day whether they know anyone (Eggink).

WPP receives a lot of applications from people who claim to have good voices who seem to think that this is enough (Pel). Dutch dubbing professionals reiterate time and again, in press interviews as well as in the interviews I did, that dubbing is not about doing funny voices.<sup>43</sup> Having a good voice is not enough, and it is crucial that dubbing actors can actually act. They have to be able to put themselves into the role of a character, and make their lines come across as natural dialogue.

Despite the fact that dubbing studios prefer to work with qualified dubbing actors, clients sometimes make them work with Dutch celebrities, even though these may not have any experience as dubbing actors, or even as actors (Eggink).<sup>44</sup> They are only hired to obtain more publicity. This is becoming more and more common (Nadorp). Celebrities are paid much more for the same amount and the same type of work, while they often take much longer than regular dubbing actors, and cannot do the job as well (Eggink). My interviewees denounce the practice, because pretty faces are worthless in dubbing, because the lack of experience means the quality is lower, and because viewers will recognise the voice, while dubbing should go undetected (Eggink, Nadorp, Pel).

### *5.2.2 Training and education*

Specialist education for dubbing professionals is virtually non-existent in the Netherlands, even for translators. There are no degrees in audiovisual translation, and very few in translation. Only two of the participating translators had received practical translation training or education in the field of translation studies. Lips thinks it has an important effect on translations that there are a lot of people in the dubbing industry who had no education for what they are doing. She argues: “Especially when you begin translating animation, you make a lot of these mistakes, (one or two in each script or episode) simply because most people who

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<sup>43</sup> “Stemmetje” is the literal word that is often used in Dutch in this context. “Stem” means “voice,” “stemmetje” is a diminutive, so it literally means “little voice.” The use of the diminutive here is in a pejorative way.

<sup>44</sup> Chaume informs that this practice of hiring local celebrities for dubbing roles, regardless of their experience, happens in the FIGS too.

translate in this branch are not qualified translators and know enough of the language to translate roughly, but [lack] the finesse.”

WPP and Creative Sounds invite new translators to visit the studio, so that they can attend a few recording sessions to get to know the procedure, and to learn how translations are judged and corrected (Pel, Ulenberg). WPP also has one director who coaches new translators for a while (Winter). Nonhof says WPP considers it very important to give translators a proper training. Because there is no education for this profession, dubbing translators have to learn on the job. Nonhof finds it important that translators get a decent opportunity to learn their trade, and says WPP is more than willing to help them. However, none of the participating translators mention any on-the-job training. Six translators say they learned the job by doing it. Four translators received no training or support at all. Four attended one or more recording sessions. Two received instructions on paper. In one case, the aspiring translator and a dubbing professional had a look at the test translation together. Two translators think dubbing studios do not offer enough training and support, but doubt whether this should be their responsibility. One says there should be education in dubbing, and dubbing studios should not hire newcomers without experience. The other says dubbing studios should require aspiring translators to attend at least one recording session.

There is no degree for dubbing actors either, although in practice, they have often studied at a school of acting. Eggink reckons this is the best degree available for an aspiring dubbing actor. However, Eggink himself did not attend a school of acting. He says there are plenty of exceptions to the rule. Ulenberg adds that dubbing actors sometimes started out in amateur theatre, or they became dubbing actors when they were children. Dubbing actors have to learn on the job as well, even if they went to a school of acting. They learn in the studio how to read time codes and stay in sync with the image. Gelderman suggests that perhaps acting for dubbing should be introduced as a course in schools of acting (Ockhuysen, 1996).

Eggink notes that there are more and more dubbing courses, but he distrusts them, because they cost a lot of money, while according to Eggink, having such courses on a resume does not appeal to dubbing studios at all. Ulenberg does indeed not care about dubbing courses. Nadorp, however, says it shows that the applicant takes dubbing seriously and is prepared to put some effort into it. He thinks it is a good thing that there are more of such courses nowadays, because a beginning dubbing actor has to learn the trade somehow. He also says these courses can remove some of the pressure off of the dubbing studios, who are bothered with applications. I tried to find these courses, but found just one voice course that was specifically for dubbing (animation), offered by stemacteren.nl. Others target anyone

already in or aspiring to enter any voice-related profession, or those already in or aspiring to do voiceover. Geerling of stemacteren.nl informs that the course for dubbing animation only started recently, and it was too early to say anything about results. His voice courses are for novices, and he does not pretend, nor do the participants expect, that completion of the course is guaranteed to result in job offers (Geerling).

There is no degree for dubbing directors. Eggink notes that dubbing directors are usually dubbing actors who are asked whether they would be interested in directing, because they have authority in the recording studio, or show that they know how the process works. Nonhof adds that dubbing directors then have to learn the technical aspects on the job.

There are plenty of degrees for sound engineers at schools of the arts. Nonhof says all sound engineers have a degree in something related to sound. However, even these schools do not offer specialised degrees in dubbing. Nonhof therefore says that even sound engineers have to develop their knowledge and know-how on the job.

### *5.3.3 Treatment of employees*

As in part I, this is where I look into the following aspects: stimulating good performance, paying decent wages, offering job security and benefits, and minding status.

#### *5.3.3.1 Stimulating performance*

Nonhof argues that the quality of dubbing is always related to the working conditions. If the working conditions are not good, that automatically results in lower quality. However, Nonhof thinks the working conditions at WPP are just fine. The facilities are good, the wages are ok, and the conditions in the recording studio are comfortable. I suggest that workers might complain about not having enough time to do their jobs, but he equates that with complaining about air-conditioning or not being able to turn up the heat. He does not seem to take the notion seriously that an employee could have serious complaints about working conditions at WPP, and if they did, then they could just leave the company. Eggink thinks that dubbing professionals do complain a lot about their work, but do generally enjoy their jobs nevertheless. He reckons they complain because it is a Dutch trait to complain about everything. Nadorp says that the work atmosphere is always great. He relates: “There is this creative tension. People work to accomplish something, and the elation that everyone

experiences when a project is done and, wow, look at what we pulled off together, the team spirit is very strong. [...] Especially at three o'clock in the morning.”<sup>45</sup>

According to Ulenberg, the work atmosphere at Creative Sounds is very good. He finds it very important not to pressure the employees, because he thinks that if he did that, they would refuse to cooperate out of spite. He also stresses the importance of inquiring how people feel. Nonhof remarks that very high stress can get in the way of a good work atmosphere, because it causes mistakes to be made and the quality to decrease, while everyone wants to stand for good quality, and loves their job too much to do a poor job (Nonhof).

Unfortunately, stress can get pretty high in Dutch dubbing studios. Nadorp explains that while he plans projects neatly in succession, in practice, time overruns occur with nearly every project due to various mishaps, which sometimes causes projects to pile up to the point where he does not know how he is going to get through. Nonhof says the amount of stress depends on the number of projects WPP is dealing with at once, and how reasonable the deadlines are. At any given moment, WPP is juggling twenty productions at the same time, and deadlines can be so unreasonable sometimes that nothing is allowed to go wrong, and even a dubbing actor with a cold can be a major problem (Winter, Nonhof). Due to the resulting stress, people can get close to a burnout (Nadorp, Nonhof, Winter).

My interviewees agree that a good translation is very important. They argue that cutting costs on translation is ineffective, because fixing a translation in the recording studio takes a lot of time, while time spent in the recording studio is very expensive. The participating translators have varying opinions on how important dubbing studios consider translations. Five of them think dubbing studios consider translations important or very important. Six of them think dubbing studios do consider translations important, but add the following: the studios appear ignorant of what it takes to translate well; if good translators are unavailable, studios are just as content with less experienced or bad translators; studios who think they need a large output cannot afford to consider translations important; and that studios think translations are important does not show from translators' wages or the way studios evaluate translators.

Six of the translators say dubbing studios do not try hard enough to acquire good translations. This lack of effort shows from the anger of directors caused by poor translations, and from the fact that the time pressure is usually too high, that better translators are not paid

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<sup>45</sup> “Er is een creatieve spanning. Er moet iets gepresteerd worden en de blijdschap die iedereen toch ervaart op het moment dat het af is en, van, wow, dat hebben we toch maar met z'n allen, dat teamgevoel, dat is heel sterk. [...] Zeker om drie uur 's nachts.”

more, and that too many people are put on one series. Eight translators mention that short deadlines cause time pressure. Also, eight translators say time pressure leads to lower quality, although they say the errors are minor. Nine translators say they can afford to refuse assignments if they think the working conditions are too poor, and eleven say they are content with the quality of their work.

### *5.3.3.2 Wages*

As in the FIGS, Dutch translators are not paid very well at all. Eggink calculates that a translator earns roughly 11 Euros per hour. According to Gelderman, being underpaid motivates the translators to rush, which makes the quality of the translation poorer. Six of the participating translators say that the wages are too low. Two say they have been frozen for ten years. Being underpaid, however, is not the only issue translators have with their wages. Assignments may vary widely in content and difficulty, but this difference is not reflected in the wages. Consequently, whether a translator is underpaid or not depends on the difficulty of the assignments. One participating translator remarks that some assignments take so much time that the net pay is less than a domestic worker's. "In those cases, I am better off cleaning the neighbours' lavatory."

Acting for dubbing does not pay very well either (Winter). According to Nadorp and Eggink, fees for dubbing actors are a lot lower than fees in comparable trades, but pretty decent compared to office jobs, healthcare and construction. There is no clear wage categorisation system for Dutch dubbing actors (Nadorp, Ulenberg, Eggink). Ulenberg says actors with more experience do get paid more, but it is not the case that certain actors always get main roles, and thus higher wages than others. Eggink thinks that there are roughly three categories though: those who just started, those with more experience, and those with more experience who can also work fast.

Ulenberg tells me that one complaint he regularly hears is that his workers do not earn enough money, but he thinks personnel is always likely to complain about being underpaid, and he does not think that this is a characteristic of the dubbing industry. Contradicting himself, he also says that employees at Creative Sounds, except dubbing actors, think they earn enough money to do their jobs well. Eggink considers low wages a problem, for translators as well as dubbing actors. In fact, he thinks working conditions are pretty decent, except for the wages. Nadorp thinks some dubbing professionals who have dubbing as their sole income sometimes have to accept more work than they can handle.

Eggink argues passionately that dubbing professionals are all much more dedicated to their work than workers in non-artistic professions, such as bank workers. According to Eggink, dubbing professionals perform their jobs with passion and conviction, and they want to do their best, even if they are not paid well. However, Eggink also contradicts himself. He worries that low pay causes the overall quality to decrease, and that it provides translators in particular with an incentive to look for ways to finish their work as quickly as possible, for example, by not watching the film or not bothering to translate idiomatic language well. When I confront Eggink with this contradiction, he replies that people do not always do what they say.

Dubbing professionals can ask for wage increases, and according to Eggink, these are sometimes given. However, he also knows of plenty of colleagues who demanded a wage increase who then no longer got hired. Samen1Stem is trying to get dubbing studios to increase wages, and has been actively negotiating with dubbing studios concerning that subject. A lot of the discussion is about whether there should be wage categorisation, and how that should work. Moreover, Samen1Stem wants more openness about the wages of dubbing actors, so that individual dubbing actors can see how their wages rank compared to those of others. More importantly though, Eggink just wants hourly rates to be raised across the board. According to Eggink, wages have been stagnant for fifteen years. Therefore, he proposes an increase of 5% per year over the course of five years, to repair the injustice of stagnant wages. Also, he wants wages to be corrected for inflation, which he says they have not been.

#### *5.3.3.3 Job security, benefits and status*

As in the FIGS, Dutch dubbing professionals have to deal with the lack of continuity of work. Nadorp and Nonhof say there is never a guarantee of work. Pel and Ulenberg say it just depends on how busy the studio is. Nonhof says WPP gladly uses the services of returning employees, because they know how the company works. Therefore, sound engineers and directors can work with WPP for many years. Eggink argues that freelancers who do their job well, do not nag all the time, keep their appointments and make their deadlines, they can be fairly sure that dubbing studios will hire them again. That is a good way to get at least a halfway decent income in the dubbing industry. Nevertheless, many dubbing professionals do not have their dubbing trade as their total income. Nonhof points out that it is theoretically possible for a translator to subsist on dubbing only, but in practice, it hardly ever happens. There are also very few full-time dubbing actors. Nonhof and Eggink remark that

paradoxically, especially very good dubbing actors are sometimes out of work. This can be because they have become too recognisable or too expensive, or because dubbing studios expect them to be busy already.

Nonhof is optimistic about the availability of professional ladders to climb. He says even people who were initially hired for menial jobs can develop and acquire entirely different functions, and some translators eventually became dubbing directors. Ulenberg notes that this has not happened at Creative Sounds. There are different levels within dubbing trades: there are junior and senior sound engineers and directors, assignments for translators and actors range from very low-budget things to big screen films. Big screen films are also the ultimate attainable assignment for dubbing actors (Nonhof, Eggink). However, dubbing actors cannot be assured that they will feature in a big screen film at some point if they just work hard enough, and acquiring a main role in a big screen film is made more difficult by the fact that these roles are often snatched up by Dutch celebrities who may or may not have any experience in dubbing (Eggink).

As in the FIGS, Dutch dubbing studios hire most of their employees as freelancers. Nadorp thinks it is very important that dubbing studios only have to pay their employees when they need their services. All dubbing studios hire translators and actors on a freelance basis. Sound engineers are permanently employed at WPP and Bob Kommer Studios. Creative Sounds hires them through an agency. Dubbing directors are sometimes permanently employed at WPP and hired as freelancers at the other companies. Eggink is unhappy with the fact that dubbing professionals miss out on social benefits because of being employed as freelancers, because in the dubbing industry, as well as in some other branches such as healthcare and construction, workers do not really have a choice but to become freelancers. The dubbing industry refuses to employ them permanently, save a few exceptions. The relatively low wages mean that it can be challenging to make a living, never mind having to provide for old age or pay for insurance. Eggink estimates that 90% does not have money for disability insurance.

With few exceptions, Dutch dubbing professionals do not receive royalties or repeat fees. Clients make sure they retain all the rights over the productions (Pel, Nadorp, Eggink). Eggink laments that the position of dubbing professionals is much stronger in the surrounding countries. Because there was never a labour union that looked out for dubbing professionals, they have a weak position. Nadorp adds that contracts specify that dubbing actors are bought out for eternity, and sometimes even within this universe and outside of it. Pel knows it irks dubbing actors that they do not receive repeat fees, because series are often rerun, sometimes

many times. Eggink argues that repeat fees could constitute a kind of pension fund. Eggink: “We think that this really has to be changed, that it’s unseemly to rerun series years on end that we worked on without us receiving any additional remuneration for that. And some series have been rerun for ten years.”<sup>46</sup> Eggink points out that the law states that there should be reasonable remuneration. Therefore, he feels that the arguments are on their side.

Another issue that really bothers dubbing professionals is that they often do not appear in the credits anymore, although that depends on the type of product. There are no credits after episodes of TV series (Eggink, Van Kollenburg, Rovers, Robroek). Programmes broadcast by the NPO do note at the beginning which dubbing studio did the dubbing (Van Kollenburg). Disney films and DVDs do have ending credits (Rovers). Nonhof is very articulate about this matter. He complains: “Personally, I find [it] tragic and bothersome and bad. I also think it is a sort of disdain for the work that we do, to be honest. [...] I truly think it is a disgrace.”<sup>47</sup> He argues that it is a shame that clients are unwilling to pay to put dubbing professionals in the credits, because children are all very eager to know who dubbed the characters they just saw. Perhaps it is a small consolation that journalists who write about particular dubbings generally include a list of the involved dubbing actors.

When I discussed status with my interviewees, it soon became clear that it is important to acknowledge that status can be interpreted in multiple ways. As Nadorp puts it, one can either look at the height of income or how much workers enjoy or are expected to enjoy their jobs. Eggink thinks the status is low in terms of wages, but the general public finds dubbing jobs interesting. Nadorp adds that they figure dubbing jobs are more interesting than office jobs. Nadorp thinks dubbing professionals score well in terms of job satisfaction. According to Eggink, dubbing professionals do not care about status much. They simply work hard for their money.

As in the FIGS, translators do not have influence on the process after they have handed in their translations. Eight of the participating translators confirm this. There are some exceptions, for example, if a translator also has a part as a dubbing actor. Being present in the recording studio makes it possible to comment on suggested changes. Several translators deplore the changes that are made to their translations, because they do not always think these

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<sup>46</sup> “We vinden dat dat écht moet veranderen, dat het geen pas geeft om jaar in, jaar uit series waarbij we aan hebben meegewerkt te herhalen zonder dat daar enige vergoeding meer tegenover staat. En er zijn series die worden al 10 jaar herhaald.”

<sup>47</sup> “Dat vind ik zelf heel tragisch en vervelend en slecht. Ik vind het ook een soort minachting voor het werk wat we doen, eerlijk gezegd. [...]Ik vind het echt schande.”

are improvements. Six of the translators say they do not think translators should have more influence, because it is not part of their job, and it is impossible due to time and budget limits.

I asked the translators to estimate their position on the professional ladder with the intent to get them to say something about their status. However, this question could also be interpreted in terms of wages, which entails that the replies were not very useful if translators did not clarify whether they referred to wages or status. However, they did offer some interesting comments. One translator estimates her position as follows: “Hahaha, in the basement 😊” Another nice response is: “I do not know, but I think I cannot see the lawyer from my step, but I can see the refuse collector.”

Four of the translators are content with their status. Five translators say or imply that they do not care about status. One adds that that is a good thing because of the lousy status. Another adds that he just likes the job, which is all that matters. Four translators are not content.

#### *5.3.4 Quality control system*

As in the FIGS, Dutch dubbing studios do not have quality control systems. Rather, they trust their employees to have the sense of honour to provide good quality (Nadorp). According to Ulenberg, quality control occurs pretty much automatically at every stage of the process by the people who are involved. However, quality control is not entirely haphazard. At Creative Sounds, a director watches the footage before the recording process starts. Nadorp says he does this too, with films, but not with series. He watches films in advance to check whether the information the client supplied about the production is correct, because the client may have had an interest in presenting a rosier picture of the product, and also because the script is often not the ‘as recorded’ script, and may contain errors. Nadorp reads the original script while watching the film, while at Creative Sounds, the director reads the translation while doing so. Nadorp argues that watching the film in advance is an investment, but it does pay off in the sense that it makes the planning and the budget more accurate. He explains: “Imagine that someone was not entered into the script, while he does feature in the film.”<sup>48</sup> Nadorp does not know whether the investment truly pays off in terms of time and money, but it is a matter of peace of mind.

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<sup>48</sup> “Want stel je voor zeg. Dat er toch nog iemand niet in het script is geschreven die er wel in zit.”

Pel and Ulenberg argue that the mixing phase is a good opportunity for checking, because the sound engineer has to examine everything in great detail. Both WPP and Creative Sounds have a final check after everything is done. At Creative Sounds, a sound engineer is told to watch the dubbed material. His only task at that point is to watch everything again, and he is not allowed to do anything else. Ulenberg says Creative Sounds does not have time for this, but they do it anyway. At WPP, one department watches the productions entirely to double check for any missed entries or anything else that might have gone wrong. Pel notes that this is purely a technical check, and not a check on the content. The content is the responsibility of the director.

## Chapter 6: Quality

### 6.1 Purpose of dubbing

Dutch dubbing has to meet the same demands to classify as good dubbing as dubbing in the FIGS. My interviewees name all of the criteria that I mentioned in part I, although they also mention some additional criteria. The main priority is for the dubbing to go unnoticed (Pel, Nadorp). Nadorp comments: “If [the viewer] forgets after five minutes that it is a dubbing and is absorbed into the story and is no longer bothered by [the fact that it is a dubbing] and is absorbed into what a film is, a film is and sound and image and total experience. If that total experience simply continues, then that is complete perfection.”<sup>49</sup> It has to be noted that even for this hypothetical best result, Nadorp allows the viewer to initially realise that they are watching a dubbing. Pel emphasises that dubbing is always subordinate to the product, and should therefore not attract attention. To have a viewer say that the dubbing was done well is only the second best compliment. For this reason, viewers should not be able to identify the dubbing actors by recognising their voices. All they should think about the voices is that they fit the characters well.

Nadorp regards it as his studio's duty to protect Dutch language and culture. He says he does not want to go along with the dumbing down of Dutch society. He does not refrain from using difficult words, and abhors SMS language. While protecting the Dutch language, however, Nadorp takes into account that language is a living thing. Some expressions that used to be incorrect may one day become correct use of language. Also, he says it is important to observe that there is a difference between spoken and written language. Pel does not think WPP should protect Dutch language and culture. He emphasises that WPP is out to make a profit. The language that is used in dubbed products is definitely under scrutiny, but only for commercial intentions and not from an idealistic point of view. Caring about using correct and appropriate language results in more clients.

There are two additional concerns related to language that were not addressed in part I. First of all, dubbed language should not contain fashionable expressions, because dubbings should ideally still be usable in ten years' time, and any expressions that are no longer in common use among viewers could distract them (Pel, Van Kollenburg). Secondly, Dutch

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<sup>49</sup> “Als die het na vijf minuten vergeten, als die na vijf minuten vergeten is dat het een nasynchronisatie is en meegaat in het verhaal en zich daar niet meer door laat storen en meegaat in zoals een film is, een film is én audio én beeld en totale beleving. Als die totale beleving gewoon doorgaat, dan is dat de perfectie in top.”

dubbing studios have to consider the fact that many Dutch dubbings, up to 99% in the case of Creative Sounds' productions, will be aired in Belgium as well. As a consequence, translators cannot use Dutch words that do not occur in Flemish (Pel, Ulenberg, Nadorp). Pel argues that broadcasting in Belgium is an extra incentive to make sure that the language is correct, because the Flemish are even stricter about correct Dutch than the Dutch are.

As in the FIGS, Dutch dubbing studios may also feel compelled to apply censorship, although Pel takes exception to the use of the word "censorship." This is a result of the fact that Dutch dubbing is mostly targeted at children. Ulenberg argues: "You have a duty to society, because you're making something public that can become very popular."<sup>50</sup> He cautions that children could start to use bad language because they hear it on TV, and he does not want them to hear it in any of the series that Creative Sounds dubs. Therefore, Creative Sounds bans all bad language and discrimination from their dubbing. Fortunately for Ulenberg, none of the clients want cursing in their series either. Ulenberg finds it very important to protect children, especially because a lot of children are made to watch TV while unsupervised. He says: "We consider it a big responsibility towards the Dutch children that you know what you serve up to them."<sup>51</sup> Eggink also thinks it is a duty of dubbing studios not to use bad language. Winter, on the other hand, says bad language does sometimes occur in the series that WPP dubs, and it is not the default position of WPP that bad language is not allowed. How much bad language is used depends on the personal preference of the director as well as the age category. Bad language is less of a problem in a production that is targeted at older children. Eggink singles out children aged up until four and Nadorp children in-between four and eight as more vulnerable age groups that need more protection from bad language.

## 6.2 Reality

Nadorp's reply to my question whether the quality of Dutch dubbing has decreased because of tightening budgets is fairly ominous. He says it is not so bad, because it is for a limited target audience, and he wonders whether young viewers are critical enough to experience differences in quality. Of course, whether children can detect bad quality or not has nothing to do with whether quality is objectively decreasing. Eggink has a stance on

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<sup>50</sup> "Je hebt een maatschappelijke functie, omdat je namelijk iets in de openbaarheid brengt wat heel erg populair kan zijn."

<sup>51</sup> "Wij ervaren dat als een grote verantwoording naar de Nederlandse kinderen toe dat je weet wat je ze voorschotelt."

quality that he himself admits is paradoxical. On the one hand, he says the quality of Dutch dubbing is increasing, because of more professionalisation. On the other hand, he also warns of the effect of tightening budgets. According to Eggink, because of the current trend, all factors that contribute to good quality are under pressure, and he would like that pressure to be released.

Nadorp and Nonhof think Dutch dubbings always betray that they are not originals, but they seem to think this is a natural consequence of dubbing, and not due to the quality of Dutch dubbing. Ulenberg thinks that in some cases, dubbings betray their nature, but in other cases, such as with animation films, it is hard to tell that it is not a home-made production. He thinks many Dutch people never realise that these products are imported, because they never hear the original productions. Eggink evasively says that dubbings do not betray the fact that they are not originals if they were done well.

Nadorp and Nonhof acknowledge that tight budgets can lead to lesser quality. Nadorp remarks that if the price is badly under pressure, that is almost a guarantee that the quality will be less. Nonhof says that when he sees finished projects that were rushed jobs, he can tell that the quality is lower. Van Kollenburg relates that the NPO sometimes recommissions dubbing for series that have already been dubbed in Dutch, because they think the quality is too poor. He says these series had been dubbed, for example, for DVD or for Cartoon Network. Eggink thinks everything he sees on TV or in cinemas is dubbed fine, but the same does not apply to DVDs. According to Eggink, even the main six dubbing studios sometimes do dubbings of which the quality is very poor, despite the fact that dubbing studios themselves claim they can still achieve an acceptable level of quality even with tight budgets. Eggink has worked for multiple productions where he could tell, by the pace of recording, for instance, that the quality would be really low. He says these productions are those DVDs that end up at the Blokker or Kruidvat. He refuses to watch DVDs from the Blokker or Kruidvat that he collaborated on, because he knows the quality is poor, and he does not want to see just how poor it is. He estimates that the quality of perhaps 5 to 10% of all productions is so poor that he would refuse to watch it even if he was in it. According to Eggink, the main fault of these low-budget, poor-quality dubbings is that they are not lip-synchronous.

The participating translators show that despite not splitting the tasks of translating and adapting, dubbed Dutch is not immune to literal translations of idiomatic language. Lips thinks such errors are usually caused by lack of time rather than lack of expertise. Underneath are examples of inaccurate translation provided by the translators:

Source text: armed concrete  
Translation: legerbeton  
Back-translation: army concrete  
Correct translation: gewapend beton

Source text: back-to-back  
Translation: rug tegen rug  
Back-translation: back-to-back (physically)  
Correct translation: opeenvolgend (consecutive)

Source text: not on my watch  
Translation: niet op mijn horloge  
Back-translation: not on my (wrist) watch  
Correct translation: niet zolang ik de baas ben (not while I am in charge)

Source text: you rock!  
Translation: jij steen!  
Back-translation: you, rock! ('rock' = noun instead of verb)  
Correct translation: jij bent te gek! (you are awesome!)

Source text: copycat  
Translation: kopieerkat  
Back-translation: cat that uses a copy machine  
Correct translation: na-aper

Source text: mullet  
Translation: zeebarbeel  
Back-translation: mullet (the fish, not the hairdo)  
Correct translation: matje

Source text: this is a wrap  
Translation: dat is mooi ingepakt  
Back-translation: that is wrapped nicely  
Correct translation: het zit erop

### *6.3 Dutch dubbese*

The concept of dubbese seemed completely alien to my interviewees. They had never heard of that word before, and I had not expected them to, but as I explained what dubbese entailed, it did not seem that they entirely understood. Eggink thinks dubbed Dutch has not acquired characteristics that distinguish it from everyday Dutch. Pel says WPP always tries to prevent that. Nadorp first says dubbed Dutch is perhaps a little bit different from everyday Dutch, but he is unable to come up with any examples when I ask him to.

Pel claims WPP never uses written language in dubbing, and Ulenberg claims the productions of Creative Sounds never have inappropriate shifts in the formality of language.

Eggink thinks he has never seen translations that were too formal, and he comments that dubbing for animation generally does not care about the rules, which also applies to the language in it.

When I ask Nadorp whether certain words or expressions occur that are often translated in a certain way for the sake of lip synchrony, while they are not accurate translations, he responds affirmatively, but he is unable to give me any examples. Eggink thinks the desire for lip synchrony does not motivate dubbing professionals to use incorrect language to make it fit, but they may, however, tinker with the syntax a bit: put parts of sentences in different places than where the translator had originally put them. Pel cannot imagine the occurrence of unnatural lexical expressions in dubbed Dutch, but he does point to a phenomenon of correct, but slightly unusual expressions that become really popular among children due to the use of them on TV. To illustrate this, he shows me a *Spongebob* talking action figure. Dutch children started using the word “tartaarsaus” [tartar sauce] themselves too. Nadorp raises the argument that with some expressions that originated from English, such as ‘ok’, it is hard to find out what caused the expression to be adopted, and therefore, it is possible that the adoption was caused by dubbing. Nevertheless, Nadorp cannot imagine that deviant use of language in dubbings would affect everyday language use in the Netherlands.

Pel, Nadorp, Ulenberg and Eggink acknowledge that anglicisms do sometimes occur in Dutch, but the dubbing studios all try to prevent those. Eggink thinks there are not a lot of them. Ulenberg mentions one example of an anglicism. Sometimes, the simple past is used in dubbed Dutch where the simple past is used in English, whereas the present perfect would be normal in standard Dutch. Beerekamp mentions an example of this in an article: “Ik liep een verkoudheid op, zwom jij ook gisteren?” [I caught a cold, did you also swim yesterday?] (Beerekamp, 2001:15). Ulenberg does not think that children would suddenly adopt this erroneous use of tense just because they hear it on TV.

#### *6.4 Reception*

No experiments have been carried out concerning the reception of dubbed films and series. There has been one experiment on the reception of dubbed commercials, however. Research conducted by Debby Damen for a bachelor's degree indicated that the Dutch disapproval of dubbing runs so deep that dubbing has an adverse effect on the appeal of commercials. In the case of dubbing as opposed to original versions, the participants considered the commercial as well as the spokesperson in it to be “unreliable, incompetent,

unnatural and inauthentic,”<sup>52</sup> which “resulted in a negative view of both the commercial and the brand in that commercial.”<sup>53</sup> Participants were consequently less likely to try, buy or recommend the product (Damen, 2011).

Strikingly, my interviewees know very little about how the Dutch public feels about the quality of dubbing. As Pel notes, dubbing studios receive little to no feedback from the consumers of their products. Creative Sounds did once receive a complaint from a viewer, an educationalist, who thought the main character in the Dutch version of *Dora* was much too bossy and forceful, and said she would never allow her child to watch the series again. Ulenberg did not take the complaint very seriously, as he reckons *Dora* is probably the most innocent children’s series on TV right now. In general, Ulenberg says the audience complains about hearing the same voices over and over.

Nadorp addresses one problem that makes it more difficult to ascertain how the Dutch feel about the quality of Dutch dubbing, which is that many Dutch people dismiss dubbing wholesale. It is hard, yet absolutely necessary, to penetrate the bias against dubbing if one desires a verdict that is based on an actual appraisal of the quality of particular Dutch dubbings rather than a verdict on the concept of dubbing itself. Another issue that Nadorp addresses is that if a good dubbing does not attract any attention, it has the result that the audience does not have an opinion about it. Therefore, an audience would never be able to say that a dubbing was done well. If it caught their attention, that is because it was not done well, and then they are going to think that the dubbing was bad.

### *6.5 Suggestions for improvement*

Some possible improvements were already discussed in chapter 3: dubbing studios could become more efficient by adopting common standards with regard to script making among other things, by keeping records of the pronunciation of foreign names, and working with computers instead of paper. Bob Kommer Studios’ software, with its resemblance to the *bande rythmo* in the respect that it also allows actors to read their lines on screen, could be a huge asset to other dubbing studios too.

Ulenberg thinks Creative Sounds is already working as efficiently as they possibly could, and therefore, he cannot come up with any possible improvements in the dubbing process. Nadorp also finds it hard to think of anything, but he does mention that it would be nice if the

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<sup>52</sup> “onbetrouwbaar, incompetent, onnatuurlijk en niet authentiek.”

<sup>53</sup> “resulteerde in een negatieve houding ten opzichte van zowel de reclame als het merk in die reclame.”

source language scripts that clients sent were more accurate. The improvement that Nonhof suggests is fairly obvious: he would like more money. He would like to have just a bit more time and devote yet a bit more attention to his work, and perhaps employ more people permanently instead of being dependent on freelancers, because it sometimes happens that WPP wants to hire someone for an assignment who is working for another company at that moment. However, he cautions that more time is no panacea. Infinite time would allow him to make the actor rerecord his part indefinitely, but there is no guarantee that that would actually improve the part.

In addition to adopting common standards, Eggink thinks Dutch dubbing studios should communicate much more with each other. In fact, Eggink encourages the studios to unite, so that they can share a minimum price. This makes it easier for them to prevent clients from asking them to work below a certain base level. If a client refuses to pay the minimum price of united dubbing studios, they are forced to turn to smaller, less professional dubbing studios. Eggink hopes that this would cause clients to realise that the quality of amateur studios is so much lower that they would return to one of the six main dubbing studios. However, this would only work if the trade union contains all of the dubbing studios that are capable of delivering high quality, and if a choice for low-quality dubbing really harms the client. This would not be the case if low-quality dubbing does not affect audience ratings or sales figures.

## Summary

The Netherlands became a subtitling country due to a combination of an open-minded attitude towards foreign languages and a lack of money. The Dutch also feared the influence of English, but this was ignored by the government. If the government had decided to ban foreign-language films and subsidise the Dutch film industry, the Netherlands could also have become a dubbing country, notwithstanding difficulties to make dubbing profitable.

For a long time, the needs of children were mostly neglected. A lot of programming for children was subtitled, although children could not understand the subtitles. When children's channels decided to dub for children, the audience ratings went through the roof. Three developments occurred: dubbing became the default mode of translation for children's programmes, children who can already read now also watch dubbing, and dubbing live action is no longer taboo. Although there is hopeful speculation that children will now skip becoming accustomed to subtitling, and instead continue to prefer dubbing, this is not happening so far. Children's channels broadcast some of their programmes both dubbed and subtitled. The subtitling is to cater to teenagers. Most dubbing is still for children, and it is predominantly animation rather than live action, although this is becoming more common.

The Dutch dubbing industry has become much more professionalised due to an increase in demand and a growing ability, due to digitalisation, to meet the demand. Dutch dubbing studios do have international partnerships, in contrast to what Chaume said. They do, however, differ from each other in ways that make them inefficient. Efficiency, in any case, does not appear to be their strongest point.

Until recently, dubbing professionals basically were not represented by labour unions, but now they have association Samen1Stem to fall back on. There have not yet been any strikes, although Eggink thinks it should be an option as a last resort. As in the FIGS, producers stay aloof, clients care more or less about quality, and clients have a powerful position compared to dubbing studios. The dubbing process is also much the same, although the Netherlands does not split the tasks of translating and adapting, and there are no 'alter egos.'

It is true that Dutch adults are very sceptical towards dubbing. However, the target audience of dubbing is not these sceptical adults, but children. Children make much less fuss about dubbing. They are generally not aware of it, which may be caused by not knowing what it is. Children will, however, change channels if a programme fails to entertain them, which

can be caused by poor dubbing. The fact that they will use this means of bargaining power makes clients and dubbing studios very concerned about their audience.

The Dutch dubbing industry also struggles with heavy competition, low budgets and tight deadlines. Dubbing studios and clients do profess to care for quality, but they may not do as they say. It requires an outside view and more research to determine to what extent quality is actually cared for. There is no specialist education for dubbing professionals at all in the Netherlands. Everyone has to learn on-the-job. There is a lot of stress, low wages, workers are freelancers who have fewer rights than their colleagues in the FIGS, and there are no quality control systems. The dubbing studios have the same demands concerning quality as in the FIGS, although they also have extra demands that are related to the fact that their target audience is children. Unfortunately, too little is known about the quality of dubbing, the possible existence of Dutch dubbese, and about the reception of dubbing to draw any conclusions about those matters.

## CONCLUSION

First of all, I return to my suggestion in the theoretical section that we should call dubbing part of dominant culture in the FIGS and part of emergent culture in the Netherlands. Without a doubt, the concept of “dominant culture” appears to be apply to dubbing in the FIGS, but the position of dubbing in the Netherlands is less straightforward. Most of the Dutch dislike and distrust dubbing, as I predicted, but instead of having to try hard to win them over, the Dutch dubbing industry bypasses this reluctant audience and finds itself more willing ears. For children, dubbing rather than subtitling is the default mode of choice. Ironically, this entails that the Dutch dubbing industry, just like those in FIGS, has got itself a mostly uncritical audience, although children are perhaps slightly more critical, because they can and they will change channels if they do not enjoy what they are watching. Ulenberg’s argument was that the fact that the Dutch dislike and distrust dubbing, which is caused by the position of dubbing as a part of emergent culture, provides an impetus for dubbing studios to provide better quality. This argument does not hold, which casts doubts on the usefulness of the concept “emergent culture” here. However, dubbing is clearly emergent culture in the Netherlands in the sense that the practice is becoming more and more common, and is slowly gaining more acceptance.

Because of the mostly uncritical audience, perhaps it is no wonder that what is most remarkable about dubbing in the FIGS and in the Netherlands is just how strikingly similar the two are. They have the same involved parties, the same balances of power between those parties, the same production process, the same low budgets and tight deadlines, and the same other circumstances that are not conducive to creating the best possible dubbing. Beyond size, the only way the different position of dubbing in the Netherlands appears to be reflected is in the poorer labour union situation, the absolute lack of specialist education, and the lack of rights for dubbing professionals.

Gelderman suggests that quality was more important when dubbing in the Netherlands was still rather uncommon. Nowadays, Dutch dubbing studios still do not have as much experience as their counterparts in the FIGS, but it certainly cannot be said that they lack expertise. The Dutch dubbing industry has become more professionalised, and the dubbing studios appear to know exactly what they are doing. However, if Gelderman is right, the accumulation of experience went hand in hand with a decrease in attention for quality. This is the exact reverse of Vöge’s argument that lesser experience should automatically result in poorer quality.

I have to conclude, regrettably, that the data produced by this research do not offer sufficient information for drawing conclusions about the level of quality in the Netherlands compared to that in the FIGS. This subject is so sizable that one could write another thesis based on the results of that project alone. In fact, I think that is exactly what should be done, and I strongly recommend that other Dutch students or scholars also venture into the almost virgin territory of Dutch dubbing. Also, there is still a lot more research that can be done into dubbing in the FIGS.

More research is required into dubbings as objects, which is what I set out not to do. Researchers should continue to compare original-language versions to their translated versions. They could look into what influence the amount of expertise and the manner of dubbing (analogue or digital) have on the quality of dubbing, and to what extent the type of product (for instance, big-screen films as opposed to cheap DVDs) affects the level of quality. As for the FIGS, research into dubbings as objects is required to establish conclusively whether less-than-ideal working conditions really should be blamed for the flaws in dubbing that have been documented. The best way to do that is to explore the working conditions during the production process of particular dubbings, and to examine the quality of the final products. This, however, would require permission from the dubbing studios to poke about, and it is not at all certain that they would grant this.

A lot of uncertainty remains pertaining to the low budgets and tight deadlines. Exactly what constitutes a low budget or an unreasonably tight deadline? What are common budgets and deadlines in the industries in the FIGS and in the Netherlands? How much time and money can dubbing studios reasonably request from clients so that they can offer sufficiently decent working conditions, and produce dubbings that, at the very least, do not suffer from flaws that could be considered unacceptable in dubbing? The last question gives rise to one that is more usual for Translation Studies: exactly what traits should be considered unacceptable in dubbing? One could argue that if a dubbing does not make the viewer stop enjoying what they are watching, the dubbing is good enough. However, a dubbing can contain quite a few serious flaws without getting to that stage, and it is virtually impossible for the viewers of dubbings to influence the level of quality that dubbing studios deliver. Perhaps they are not aware that dubbing could be better, but they certainly would not mind if dubbing studios could meet higher standards. Therefore, more needs to be written about that subject as well. For anyone who wishes to do more research into dubbing, whether this is dubbing in the Netherlands, in the FIGS, or anywhere else, I hope this thesis offers a helpful perspective.

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## **Appendix I: Report first questionnaire for dubbing translators**

I distributed a questionnaire to translators by sending it to the dubbing studios I interviewed, as well as Samen1Stem and CineMeta, a dubbing studio that I did not interview but that did agree to help me. I received 16 filled in questionnaires, of which I had to discard one, because it was filled in by someone who did not do translation for dubbing, but for subtitling. I received the questionnaires between 15 September and 16 October 2011.

The questionnaire consisted of 24 questions. The questions and answers were all originally in Dutch. Underneath is an English translation of the questions.

- 1 How long have you been a translator?
- 2 What sort of education have you had?
- 3 How did you end up in dubbing?
- 4 Do you usually translate only for dubbing or also for other purposes?
- 5 How important do you think dubbing studios consider translations?
- 6 Do you think dubbing studios try hard enough to acquire good translations?
- 7 How often does it occur that you have to translate from an incomplete script?
- 8 How often does it occur that you have to translate without a copy of the film or series?
- 9 Is there any way in which you have influence on further stages of the production process after handing in the translation?
- 10 Do you think you should have influence?
- 11 How do you experience communication with your clients?
- 12 How do you think relations are between translators and dubbing studios in general?
- 13 Have you ever been in contact with viewers who criticised your translations?
- 14 What demands do you think a good translation should meet?
- 15 Are you content with how you are being paid?
- 16 Where do you think a dubbing translator is situated on the professional ladder, with refuse collectors roughly at the bottom and lawyers at the top?
- 17 Are you content with this status?
- 18 How high do you experience work stress?
- 19 What influence does stress have on the quality of your work?
- 20 Do you find your work difficult?
- 21 Do you enjoy your work?
- 22 Is the work as much fun as you expected it to be when you started out?
- 23 Can you afford to refuse assignments if you think the working conditions are too poor?
- 24 Are you content with the quality of your work?

This is how the translators responded.

- 1 How long have you been a translator?

The fifteen translators have been working as translators for an average of ten and a half years. Nine of them have been working for ten years or more. The least experienced translator had only been a translator for half a year at the time of the questionnaire. The two most experienced translators had been translators for twenty-five years. Note that they were asked how long they had been translators. This does not mean in all cases that they had been translating for dubbing this long.

- 2 What sort of education have you had?

Only two of the translators had received practical translation training or education in the field of translation studies. Five went to a school of acting. Three went to a school of music. One of these studied French, of which the programme is likely to include translation. Two state they have had additional training. Of the remaining three, one only mentions high school, the second finished the first year of a degree in journalism, and the third did some type of senior secondary vocational education (MBO), but does not say which type. There are no translation degrees at MBO in the Netherlands.

### 3 How did you end up in dubbing?

This question proved not to be specific enough. A distinction needs to be made between coming in contact with dubbing through expertise or through acquaintances, and between the whole dubbing industry and translating for dubbing. The translators answered the question in any of four of the following different ways. Six translators name a person that introduced them to dubbing, which underlines the importance of networking. Four had previous experience with another field of translation. Two had been doing voice jobs in related fields. Two simply state that they had auditioned for a role as a dubbing actor. One worked at a broadcasting company, and purchased series that had to be dubbed. One says her work as a singer introduced her to dubbing.

Spurred on by some of these answers, I googled the translators' names to find out the answers to another relevant question, which is what other means of income they had. Eight translators are also dubbing actors. One used to be a dubbing actor and a singer, and now runs a company that gives media training. Two are actors, of which one is also a singer and director. One is an author of children's books. One used to be a singer and is now a song writer and producer. Just two only work in translation, of which one used to be involved in the translation and dubbing of games, and the other used to work in subtitling.

### 4 Do you usually translate only for dubbing or also for other purposes?

Seven only translate for dubbing. Three more translate for dubbing mostly. Other purposes mentioned by the remaining five are translation for games and translation of financial and medical language, song texts, picture books, children's books and musicals.

### 5 How important do you think dubbing studios consider translations?

This question gives rise to widely differing opinions. Five of them think dubbing studios consider translations important or very important. A good translation means the people in the recording studio can work faster, which saves money. Six of them think dubbing studios do consider translations important, but add the following qualifications: the studios appear ignorant of what it takes to translate well; if good translators are unavailable, studios are just as content with less experienced or bad translators; studios who think they need a large output cannot afford to consider translations important; and that studios think translations are important does not show from translators' wages or the way studios evaluate translators. One says it varies widely with each studio. One says the quality of some scripts shows that the studios do not care. One says the dubbing studios never find translations important enough. One says that the executives of dubbing studios underrate the importance of translations, but dubbing professionals do not.

6 Do you think dubbing studios try hard enough to acquire good translations?

Six translators say dubbing studios do not try hard enough to acquire good translations. One of these deplors the absence of specialist education for dubbing translators, as well a failure of dubbing studios to do anything about that. He also deplors their tendency to hire actors and directors for translation, which to him shows that dubbing studios do not recognise translation as a trade. Furthermore, low wages make it difficult to retain well-educated and qualified translators. He says the subtitling industry witnessed the start of this trend years ago, which had a detrimental effect on quality. Others say that the dubbing studios' lack of effort in acquiring good translations is apparent from the anger of directors caused by poor translations, and from the fact that the time pressure is usually too high, that better translators are not paid more, and that too many people are put on one series. One says it depends on the studio, but he thinks too many good aspiring translators do not know that there is work for them. Six are not so sure whether dubbing studios try hard enough. Two think they do.

7 How often does it occur that you have to translate from an incomplete script?

It does not happen very often that translators have to translate from an incomplete script. Answers range from sometimes to never. Opinions about the accuracy of the scripts differ. One says that the scripts are usually ok, while others say the scripts contain mistakes. One says that it is clear that the 'as recorded' script is made after and not during the recording process, and that the time codes are usually not entirely right. One translator complains that the quality of scripts is getting worse.

8 How often does it occur that you have to translate without a copy of the film or series?

Only two translators say that they sometimes have to translate without a copy of the film or series, but this happens only very rarely. All other translators say they never do that. Some say it is impossible. One translator mentions the practice of translating the script first and then watching the film to check for mistakes and enter the right time codes. He says these translators should be fired immediately if they get caught, which he thinks is not hard. He says the fact that they do not get fired show how poorly translation is appreciated.

9 Is there any way in which you have influence on further stages of the production process after handing in the translation?

Eight translators simply answer this question with "no." An exception is when the translator also acts in or directs a series. One translator who also acts says he has influence on casting preferences. One says that she is allowed to be present at recording sessions, and if she does have comments then, those are taken into consideration. Another says that dubbing studios are sometimes open for suggestions for names of roles or how to translate a commonly used expression. Several translators deplore the changes that are made to their translations, because they do not always think these are improvements.

10 Do you think you should have influence?

Six say they do not think translators should have more influence, because it is not part of their job, and it is impossible due to time and budget limits. Two say it depends on how well the translator is acquainted with the recording process. One says she would like to, since she has experience in directing. Two say more cooperation would benefit the translations. One

translator cautions that the other dubbing professionals should not change too much about the translations, but she says she understands that they are inclined to edit translations, because the translations are often poor. Another translator explicitly states that he trusts the others to do their jobs well and not mess up the translation. Some translators offer suggestions for more influence: it is useful for translators to attend the first recording sessions, dubbing studios could send their 'as recorded' scripts to translators to show what has been changed, so that translators can use that to improve, and more communication between the director and the translator in the case of long-running series would be useful. One translator argues that translating and directing is a good combination, implying that maybe that should be done more often.

#### 11 How do you experience communication with your clients?

Thirteen translators are satisfied with the communication with the dubbing studios. One says the communication is businesslike, but gives no value judgment. Another says only SDI communicates in an acceptable way. He complains about an overall lack of feedback, especially when there have been complaints about the quality of translations, in which case he would be willing to attend recording sessions, if only the studio bothered to inform him. Others also say feedback can be poor or that studios can be unclear.

#### 12 How do you think relations are between translators and dubbing studios in general?

Six translators do not know how relations are between translators and studios in general. Four think they are fine. One says it depends on the studio. Some studios treat translators well and others do not. One says they could be better overall. One says translators should know more about how studios handle translations. Two say there is discontent on both sides: the studios complain about poor translations and the translators complain about poor wages.

#### 13 Have you ever been in contact with viewers who criticised your translations?

Twelve translators have never been in contact with viewers who criticised their translations. One says he has had little contact, and complains about the lack of credits in films and series, which causes the viewers not to know who the translator was. One had one or two e-mails of viewers. One sarcastically says that viewers have only offered him compliments.

#### 14 What demands do you think a good translation should meet?

Translators mention a myriad of demands that a translation should meet. Isochrony, kinetic synchrony and lip synchrony are all mentioned. One translator says that lip synchrony does not mean that the Dutch version should have the same number of syllables as the original, because Dutch generally has more syllables than American English. However, another translator warns that the number of syllables should not be exceeded too much in Dutch, because then, the lines sound rushed when they are recorded.

The translation should be accurate: the time codes, entries, formatting, punctuation and spelling should all be correct. The translation has to be consistent in tone as well as content. Series would have more consistency in translations if studios were to let each series be translated by one translator only.

The translation should be in well-written, easily comprehensible, decent and current Dutch. The lines must be easy to pronounce. The translation should use spoken language, not formal language, but still be grammatically correct. The use of language has to be adjusted to the target audience. The following should not occur: difficult words, language that sounds translated, artificial language (unless required), anglicisms, and fashionable expressions. Translators must not copy translated words indiscriminately from internet dictionaries.

The translation should be equivalent as well as adequate. One translator says the translator must try to stay away from the literal source text as much as possible, while another says they should deviate from the source text where necessary. Equivalence in translation for dubbing means that not just the content has to be equivalent. This also goes for the musicality of the language. The translator has to take into account rhythm and melody, and create a translation that is as musical as the original.

Adequacy in translation for dubbing means that the translation has to “fit”: the use of language should match the character’s traits, and the translation must correspond with the atmosphere and mood of the film/series, which should be similar to that of the original. Also, humour has to be translated well. Jokes have to be translated to Dutch somehow, which may require neutralisation or naturalisation.

Translators in general should be accurate, creative, have a good sense of language, have a feel for word order, stress and rhythm, and should feel a desire to always do their best.

15 Are you content with how you are being paid?

Six translators say that the wages are too low. Two say they have been frozen for ten years. Being underpaid, however, is not the only issue translators have with their wages. Assignments may vary widely in content and difficulty, but this difference is not reflected in the wages. Consequently, whether a translator is underpaid or not depends on the difficulty of the assignments. Three translators say just this. Three others call for more distinctions. Pay should reflect the difficulty in terms of the number of entries and other requirements (for example rhyme), pay should be adjusted to reflect a distinction between animation and live action (live action tends to be harder; one translator says the wages for live action should be increased with 50%), and there should be a surcharge for songs and urgent jobs. One translator says that she hardly ever translates live action anymore and she knows of other translators who have the same approach to live action. One translator says she has a good income, and is therefore satisfied. Translators who complain about low wages should accept more assignments. One translator who said the wages are too low says they are agreeable as long as the work is steady. Another says the wage is not high, but cable rights add something to it. One translator is moderately satisfied. Two translators say they are satisfied. One does not answer the question.

16 Where do you think a dubbing translator is situated on the professional ladder, with refuse collectors roughly at the bottom and lawyers at the top?

Estimates of the position on the professional ladder vary widely. There are a few things that have to be taken into account, however. Two translators remark correctly that there is no mobility in their trade, which, especially with the Dutch word for “professional ladder” (carrière ladder) can be taken to mean that translators are not on this ladder at all, or have a low position because of the lack of mobility. Also, this question was not clear enough. As it

is, it could be interpreted in terms of status or in terms of wages. Answers that only offer estimates are not very helpful, because it is unclear whether they base this estimate on status, wages or anything else. Seven translators only offer estimates. One translator simply says that the position of a dubbing translator is the same as that of a teacher in secondary education. One translator's estimate of her position is, literally: "Hahaha, in the basement 😊" Another nice response is "I do not know, but I think I cannot see the lawyer from my step, but I can see the refuse collector." One translator discusses the status in different environments. She thinks people in general tend to underestimate how hard translating can be. Translators for other purposes belittle dubbing translators, but dubbing studios treat translators better than translation agencies do. One says a translator resembles the refuse collector in the dubbing process, but the lawyer in Dutch society. One translator puts translators on step 3 (out of 10), because more experience leads to harder work, but not more pay. One translator remarks some assignments take so much time that the net pay is less than a domestic worker's. "In those cases, I am better off cleaning the neighbours' lavatory." One translator remarks that he is not far above the refuse collector, because it is hard to get by on a translator's income if you want to deliver good quality.

17 Are you content with this status?

Four translators are content with their status, although one adds that he is content as long as he is treated with respect, a second adds that she is content as long as her income is nice and studios sometimes give her compliments, and a third adds that she can acquire status by writing books. One is moderately satisfied. Five translators say or imply that they do not care about status. One adds that that is a good thing because of the lousy status. Another adds that he just likes the job, which is all that matters. Four translators are not content. One adds that it is rather frustrating. One translator says specifically that really good translators should be awarded a higher position on the ladder.

18 How high do you experience work stress?

Eight translators mention that short deadlines cause time pressure. One says he is able to manage his workload. Three say the stress varies. One of these elaborates and says it depends on the difficulty of the film or series. He says the time allotted tends to be the same, but the difficulty is not. In the case of a difficult translation, he says pressure is often higher than he would like. Two say the pressure is ok. One says the pressure is less high than with translation for other purposes, because of more flexibility. Four say the pressure is high. One keeps the workload manageable by handing back work if deadlines are advanced. Two say they find high time pressure pleasant.

19 What influence does stress have on the quality of your work?

Three translators say they refuse to hand in work that they are not satisfied with. In order to meet the deadline, two translators say they also work in the evenings and weekends if necessary, but one of these says that makes you less focused. One threatens dubbing studios that short deadlines lead to lower quality, but is unable to start handing in poorer translations. Two translators consciously avoid time pressure, because they know it affects quality. She complains that mistakes are always the translator's fault, but that translators do not get credit for good translations. One translator says time pressure has no influence. Another says it has hopefully no influence or only a good one. One more translator says he works better under pressure, which makes for a total of three who say that. Eight translators say time pressure

leads to lower quality, although they say the errors are minor. One translator does not like it when he is not able to translate an episode in one go.

20 Do you find your work difficult?

Three translators say they find their work hard. Four say it depends on certain factors. It depends on the film/series, the type of text (ordinary dialogue versus songs or games), pre-school or non-pre-school, and the language. One said he found it hard initially to come up with a routine that worked. One says the work is hard, because it requires multiple traits, such as self-discipline, language skills and world knowledge. Four say that they find their work challenging. One says that he found subtitling more challenging and sometimes misses that. The translator who had only been doing this for half a year says he finds the lack of feedback hard to deal with.

21 Do you enjoy your work?

Nine translators say they enjoy their work. Six say this too, but add qualifications. Two say translators are lonely. One says he does not like it when he does not have many acting duties, which causes long stretches behind the computer. One says that combining translation with acting adds to the enjoyment, because acting gives her the opportunity to ask for feedback, which she desires. One mentions that relations with the studios affect how much he enjoys the work. He especially enjoys receiving compliments. Two translators say it depends on the series. One says he has to watch his limits. One says translating episodes can become so repetitive that it starts to look like work.

22 Is the work as much fun as you expected it to be when you started out?

Five translators think it is as much fun as they expected it to be when they started out. One adds the qualification that the work is lonesome. Four translators say it is more fun. One adds that he loves to work for SDI. He does not like working for the other studios, because he finds them too impersonal, but he does not need to anymore. One adds that the work is more fun now, because she learned a lot and know what she needs to pay attention to. Two do not remember their prior expectations. One says he would not want this as a full-time job. Three translators say it is less fun. One of these says quality takes a lot of time. He only translates to secure an income to cover for the periods that he does not have work in acting. One translator says the deadlines have become so unrealistic that quality has become insignificant, yet she feels that the studios still demand her to deliver high quality, because if she slacks off, they immediately start complaining. She does not think this is fair, because actors do not necessarily have to do their work synchronously, even if the translation is perfectly synchronous. She says it appears that translators are the only ones who are not allowed to reflect in the quality of their work that the deadlines are impossible to meet.

23 Can you afford to refuse assignments if you think the working conditions are too poor?

Nine translators say they can afford to refuse assignments if they think the working conditions are too poor. One adds the qualification that he can, because this is not his main source of income. One adds the qualification that working conditions are almost always the same. One adds that she never informs the dubbing studio that she refuses an assignment because she is not paid enough for it. She instead says that she does not have time. Two translators note that quiet periods can cause them to take on assignments that they otherwise would have refused.

One says that she does not refuse assignments because of working conditions, but only because of the quantity of work. One says that when he refuses assignments, he prefers not to think about whether he can actually afford to do that. One says he determines his own working conditions. One says he never had to, but thinks he would be able to. Just one translator says he cannot afford to refuse assignments if working conditions are too poor.

24 Are you content with the quality of your work?

Eleven translators say they are content with the quality of their work. Three translators add that they refuse to hand in the work before they are satisfied. One of these says he prefers fighting for an extension to handing in something that he cannot stand for. One says she only accepts assignments of which she knows she can do them well. Two say they are very content with the quality of their work. One of these says she takes pride in doing her work as well as possible. The translator with half a year of experience, who says he is content, says he handed in some dreadful translations in the beginning, due to misunderstandings. He felt awful about that and he hopes it never happens again. Two say they are not always entirely satisfied.

## Appendix II: Report second questionnaire for dubbing translators

After a discussion with Christa Lips, I distributed a follow-up questionnaire to the participants of the previous one. I received 9 filled in questionnaires, between 29 March and 10 April 2012.

The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions. The questions and answers were all in Dutch, except one filled in questionnaire, which was in English. Underneath is an English translation of the questions.

- 1 How did you learn the trade of translating for dubbing?
- 2 What training or support did the dubbing studios give you when you were learning how to translate for dubbing?
- 3 Do you think dubbing studios offer enough training and support to beginning translators?
- 4 Are you content with the quantity of feedback you receive from dubbing studios?
- 5 Do you first watch the film or series before you start translating?
- 6 Do you translate while you watch the film or series, or do you first translate the script and then compare this with the film or series so that you can adapt the translation to, for example, mouth movements and time codes?
- 7 How often do you check your translation once you are finished with it?
- 8 Do you think you have enough time to check whether a translation is good before you send it in?
- 9 Do you think experience in acting for dubbing influences translation skills, and if so, in what way?
- 10 If you think experience in acting for dubbing has a positive influence on translation skills, do you think that dubbing studios should consider this added value, and consequently pay more to translators with experience in acting for dubbing?
- 11 Can you give me examples of translation errors you encountered? (in your own translations or those of others) Think, for example, but not exclusively, of the erroneous translation of idiomatic language, e.g. 'you rock!' as 'jij steen!'.
- 12 How often do you think translation errors are caused by the incompetence of the translator and how often by lack of time?
- 13 Can you think of other causes for translation errors?

This is how the translators responded.

- 1 How did you learn the trade of translating for dubbing?

Six translators learned it by doing it. The other three do not properly answer the question. One says he subtitled for twelve years before he did a test translation for dubbing. Another mentions his work as a dubbing actor and a good sense of language. The third says he started doing it after he had acted for dubbing.

- 2 What training or support did the dubbing studios give you when you were learning how to translate for dubbing?

Four translators received no training or support at all. Four attended one or more recording sessions. Two received instructions on paper. In one case, the aspiring translator and a

dubbing professional had a look at the test translation together. This translator says he also sometimes receives tips when he is acting.

3 Do you think dubbing studios offer enough training and support to beginning translators? Three translators do not know whether dubbing studios offer enough training and support now, because they started out a long time ago. One of these three thinks translators do not need more support, but more communication. Another of these three sent a list with tips and instructions to two dubbing studios, which they then sent to aspiring translators. One translator does not know whether there are any courses, because she never looked for any, but she does think that workshops for aspiring translators would be a good idea, because very few people with a degree in translation end up in dubbing. Two translators think the amount of training and support differs among studios. One of these prefers translations done by dubbing actors, because he thinks these are better. Two translators think dubbing studios do not offer enough training and support, but doubt whether this should be their responsibility. One says there should be education in dubbing, and dubbing studios should not hire newcomers without experience. The other says dubbing studios should require aspiring translators to attend at least one recording session.

4 Are you content with the quantity of feedback you receive from dubbing studios?

Just one translator is content with the quantity of feedback. Two say they are not content. Two would like a bit more feedback. One says it depends on the production: there is decent feedback concerning Disney series and big screen films, but no budget for feedback in other cases. One reviews the scripts himself when he is in the studio for recording. He complains that there is little to no feedback, and if there is feedback, it is only at the end of the project. One says it depends on the studio. One assumes she would not get more assignments if the quality of her translations were not good, but says she would like to be informed about modifications of certain recurring elements of the script, such as names or expressions, so that she can do it right the next time.

5 Do you first watch the film or series before you start translating?

Three translators do watch the film or episode before translating. Two of these say this is when they spot time codes. One of them makes notes. One of them, and three others, say it is not necessary if they are familiar with the series or concept. Two never watch the film or episode in advance. Another says it is not necessary with most series.

6 Do you translate while you watch the film or series, or do you first translate the script and then compare this with the film or series so that you can adapt the translation to, for example, mouth movements and time codes?

Seven translators translate while watching the film or episode. Two of these add that they use the original script as little as possible. One of them adds that translators who translate the script first should cease doing that immediately and translate from the image and audio. One translates from the script first and then watches the film or episode second by second, so that she can discover mistakes in the translation, correct the length of the lines to make them lip-sync and put in time codes. One says she watches first and makes notes in the original script, which she then translates and corrects while watching again.

7 How often do you check your translation once you are finished with it?

Seven translators check their translation once. One of them adds that he continually checks whether everything fits while translating. Another of them adds that she usually checks the translations of songs more often. One of them suggests that to hand in a truly perfect translation, he could mute the sound and read along his translation with the film or episode on screen, and wait a day with correcting his translation, but there is only so much time that can be spent on translating, and perfecting the translation would make translators so expensive for the studios that it would become impossible to make a profit. Also, he jokes that directors would become bored, because there would be so little left for them in the script to correct. One translator says he repeatedly checks every entry for accuracy and lip synchrony. One says she double checks particular aspects.

8 Do you think you have enough time to check whether a translation is good before you send it in?

One translator says she always takes the time she needs to check the translation. She does not accept assignments that require her to rush. Two translators say it depends on your own planning. One says the deadline is a bit tight sometimes, but it is part of the trade. Two say they sometimes do and sometimes do not have enough time. One of these says rush jobs do not allow enough time, and translators are not paid more for extra care. One translator says she has enough time, but the wages determine how much time she can put into it. One translator says the low wages mean there is usually not enough time to give translations the amount of attention that they deserve, but if one translates well enough, correcting does not take much time. Just one translator says there is not enough time, because she does not have the time to check the whole translation with the image.

9 Do you think experience in acting for dubbing influences translation skills, and if so, in what way?

Five translators think experience in acting for dubbing influences translation skills in a positive way. They think it makes translators more proficient in many ways, for example, with lip movements and syllables and formatting the scripts, and translators who also work as dubbing actors are much more aware of what happens to their scripts in the studio. Of these five, one says he believes there are also plenty of excellent translators who do not work as dubbing actors. Three say they can imagine some positive influence, but they are not convinced it really makes a difference, because translating and acting are two separate trades. One translator sees no benefit at all.

10 If you think experience in acting for dubbing has a positive influence on translation skills, do you think that dubbing studios should consider this added value, and consequently pay more to translators with experience in acting for dubbing?

Three translators are adamant that translators with experience in acting for dubbing should absolutely not be paid more than translators without it. Four translators (of which two belong to the previous three) raise the point that if a translator should be paid more, it should be because the quality of his work is better. One translator raises the factor of difficulty as an aspect that should be rewarded. One says wages should be raised regardless of whether the translator has experience in dubbing. One says dubbing actors are not necessarily better translators, and another likes the idea, but says good translators are not necessarily dubbing actors. Two translators answer the question affirmatively, of which one proceeds to say that

good translators should earn more, especially if they are assigned more difficult productions. One translator also thinks a more experienced and good translator should earn more.

11 Can you give me examples of translation errors you encountered? (in your own translations or those of others) Think, for example, but not exclusively, of the erroneous translation of idiomatic language, e.g. 'you rock!' as 'jij steen!'.

The translators note that they see literal translations of English idiomatic language and cultural references that are not recognised by the translator. One translator says it happened to her multiple times that a dubbing director replaced Dutch word play with a literal translation of the English joke. This shows that it is not always the translator's fault. One translator says she sees many translations with language errors. The examples the translators mentioned are already in the thesis.

12 How often do you think translation errors are caused by the incompetence of the translator and how often by lack of time?

Five translators say translation errors are more often caused by incompetence, and three think lack of time is more often to blame. However, three translators argue that lack of time is a result of bad planning or accepting more assignments than the translator can handle, which arguably could also be interpreted as a kind of incompetence. One translator says she does not know.

13 Can you think of other causes for translation errors?

One translator explains that translators are sometimes asked to compile glossaries, but do so without watching the image, which may result in errors. Other causes for errors that they mention are too many people working on the same production, and having an off-day. Many of the other causes for errors mentioned, such as a lack of humour, a lack of language skills, a lack of interest and a lack of empathy, could be regarded as types of incompetence.