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## **Media Studies**

### **Jonathan Evans**

Abstract: As new media and audiovisual texts have become increasingly dominant features of the cultural landscape, there has been increasing interest in methodologies for discussing media content, many of which have been developed in the discipline of media studies. This chapter discusses the intersections between media and translation studies, with a particular focus on how media studies methodologies can be useful for translation studies. The introduction contextualises the development of media studies and suggests ways in which its methods can enrich translation studies. The second section gives an overview of the work in translation studies on media texts and in media studies on translations, allowing readers to understand the history of these ideas. The third section discusses the key research methods of media studies that can be used by translation scholars, before the fourth section looks at critical issues and topics that overlap between the two disciplines. The final section proposes interdisciplinary ways of developing research practice in translation studies drawing from and addressing media studies, in order to benefit both disciplines. Examples of where methodologies have been applied and suggestions for research practice are embedded throughout the chapter.

### **1. Introduction**

This chapter discusses the intersections between media studies and translation studies, with a particular focus on what translation studies can learn from media studies in terms of research methodologies and research questions.<sup>1</sup> Given the growing dominance of new media and especially the internet as a means of distributing information and cultural texts, an understanding of how media work is essential for translation scholars working in many fields. There has been a growth in translation research that discusses media texts (surveyed in the second section of this chapter), but there are still ways in which the conversation between the two disciplines can be improved. As Tessa Dwyer comments, ‘translation is routinely devalued and ignored within screen culture, especially in Anglophone contexts’ (2017: 2), yet translation is central to the global flows of screen media across languages.

While much of the work dealing with media in translation has focused on screen media, that is, film and television (terms that are further complicated by streaming of audiovisual products through platforms such as Netflix or Youtube), media studies itself has a wider remit. Media studies is the umbrella term that covers a range of methodologies and theoretical approaches to the study of the mass media, itself a large category that can include film, newspapers, magazines, comics, radio, TV, videos, vinyl records, CDs, DVDs, mp3s, the internet, video games and mobile forms of media (i.e. new media). The result is that media studies is a large and diffuse discipline that does not have a single centre. Like translation studies, there are also practical aspects of media studies that include media production, which may also range from the creation of broadcast radio shows to internet TV.

Media studies has multiple different histories, having developed in different locations at the same time. It would be impossible here to give a full history, but some idea of the development of the discipline in the West can help to understand some of the positions taken and some of the contradictions arising. In the USA, media studies began as a form of mass communication research, i.e. the study of radio and TV (Williams 2003: 23-29). Some of this

study was based on a need for producers to see the effects of their shows and to quantify audiences in order to be able to charge advertisers for access to their audience (Ang 1991: 53). It is still common to see departments of media in the USA aligned with communication studies and journalism, though media studies has expanded due to its own internal developments, developments in technology, and interactions with other areas of the humanities and social sciences, including sociology, literary criticism, anthropology and other disciplines. European critical approaches to mass media appeared in the 1940s and 1950s in the work of the Frankfurt School, social science scholars such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas. Horkheimer and Adorno posit a culture industry which they argue is ‘infecting everything with sameness’ (2002: 94) and which, Adorno argues, reduces the individual’s capacity for autonomy (2001: 106). In Britain, accounts of media usage took a contrasting focus, with the burgeoning discipline tending to concentrate more on the agency of the viewer (see e.g. Morley 1992, Hall 2016). The narratives of media studies as an academic discipline in the West are not the only ways in which the study of media developed, however; in Japan, for example, media studies developed rather differently (see Steinberg and Zahlten 2017). Film studies, which is often institutionally connected to media studies and increasingly overlaps with it due to digital forms of film distribution, has its own complex disciplinary history that reflects its origins in film education programmes as well as academia (see Grieveson and Wasson 2008). Finally, it is worth mentioning that in parallel with the academic study of media, there are also many books written for a general public that have influenced the development of media studies (e.g. Warshaw 1962, McLuhan 2001).

In addition to media specific scholarship, media studies work tends to draw from a similar pool of theories to the critical humanities in general, including notions such as gender, poststructuralism, race, identity, capital and labour. The borders of media studies fray into the wider field of the humanities, especially in relation to domains such as literature and film studies. For instance, English literature professor Sianne Ngai’s discussions of animated television comedy (Ngai 2005: 102-125) and the TV show *I Love Lucy* (Ngai 2012: 175-181) both take objects which are typical of media studies scholarship, but they would not necessarily be considered media studies research as they are published as parts of larger studies focused primarily on literature.

These diverse sources and histories have made media studies into a field that frequently reflects on its own position in the academic landscape (see e.g. Lovink 2011: 76-94). In this way it is similar to translation studies, which is also an interdisciplinary field that is positioned between industry and academia. However, there are key elements of media studies that tend to be shared across its iterations. Most important for this chapter is the way in which it tends to focus on different aspects of media production and distribution: some media studies work focuses on textual elements of media texts, while other work focuses on institutions, and yet more on audiences. These multiple approaches allow media to be studied in their historical, critical and commercial contexts. By developing such a thick approach (to borrow Clifford Geertz’s anthropological term ‘thick description’; Geertz 1973) to media analysis, research can understand the role of media in society as well as the formal aspects of media texts. It is this thick analysis, I argue in this chapter, which stands to benefit translation studies.

## 2. Media and Translation Studies

This section aims to give an overview of the literature on media in translation studies, before discussing the scholarship on translation in media studies, which is somewhat smaller in quantity. As ‘media’ is a wide concept, encompassing many forms of mass communication technology, this will necessarily be quite a condensed overview of a field that covers film, TV, news, video games, comics and social media. Of these, film and TV have received the most attention in translation studies, due to their centrality in the subdiscipline of audiovisual translation studies.

While translation in film began before the invention of the sound film (Nornes 2007: 91-121), the invention of sound cinema – the ‘talkies’ – in 1927 made the issue more pressing (Cornu 2014: 21). Over the course of the late 1920s and the 1930s, the forms of dubbing and subtitling as we now know them appeared (Cornu 2014: 22-31). Scholarship on translation in film developed somewhat later: the first key publication is a special issue of the journal *Babel* (itself then only five years old) in 1960, edited by Pierre-François Caillé (Caillé 1960a), consisting of three short articles on film translation (Caillé 1960b; Cary 1960; Rowe 1960). A number of scattered articles on translation and film follow in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (see Delabastita 1990 for a full bibliography).

As with much work in the field of translation, the quantity of research being published increases significantly at the end of the 1980s with the founding of translation studies journals such as *Traduction Terminologie Rédaction* (1988) in Canada, *Target* (1989) in the Netherlands and *The Translator* (1995) in the United Kingdom, which helped to consolidate translation studies as a discipline. Early papers by José Lambert (1989) and Dirk Delabastita (1989, 1990) helped to lay the groundwork for much of the later work on audiovisual translation, including the focus on film and TV.

Research on translation in film and TV was developed further by books edited by Yves Gambier (1996, 1998), as well as collections edited by Gambier and Henrik Gottlieb (2001) and Frederic Chaume Varela and Rosa Agost Canós (2001). This reflects the significance of film and TV in the media landscape at the end of the twentieth century; their subtitling and dubbing is important for international sales and flows of media. More research follows in the early 2000s, including special issues of *The Translator* (Gambier 2003) and *Meta: Journal des traducteurs* (Gambier 2004). These special issues remain key references for scholars working in audiovisual translation, even though many of the ways in which screen media are watched and received have changed significantly with the introduction of mobile devices (smartphones, tablets) that make it possible to watch audiovisual products away from televisions or cinema screens, as well as the introduction of streaming and other forms of post-broadcast distribution that have altered how viewers choose what to watch. Monographs such as Fotios Karamitroglou’s *Towards a Methodology for the Investigation of Norms in Audiovisual Translation* (2000) help to consolidate the field, drawing in this case from the descriptive paradigm. Scholarship in the area has also been developing more interdisciplinary connections, with Frederic Chaume’s *Ciné y traducción* (2004), Carol O’Sullivan’s *Translating Popular Film* (2011) and Charlotte Bosseaux’s *Dubbing, Film and Performance* (2015) all drawing significantly from film studies in order to conceptualise the effects on audiences and filmic context of audiovisual translation. Luis Pérez-González’s *Audiovisual Translation* (2014) exemplifies the benefits for research in audiovisual translation of using

frameworks from multimodal analysis and media studies, as well as the more established borrowing from film and television studies. This interdisciplinarity is also evidence in the *Routledge Handbook of Audiovisual Translation* (Pérez-González 2018) and suggests that the future of audiovisual translation research will draw from other work in the humanities, particularly in areas of media and film studies, but also in linguistics. The study of reception of audiovisual material has been limited but is developing (see Yuan 2012, Di Giovanni and Gambier 2018).

While news has been central to the discussion in media studies (see Hartley 1982), translation studies began to focus on news translation in the 2000s. Understanding how the news affects readers' and viewers' perceptions of events is an important aspect of understanding how the media influence people's decisions and understanding of the world. Translation studies research in this area includes a special issue of *Language and Intercultural Communication* edited by Susan Bassnett (2005) and the key monograph *Translation in Global News* by Esperança Bielsa and Susan Bassnett (2008), which lays groundwork for research in this area by discussing translation and globalisation while also drawing from fieldwork in relevant news agencies. Other work in the area draws from linguistic and sociological approaches (Schäffner and Bassnett 2010). More recent work has analysed the role of culture in news translation (Conway 2015), demonstrating once again the branching out that research in translation studies has been undertaking to better understand the complexity of translational phenomena.

Popular media that have been analysed within translation studies include video games and comics. Minako O'Hagan's special issue of *Perspectives* (O'Hagan 2007) combined these two areas by analysing the translation of Japanese popular media. Video games present challenges to translators that combine aspects of audiovisual translation (for video scenes), software translation (in the form of lists of assets where words are often decontextualized) and literary translation (texts that are fictional). Early research on videogame localisation focused on integrating it into industrial processes (Chandler 2005), while more translation studies approaches focusing on language and translatability of phenomena also developed (Mangiron 2007). Key publications include monographs by O'Hagan and Carmen Mangiron (2013) and Miguel Bernal-Merino (2015). While this field is developing, it is still not as large or as interdisciplinary as audiovisual translation. Comics have been studied for longer, but, like video games, remain peripheral to mainstream translation studies. Key publications include Klaus Kaindl's German language monograph (2004) and collections edited by Federico Zanettin (2008), Tilmann Altenberg and Ruth Owens (2015), and Chris Reynolds-Chikuma and Julie Tarif (2016). Much of the work on comics focuses on formal features of comics translation, but increasingly questions of fan translation have become foregrounded (for an overview, see Evans 2017). Fan translation, or amateur translation undertaken by fans of the texts being translated, develops as a research topic in translation studies in the 2000s, with scholars looking outside of the professional translation paradigm to understand the wider variety of existing practices of translation (see Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva 2012). Much of the work on fan translation has focused on fansubbing (e.g. Massidda 2015, Dwyer 2017), but there has also been work on romhacking or the fan translation of video games (see O'Hagan 2009) and the fan translation of other media including comics and songs (see Evans 2019).

Social media, that is, blogging, social networks (e.g. Facebook) and microblogging (Twitter, Instagram, Weibo), which have been around since the early 2000s, have not yet attracted much attention from translation studies, despite their significant role in many people's lives (see Fuchs 2014). Renée Desjardins' monograph *Translation and Social Media* (2017) focuses on the professional and practical aspects of translating in this medium. Given the ways in which social media are changing how people interact and create their identities, exploring how translation affects them and how they can be used by translators seems an important avenue for future research: insights from media studies may help develop these understandings.

Explicit links between translation and media have seldom been explored. Exceptions include the volume of essays edited by Dror Abend-David (2014), which covers many of the areas discussed earlier in this section, that is, film and TV, news translation and advertising. More challenging of accepted paradigms is Karen Littau's work (Littau 2009, 2016) which asks for a media history of translation that takes into account how different media affect translation practices. For instance, how is translation for printed texts different for translation for digital ones? Littau therefore argues for the analysis of the mediality of translations – in other words, for analysing how the specific capacities of media affect how translators interact with texts and how media suggest forms of meaning making. As Henry Jones (2018) has shown, translating for the medium of film, understood as 35mm celluloid displayed at 24 frames a second in a cinema, is significantly different to translating for streamed digital media due to the different capacities of the different media. Understanding the specificity of media and their interactions with translation practice seems a valuable direction for future research, especially given the shift to digital media. This is another area where media studies can offer support for translation studies.

Film and media scholars have tended not to discuss translation in depth. However, there are exceptions, though most of these, like most of the work in translation studies, tends to focus on subtitling and dubbing, mainly of film. Ella Schochat and Robert Stam's early article 'The Cinema After Babel: Language Difference and Power' (1985) covers a range of interactions between film and translation, including subtitling and dubbing and the translation of film titles. Other film scholars who have worked on translation in film include Abé Mark Nornes (2007), Mark Betz (2009), Nataša Đurovičová (2010) and the essays collected in *Subtitles: On the Foreignness of Film* (Egoyan and Balfour 2004). Tessa Dwyer's *Speaking in Subtitles* (2017) offers a media studies approach to film and TV subtitling that draws heavily from translation studies. The question of language difference is of course relevant to scholars working on media, especially as popular media is becoming more and more internationalised and polycentric (produced in many different locations), but little research within media studies has addressed this: here is an area where translation studies can contribute.

### **3. Main research methods**

This section focuses on the research methodologies used in media studies and asks how they might be useful for translation scholars. They are presented separately for clarity's sake, but it is important to remember that they are often applied together in the same research in 'eclectic' methodologies, in order to develop a deeper understanding of the issue at hand or to question findings that have come from using only one method.

### 3.1 Quantitative research

Quantitative research focuses on things that can be counted, for example, the amount of people clicking ‘like’ on a Facebook post or Box Office receipts for films, which may be counted directly. It may also refer to counting by proxy and sample populations, as TV ratings have been (Ang 1991: 46-59). Denis McQuail (1994: 276-279) discusses quantitative research analysis, where researchers count the appearance of terms or concepts across a number of media products (TV shows, radio programmes, etc.), in a form of analysis that resembles Discourse Analysis using corpora. More recently, algorithms (see Striphas 2015), which analyse trends by using quantitative data, have become more common, especially online as web usage leaves traces that can be analysed, e.g. a Youtube user’s tastes may be analysed through their viewing history.

There are some inherent problems with quantitative research. Not all things are easily counted and decisions may have to be made whether or not something counts, which can lead to arbitrary and inconsistent decision making. Ien Ang, for instance, argues against the purely quantitative methodology of audience measuring in her *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (1991) as it overlooks the more complex relationship people have with TV watching. Ang points out that even if a TV is on in a household, it does not mean that people are actually watching it, even if they are in the same room. Or they might be watching it and doing homework, reading the newspaper, checking social media, etc. This might not be captured by the quantitative framework.

Yet there are uses for quantitative data, used cautiously. It is useful to know what numbers saw a film, or what percentage of a TV channel’s schedule is made up of translated (subtitled or dubbed) shows. This statistical and numerical data can give big picture information to studies in order to contextualise data coming from other research methods.

### 3.2 Textual Analysis

Textual analysis is a common method across the humanities and often appears in both translation and media studies. It might take the form of genre analysis, where the textual features of a genre such as news reportage are analysed, or the analysis might focus on the representation of specific groups in society, for example the presentation of migrants, women doctors, punks, etc. (see e.g. Gauntlett 2002: 152-210 for analysis of gender representations). Alternatively, it may analyse the semiotic elements of the text, or focus on how meaning is encoded in the text (Brennen 2013: 192-206). This type of analysis is generally qualitative in nature.

More recent work that analyses texts looks to new forms of media, such as social media (Twitter, Weibo, etc.), as well as non-professional streaming media (Youtube, Twitch, Youku). These media can give voice to people who are not heard elsewhere and also they make it possible to make media products that do not fit the standard broadcast format, by having irregular episode length or irregular intervals of production. The lower costs of distribution using streaming media have made it possible to target niche audiences, such as role-playing gamers (e.g. the show *Critical Role* on Youtube, which consists of recorded sessions of a group playing) or translation students (e.g. Anthony Pym’s video interviews with translation scholars). There has also been a growth of extremist material on these media (for a critical view, see Aly et al. 2016), which takes advantage of the possibilities for

reaching niche audiences. It is possible to analyse all these new media texts using existing forms of textual analysis.

There is obviously crossover with translation studies in this area, as translation studies has traditionally used various forms of textual analysis to analyse translation strategies or other textual features. Media studies offers a repository of material that analyses a range of media that can help to develop ways of reading those media in translation studies, and in particular in multimodal analysis of audiovisual translation.

### 3.3 Ethnography

Ethnography started as a method in the field of anthropology, where researchers would spend time living with their subjects, learning their language and their culture. Classical examples of this might have involved isolated communities in the developing world, such as the Bororo, Nambikwara and Tupi-Kawahib discussed by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *Tristes tropiques* (1976), while more recent work has focused on communities in the developed world, such as Esther Newton's study of American drag queens, *Mother Camp* (1972), or Japanese tourist guides in the Canada's Banff National Park in Shiho Satsuka's *Nature in Translation* (2015).

Ethnography is also becoming a more common research method in translation studies, with Maeve Olohan and Elena Davitti's (2015) study of trust in translation project management an example of the developing field. Ethnographic methods might be used in the analysis of events such as fan conventions or locations such as specialist shops (see Geraghty 2014), which could also analyse the question of language and translation in these events. The advantage of ethnography is that it allows researchers to see subjects in their native environments and acting in the ways that they normally act, rather than in more artificial experimental environments where they may act differently.

Two methods of media ethnography stand out as potentially useful to translation studies: micro-ethnography and netnography (i.e. ethnography on the internet). The former of these involves ethnographic study of very small populations, which may be only one or two people. This could take place, for instance, in a small translation agency or it could take place with freelancers. The historical use in media studies can be found in James Lull's early work (e.g. Lull 1980), where observers spent time with families in order to understand how they used television as part of their everyday lives. Long periods of observation were undertaken in order to make the observers' presence feel unobtrusive. In addition to these observations, Lull and his team undertook interviews with participants to triangulate the data and further understand motivations for behaviour. Other media scholars have not undertaken the same ethnographic work, but by using family interviews have hoped to develop a similarly 'thick' approach to how to families use the television (see Morley 1986; Morley 1992: 138-158).

Netnography was a term coined by Robert Kozinets (2010) for ethnography online, although the practice had existed since the early 1990s (see Escobar 1994). Where the observations undertaken by Lull took place physically, ethnography on the internet takes place by observing internet communities through their forums, email lists, Facebook groups, Twitter interactions, Youtube comments and linking, etc. As with other forms of ethnography, there are obvious ethical questions about observing people's behaviour, but the problem on the internet is that it is more possible to do so without being seen: it is very difficult to 'lurk' in real life in the same way as it is on the internet, and it is more difficult to negotiate consent



with internet communities than it is with translation agencies or even families. Netnography has begun to be practised in translation studies, especially among fan communities (Li 2015).

There is much critical discussion of ethnography in media studies (see e.g. Morley 1992: 173-197; Nightingale 1993; Moores 1993). As with all research methodologies, it offers a partial view of what is happening at any one moment, as well as not always giving clear statements regarding its own hermeneutic principles (Nightingale 1993: 150-151). These challenges and the problem of consent need negotiating, as with traditional ethnography, but the wealth of ethnographic data combined with other approaches can help develop understandings of both how people translate and how they use translation in their everyday lives, rather than in experimental conditions.

### 3.4 Questionnaires, interviews and focus groups

These methods are not exclusive to media studies and are common across the social sciences and humanities. Where media studies differs is in how it uses these methods to find out about the media: a questionnaire might be sent to TV watchers or participants in an online forum asking them about their behaviour. Interviews may take place with various actors in the media, from producers of TV shows to audiences, or one could interview participants at events such as fan conventions or even film screenings. Interviews offer more individual data than questionnaires but may be more difficult to arrange or have people agree to. Finally, focus groups offer a way of asking questions to several people in a group of fans or executives at the same time; these can, like interviews, offer rich data but they have their own issues (Brennen 2013: 59-74). All these methods offer a range of data that can give insight into how people think about media and practices; where media studies offers useful lessons for translation is in using them to find out people's actual reactions to texts and practices or their motivations (see Gilbert and Taylor 1991: 47-73 for an example of an interview study analysing girls' reaction to soap operas).

### 3.5 Historical and archive work

Again, these methods are not limited to media studies but can be used as part of media studies analysis. Given the growth of mass media and its technical developments over the twentieth and twenty first centuries, from newspapers to streaming media via broadcast TV, there is a value in understanding media usage and production in other eras. This might mean visiting media archives, such as the British Film Institute (BFI) Archive, which contains films and TV programmes as well as scripts, letters and other material. Or one might want to view archives of media paratexts, e.g. posters and other promotional material, such as the one collected at the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum in Exeter. Other archives exist that contain correspondence for particular institutions or individuals. Alternatively, fanzine archives (such as the University of Iowa Fanzine Archives) offer a view into fans' own reaction to texts and practices in fan made magazines (commonly known as fanzines).

Using archival sources can better develop historical understandings of how media were created and how people reacted to them. Understandings of silent film audiences were changed, for instance, by Miriam Hansen's (1991) use of archival newspaper reviews and other material in order to see how audiences reacted. In a similar vein, Jean-François Cornu's (2014) analysis of film translation in France also draws extensively from film periodicals. The use of archives allows historical voices to be heard and to deepen the engagement with a

period, offering greater ('thicker') context for the analyses of media and translation in that period.

#### **4. Critical Issues and Topics**

This section will focus on key issues in media studies that also are relevant for work on translation. Some of these topics are theoretical and others relate more to the practical aspects of media production, although theory and practice often affect each other.

##### 4.1 Adaptation, Derivative Works and Transformative Cultures

The question of adaptation seems to be one that links immediately to translation studies. There is a large body of material that analyses the adaptation of texts between media (Hutcheon 2006 offers a good overview). Translation itself can be viewed as a form of adaptation between languages, and adaptation and translation studies have much to offer each other. Media studies has been developing since the 1990s a more elaborate discussion of derivative works, whether these be fan-made (e.g. Jenkins 1992, Azuma 2009) or professionally made under licence from the original copyright owners, in other words official merchandise and other media forums such as spin-offs or sequels (Gray 2010). The existence of various forms of derivative work decentres texts and shifts focus to the media ecology around those texts, which may include a number of paratexts as well as various discussions and discourses. Translation can be understood as one among many other derivative forms, as André Lefevere (1992) argued when placing it among other forms of rewriting, but he focused on literary forms whereas it is possible to increase the focus to include various practices in media. Much fan studies work has focused on the creation of derivative work by fans, with scholars such as Henry Jenkins (1992) arguing that fandom itself is characterised by such creation. The online journal *Transformative Works and Cultures* offers one forum for the scholarly discussion of fan created derivative works, but there is currently little discussion of translation there.

##### 4.2 Mediality

In his pioneering work *Understanding Media*, Marshall McLuhan argues that it is the 'medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action' (2001: 9). While not all media studies would go along with this level of medium-determination, there is still an understanding that different media will be used in diverse ways. A printed newspaper, for instance, will be read differently to newspaper articles online, even if the content is exactly the same: the materiality of the paper and the juxtapositions on the page will affect reading the text when compared to reading it on screen. Media studies has therefore paid attention to the ways in which media are used and what affordances they offer as media.

A typical discussion here would be difference between film and television. John Ellis's *Visible Fictions* (1992) examines how the processes of production are different for film and TV, but also how people view film in the cinema and programmes on the television. Television's forms are often serial and episodic compared to the singular unit of the fiction film, which is meant to be watched in a single sitting. TV is also watched in the home, so it is seen as a domestic experience, whereas films are connected with the cinema and going out as

an event. Ellis was writing before the invention of streaming services such as Netflix and at the beginning of the widespread use of video recorders. Both of these have affected how people view films (see e.g. Newman 2014), especially as they allow what Laura Mulvey calls ‘interactive spectatorship’ (2006: 28) where viewers can pause, rewind and otherwise adjust the narrative flow of the film to their own preferences. Translation studies has only begun to explore how different media affect translation practices (e.g. Littau 2011; Jones 2018) and this is an area where media studies offers much research.

### 4.3 Audiences

Audiences have been particularly important to media studies, from early research on media effects (Williams 2003: 168-189) to the more developed work on audiences in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Radway 1984, Ang 1991, Morley 1992, among many others), as well as the focus on the way in which fans use texts as audiences (e.g. Jenkins 1992, Hills 2002, Azuma 2009, among many others). One of the ways in which media studies distinguishes itself from other humanities disciplines like Literature or Film Studies is this focus on the audience. As Jacques Rancière notes, spectators are often seen as passive (2009: 4), even if they are in fact much more active (Rancière 2009: 13). Much of the work in media studies has focused on analysing the agency of the audience. John Fiske argues that ‘the audience [...] becomes a producer, a producer of meanings and pleasures’ (1989: 27). This production is not entirely free, as it draws from materials created by others and which have ideologies already encoded in them. The way in which media are used, therefore, is a form of negotiation by audiences. So audiences can use texts to their own ends, as, for example, Fiske discusses in relation to *The Newlywed Game*: ‘[women] used it as a tool to think with’ (1989: 62). Fiske does not argue that the TV show is the only tool they used, but rather that watching the TV show about married couples gave them one means to reflect on their own lives. Translation studies can learn from the theorisation of an active audience that is engaged in the production of meaning with texts, though this is beginning to be seen in work on fan translation and citizen media by scholars such as Luis Pérez-González (2014).

### 4.4 Institutions

Institutions, like audiences, have been central to the field of media studies. There are significant differences between how public broadcasting services (such as the BBC in the UK) and private broadcasting services (such as ITV in the UK or the American networks) operate, which has a profound effect on how programmes are made and broadcast. A simple example is the presence of adverts on commercial television, which meant that TV shows needed to have breaks built in for adverts (or risk becoming incoherent). There are also differences between local media and national or international media, which affects the sorts of stories being reported in the news and the sorts of programmes being made. In relation to film, arthouse and independent cinemas often show different programmes to multiplexes; different distribution networks can provide an audience for international and foreign-language film (especially in English-speaking countries) which would not be found elsewhere. Film festivals also have an effect on what gets picked up to be distributed, offering exposure for independent filmmakers and films.

Government or state programmes can also affect media production and reception. Age ratings, such as those created by the BBFC in the UK for films and PEGI across Europe for video games, can affect how producers create content, as these institution’s guidelines will affect

who the products can be marketed to. Such age ratings and other forms of censorship can also affect how texts are received. Lucy Mazdon's (2000: 9-12) discussion of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), an international trade agreement, in relation to cinema and the international flow of films demonstrates how seemingly unrelated governmental agreements can affect how films are made and distributed. She also demonstrates how public funding has created a strong film industry in France (Mazdon 2000: 23); certainly, different institutions around the world will affect what gets made and distributed and how. Currently, Netflix and other streaming services are the institutions which are developing and affecting media production, with their international reach and the need for translation that comes with it, as well as being significant distributors of media texts.

This discussion of institutions draws attention to the complexities of the media environment and the multiple influences on media production and consumption. While translation studies has not neglected institutions – witness the large body of work on censorship (see Merkle 2018) – more could be done to understand the role of media institutions in translation.

#### 4.5 Convergence

'Convergence' is a somewhat complex term, due to the way it is used by different authors (Balbi 2017). Here I follow Henry Jenkins's use of the word 'convergence' to refer to the 'flow of content across multiple platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want' (2006: 2). Such convergence is possible due to the changing way in which media is distributed: no longer are viewers limited to a small number of broadcast TV channels, for instance, but they have access to many TV channels, DVDs, Youtube, streaming services in order to watch a show, and any number of other means to find out information about it, from official websites and Twitter channels, to fan wikis and community forums. Or they might engage with various forms of merchandise or derivative works. As Jenkins argues, audiences will look for their entertainment experiences across a number of media, and media industries have adapted to take advantage of this. The role of media paratexts (Gray 2010) is now quite important and the profit from a show is as likely to be made in merchandising as it is from network distribution of the show itself. Indeed, media products may now be conceived of as transmedia texts, extending narratives across film, TV, video games, comics and websites: all aspects converge as part of the audience experience.

As such, convergence relates to many of the issues discussed in this section: it presupposes an active audience who will seek out products that they enjoy; it assumes that there are institutions in place that create content across media or which collaborate to provide experiences across media (through franchising, for example); it deals with the growth of derivative products; and it addresses how media affect experience. This is not to say that it is the most important issue in media studies or that all media scholars would agree with Jenkins's analyses. However, convergence culture is affecting how we approach media and represents a shift in the understanding of media in recent years. Convergence is the environment that we now work in and as such it is important to understand it and how it affects how people interact with texts. This is of crucial importance when thinking about how translation fits into the media ecosystem.

### **5. Recommendations for research practice**

In this chapter I have tried to demonstrate how media studies has much to offer translation studies in terms of research practice. I have argued that research in media studies can benefit translation studies and help to develop research practices that attend to the specific media under consideration as well as how various forms of context (institutional, cultural, mediatic) affect the production and consumption of texts in translation, as well as giving audiences more agency. In other words, media studies' 'thick' approach to context and audience agency offer useful conceptualisations that can be deployed by translation studies in order to explain how people translate media and, importantly, how they receive and use translated media.

I have embedded suggestions throughout this chapter for research that could use media studies methodologies in translation studies. However, it is important to think not only about writing for other translation studies scholars (and students), but also to think about other possible users of research about translation. Christopher Rundle (2012: 232) writes that the 'natural interlocutors' of translation historians may be other historians. The case is similar for research about translation in and of the media: 'natural interlocutors' here also include media scholars, but also media practitioners (filmmakers, radio DJs, web designers) and media users (from casual viewers to fans). To an extent, this means thinking about how research into translation can be of use to them: what can it tell them about the media? Knowing how texts are translated, by whom, with what support, for what purposes, can lead to a better understanding of how audiovisual texts circulate beyond their locations and cultures of origin and how they are received when they arrive in other cultures. In a globalised world, media are commonly experienced in translation (even in linguacultures such as the Anglophone and Sinophone where many people are monolingual), yet translation is seldom discussed in media studies (Dwyer 2017: 2): this is a way that translation studies can contribute to the debates around media. Aiming for an interdisciplinary impact will, however, mean reaching out to media studies scholars and media practitioners. By doing so, translation scholars can explain the importance and use of translational analysis for understanding the media. To be effective, it will be necessary to learn what media studies scholars find interesting about translation, rather than relying on current translation studies frameworks.

Admittedly, such interdisciplinarity is difficult: it requires developing competence in media studies as well as translation studies and being able to speak to different scholarly audiences in their own idiom and about questions which interest them. It will also change how we look at translation: for media studies, translation could be viewed as part of the distribution of media content, linking it to questions of cultural and institutional power, distribution networks and reception. Or translation, especially fan translation, could be considered a form of craft: a non-industrial practice that produces materials and texts which, following David Gauntlett (2011), helps to bring communities together. Alternatively, professional translation could be understood in relation to other aspects of the creative industries, where its freelance nature makes it comparable to other media practices such as copy writing, design or visual effects creation. The ideological and labour aspects of these creative industries have been explored by Angela McRobbie (2016) and her insights could inform ways of understanding translation as a creative industry.

Media studies offers tools, methods and concepts that can help translation scholars write more effectively about media translation. Without dialogue, though, that research stays confined to translation studies, even if it could potentially be of interest to readers working in other disciplines. An interdisciplinary approach, which addresses both translation and media

studies, would seem to be an optimal way of incorporating media studies methods into translation studies, so that both disciplines can benefit.

## **6. Further reading**

Abend-David, Dror (ed.) (2014) *Media and Translation: An interdisciplinary approach*. London, Bloomsbury.

*An important collection bringing together scholars working on film, TV, news and translation studies.*

Azuma, Hiroki (2009) *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, trans. Jonathan W. Abel and Shion Kono, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

*A study of fan cultures in Japan, focusing on 1990s anime fandoms. Interesting for translation studies for its discussion of the role of derivative works.*

Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford and Joshua Green. (2013) *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in Networked Culture*. New York, New York University Press.

*Important for its analysis of how media texts spread, or are distributed, across different audiences and media.*

Pérez-González, Luis (ed) (2018) *The Routledge Handbook of Audiovisual Translation*. Abingdon, Routledge.

*A large collection of work covering many aspects of audiovisual translation from many disciplinary perspectives.*

Thornham, Sue, Caroline Bassett and Paul Marris (eds) (2009) *Media Studies A Reader*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

*An excellent collection of articles on media that serves as a good overview of the discipline.*

## **7. Related topics**

Cultural Studies, Post-Structuralism, Semiotics, Audiovisual, multimedia and videogame localization, Digital modes of translation (MT, crowdsourcing, social networks), Ethnographic research.

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