(Dis)Abling Translation and Tourism Studies

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ABSTRACT: This article will investigate the ways in which disability, meant both as a scientific field of enquiry and as a real-life issue our society is called to confront with, affects tourism and translation not only at the level of practice but also at a theoretical and methodological level. By assuming disability as a concern for all in everyday life, this issue takes on an urgency that triggers thought and action as few other social and cultural topics do nowadays.

Hence, the article will provide a preliminary—and by no means exhaustive—overview of the historical representation of disability and analyse its impact on both Tourism and Translation Studies. No empirical case study will be presented to explore this impact, as the article aims instead to go beyond specific investigations of the strategies applied to cater for the needs of people with disabilities, which are in fact flourishing in Tourism and Translation Studies. However salutary this development may be considered, there is a need to enlarge the spectrum of enquiry beyond the specificity of case studies, and investigate the complex interplay between practice and theory in the fields of Disability, Tourism and Translation Studies.

KEY WORDS: translation; tourism; disability; accessibility; inclusion

INTRODUCTION

The Call for Papers of this issue of *Other Modernities* focuses on translation as an intercultural mediation practice applied to tourism discourse. The kind of mediation the editors have in mind consists in a series of comprehensive, broad-spectrum interventions to be applied in order to allow all tourists to benefit from the services and activities offered by the tourism sector. Such interventions include, but are not restricted to, linguistic and intercultural mediation activities. Any serious attempt to break down communication barriers in the field of tourism can no longer limit itself to define tourist accessibility merely in terms of language, or from a cultural mediation perspective, however complex and fundamental these themes undoubtedly are. The aim of this issue is in fact to emphasize the importance of accessibility and inclusion in the tourism field, at a time when these notions are becoming buzzwords, when related to people with disabilities.

This article will explore the broad area of disability, its historical representations, the emergence of Disability Studies as a scientific field of enquiry, and the impact it has on Tourism and Translation Studies. The introductory and by no means exhaustive overview of disability, in terms of both historical development and current significance, should be considered only as a starting point for the exploration of accessibility and inclusion issues in the disciplinary fields of Tourism and Translation Studies.

The enquiry will be conducted at a theoretical and methodological level: no empirical case study or application of models developed within the two disciplines will be presented. In fact, as it will be demonstrated later, specialized studies on the application of strategies or devices catering for the needs of people with disabilities are proliferating in Tourism as well as in Translation Studies. However, or, rather, as a consequence of this, there is a need to go beyond specific, empirical explorations, and see whether, and in which way, they may have a bearing on translation and tourism theoretical configurations. Hence, this article combines a literary review intent with a preliminary investigation of the connections between practice and theory in the fields of Disability, Tourism and Translation Studies.

DISABILITY: CONCEPTS AND REPRESENTATIONS

Disability is a human condition or identity frame, and just one among many. Yet, it differs from most, if not all other forms of identity, in terms of social and cultural recognition. In fact if classifications in terms of gender, race, class and sexual orientation have more or less recently successfully overthrown traditional definitions, disability does not seem to have been mentioned in most debates about minority identity (Aitchison 375). Davis makes this point clear when he writes that people with a disability:

> have been relegated to the margins by the very people who have celebrated and championed the emergence of multiculturalism, class consciousness, feminism, and queer studies from the margins. (xi)

As Mitchell and Snyder have argued, although Disability Studies, like other "minority approaches," challenges the association with inferiority for people with physical and cognitive differences, when feminist, race and sexuality approaches attempted to release their identities from the stigma of physical and mental inability, they "inevitably positioned disability as the 'real' limitation from which they must escape" (2). Hence, disability came to represent the opposite of cultural acceptability, and the "material marker of inferiority itself" (3).

However, it has not been easy to acknowledge unbiased visibility to people with disability, at least up to recent years. The very definition of disability is problematic: this term was introduced to replace the previous one, 'handicapped', increasingly perceived as discriminating as it indicated incapacity to fulfil one's social role. Another term, i.e., 'impairment', is still used to designate a congenital or acquired loss of function at a physical, mental or emotional level. 'Disability', on the other hand, refers to "the socially regulated parameters that exacerbate the effect of the impairment" (Quayson 3). Other terms have been tentatively introduced in order to promote a new cultural awareness of disability: for example 'differently abled' has been suggested, a definition which, however, lays itself open to criticism, as everybody on principle is differently abled, that is more versed in certain activities, or skilled only in specific areas.

The meaning of 'disability' is still deeply rooted in our culture in terms of deviation from a 'norm' that has been posited as the yardstick. But when individuals are viewed only through the lenses of physical or mental dysfunction, they are underestimated, and the result is often social discrimination and exclusion. In order to modify such culturally ingrained conviction a radical change of perspective is necessary, one that would see impairment simply as one of the many potential configurations of the human body (Buhalis and Darcy). According to Garland Thomson disability is a representation of cultural expectations, "a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do" (6); in fact it should not be understood as a given, but, rather, as a social and cultural assumption constructed in the course of history.

The word 'normal' itself, indicating the 'common type' or standard, was introduced into the English language only around 1840, deriving from the carpenter's square, defined as a 'norm' (Davis 24). The affirmation of such a concept implies that the largest part of the population should adhere to it, and, as a consequence, those who do not fit into the 'norm' are represented as deviating from it. Disability, meant as 'abnormality', is therefore positioned at the very end of the 'normalcy' (Davis 23) spectrum.

A series of well-defined social and cultural developments have come together to establish the concept of norm or normalcy throughout the centuries. One of them was late eighteenth-century scientific thought. Darwin's notion of the survival of the fittest introduced the idea of a perfectible human body which could be improved, as it would be later speculated by eugenics, by scientific intervention. Darwin's theory was instrumentally applied in order to produce an image of disabled people as evolutionarily defective, to be eliminated in the 'normal' course of natural selection. Davis points out that in 1933 the well-known scientific periodical *Nature* endorsed the Nazis' proposal of a bill prescribing "the avoidance of inherited diseases in posterity" by

means of massive sterilization of disabled people (38). These arguments were spreading at a time when industrialization was pressing forward in many European countries, and a new pre-capitalist mentality was gaining ground: if individual citizens were not fit, they could not be productive and the nation as a whole would bear the consequences.

The concept of normalcy gradually took ground also in the field of psychology between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century: Freud established an idea of sexuality as a fundamental and 'normal' human function and contrasted it with what was defined as abnormal, perverse and pathological. Davis argues that the loose association emerging at this time between disability, psychiatric disorders and criminal activities established a legacy that somehow still lingers on today (37).

In the twentieth century the two World Wars created a fertile environment for the development of psychoanalytic treatments, particularly in the field of post-traumatic stress disorder. At the same time, these techniques laid the basis of rehabilitative interventions soon applied not only to war casualties, but also to people with disabilities. These treatments developed fast and eventually became part of the institutional care facilities specifically designed to accommodate people with disabilities. As Quayson has noticed, some modern special-education programs are still the product of the early medical rehabilitation experiments born out of the two World Wars (10).

A latter-day development of this paradigm is the medical model, which has dominated the discourse of disability until the 1980s. One of the most popular representatives of this model was Parsons, who saw disability as an individual medical condition necessitating medical intervention. According to this perspective, persons with disabilities were seen as totally dependent on other people and on society at large, and the effect of this was their further social exclusion. Eventually, his approach produced a discourse as controlling as those on madness investigated by Foucault.

At the beginning of the 1980s, however, an activist movement in favour of people with disabilities (which included a number of disabled persons) challenged the medical model, and called attention to what they defined as a "disabling society," i.e. a society where persons with disabilities are marginalized. Finkelstein quotes a passage from the Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation, a British activist group, whose manifesto was published as early as 1972. It included the following lines:

> In our view, it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society. (14)

Richards *et al.* have argued that the activist movements gave rise to the social model of disability, eventually gaining ground all over the world, advocating equal rights and a radical change of perspective, grounded in the experience of people of disabilities vis-à-vis an 'ableist' society (1101). The social model of disability analyses both material limiting factors and social and psychological obstacles that intensify the difficulties experienced by disabled individuals (Daruwalla and Darcy; Gleeson; Zajadacz). The approach is diametrically opposed to the medical model: here it is not

the individual who must adapt to society, but rather society itself should enable the individual with disabilities to fully partake in social life. As a consequence, the social model aims at changing social attitudes towards disability and encourages society to adapt the environment to the needs of the most vulnerable part of the population. Zajadacz has claimed that the increasing evolution of attitudes towards disability has already produced a substantial change in the way in which disability is being understood and defined, producing what she has called a "disability umbrella," which includes not only a wide range of impairments, but also a variety of social conditions affecting individuals' participation in social life.

In fact one of the principal characteristics of disability, and one that differentiates it from other 'marginalized' identities (in terms of gender, race, colour, etc.) is its instability. According to the World Bank, at least 15% of the population in the world has some kind of disability, and in Europe people with at least one disability are about 80 million (Agovino *et al.* 58). Furthermore, as Davis has put it, this category "begins to break down when one scrutinizes who make up the disabled" (XV): that is, the blind, the Deaf, people with congenital or acquired physical dysfunctions, but also people with mental illnesses, psychological problems, or people with chronic illnesses, fatal and progressive diseases, etc. When we add to this list learning impairments, dyslexia and obesity, the artificial nature of what is defined as disability becomes apparent. As a result, it is almost impossible to make a distinction between 'abled bodied' and disabled, especially because our society is composed of disabled and *only temporarily abled* people, if the consequences of ageing are taken into account.

The intrinsic fluidity of any definition of disability may be threatening at first sight, but as Richards *et al.* have argued, once we recognize that disability is a general human condition, "we can begin to see disabled people as 'us' rather than 'them' and endeavour to co-create knowledge with us/them rather than doing research 'on' them" (1113).

MEDIATING TOURISM FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The implementation of strategies allowing people with disabilities to fully partake in all aspects of social life, particularly tourism and intercultural experiences, can be understood as a type of mediation to be realized primarily at a social level, in order to guarantee equal rights and inclusion to all individuals. Mediation is meant here as a combination of services, activities and devices, tailored to specific users' needs, and aimed at facilitating access to tourism and intercultural experiences. A series of insights can be derived from the overview above on Disability Studies, and they can be summarized as follows:

- disability is a socially and culturally constructed notion, and as such it can be revised and adapted to new social and cultural attitudes. Most of the effects of disabilities on the lives of individuals are socially (and culturally) produced, hence society at large should provide measures to ensure social and cultural access and inclusion;

- disability is a highly heterogeneous and fluctuating concept: it involves people with a variety of disabilities and/or impairments, different levels of body and mind functioning, as well as 'temporarily abled' people. In other words, it involves all of us;

- in order to cater for the diverse needs of people with disabilities, a series of tailored, that is situation- and context-adjusted, services and practices have to be implemented. These practices should accommodate the needs as well as recognize the resources and interests of individuals who should be considered as differently able.

Implications for Tourism and Translation Studies are significant as we shall see in the next two sections.

ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION IN TOURISM STUDIES

In a society increasingly dominated by models of consumption rather than production, tourism is becoming one of the fundamental signals of social, economic and cultural capital formation, framing identities of gender, ethnicity, age, class and all their combinations. Yet, disability has long been excluded from tourism discourse. Aitchison has argued that this has been the result of a "codification of knowledge" within a discipline that has accommodated hegemonic discourses and definitions of travel and tourism, ignoring the lived experience of people with disabilities (378). For example, an influential theoretical approach such as Urry's tourist gaze assumed mobility and sight as fundamental preconditions for visitors to engage in tourism activities. Hence, up to fifteen years ago the tourist experience appeared to be portrayed in a "sensory void," in spite of being in fact a multi-sensual and bodily experience involving taste, touch, sound, smell as well as sight and mobility (Dann and Jacobsen). Nowadays, however, a body of literature is filling the gap, highlighting the embodied, multisensory experience of travel (Pritchard *et al. Tourism and Gender*; Urry and Larsen).

The embodied experience of tourists with disabilities, however, is not likely to be the same as that of the 'abled bodied' tourist. Not only bodily sensations may differ, but also and especially the social context in which sensations are developed is bound to be different. And this difference becomes apparent even at the pre-trip stage (Dann), that is when prospective tourists start planning a visit. The lack of representations of disability in tourism promotional material can act as a deterrent to travel for individuals with disabilities, inducing feelings of exclusion. Furthermore, communication is very often scarce and defective, at least as far as 'information for all' is concerned—that is, in an accessible form, providing guidance on services available for tourists with special needs. In fact, the information barrier has been defined as the main obstacle faced by tourists with disabilities (Agovino *et al.* 59).

Yet, people with disabilities do have a desire to travel, but are still far from travelling at similar rates as people without disabilities, in spite of the fact that in the last twenty years or so several physical barriers in the field of transport and accommodation have been partially or almost totally removed (Small *et al.* 942). The so-called universal accessibility policies in the field of tourism date back to the '70s, when a group of researchers working for the English Tourist Board started to investigate the ways in

which 'universal' tourist offers could be developed. This group eventually evolved into the *Tourism for All* project, a British research unit that soon gained world resonance, influencing several European practices in this sector. The European Network for Accessible Tourism was created in 2006, and accessibility today is one of the eight areas for joint actions in the EU supporting the core objectives pursued by the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (Agovino *et al.* 58). Hence, tourism participation is increasingly being recognized as a right for all citizens, with the same impact as any other cultural activity for the promotion of a sense of citizenship and well-being.

However, academic research in the field of Tourism Studies has tended to consider people with disabilities as a new profitable niche of the tourist market, rather than taking into account the fundamental social and cultural import of tourism accessibility and inclusion (Richards *et. al.* 1099; Agovino *et al.* 58). The economic relevance of this sector has increasingly come to the fore as a consequence of population ageing all over the world. And yet it is precisely for this reason that social inclusion, in its various connotations, should be one of the main challenges of our time. As Kastenholz *et. al.* have noticed, the notions of social and cultural inclusion have an impact that goes well beyond material and economic inequalities, steering instead towards the political, ethical and cultural texture of our society (1261).

As a matter of fact, people with disabilities have always been treated as a special section of the tourist population, requiring special assistance, specialized care and specific devices, designed to cater for their special needs. The legacy of the medical model of disability, therefore, is still alive in mainstream tourism research as well as in many studies focusing on disabled accessibility and inclusion.

Obviously, the constraints and difficulties encountered by people with disabilities in their tourism experiences vary, depending on their specific type of impairment. In the previous section, disability has emerged as an artificial and oversimplified classification, far from being a homogeneous category. Today, however, like never before, the tourist industry appears capable to satisfy the idiosyncrasies of an increasingly demanding tourist population. In fact recent developments towards customized tourist offers, together with a drive towards creating new ways to engage visitors in personalized experiences, have been illustrated by numerous studies (Binkhorst and Den Dekker; Richards; Weiler and Black). The tourist industry seems to be experiencing an unprecedented creative evolution. This goes hand in hand with new technology and digital service developments, and the extraordinary impact it is exerting on tourism practices. A substantial amount of research has been recently devoted to the investigation of the ways in which technological developments may be employed to customize the experience to visitors' needs and expectations. For example, the user-friendly interfaces available on smartphones and tablets are generating distinctive and tailored tourist offers (Anacleto *et al.*). Weiler and Black, amongst others, have analysed the use of digital media and new technologies, which are increasingly employed to enrich and personalize on-site tourist experiences (see also Gretzel *et al.*; Wang *et al.*). It goes without saying that the advantages that new technology will offer and is already offering to cater for the special needs of tourists with disabilities are plentiful and will cover physical/motor, sensory, emotional as well as intellectual impairments (Small *et al.*).

At the same time, these devices can be put into service in a variety of tourist experiences: practices such as audio-guiding and audio description for blind people, or people with low vision, have already taken ground in such diverse tourism environments as museums, art exhibitions, and any other tourist experience with a strong visual component (Jiménez Hurtado and Soler Gallego; Eardley *et al.*). What is more, audio guides, in the shape of user-friendly apps enabling tourists to explore a destination, are catering for a market that includes not only the visually impaired, but also a large part of the 'non disabled' tourist population (Szarkowska *et al.*). Improved accessibility for people with intellectual disabilities should also be mentioned as one of the most promising outcomes of audio description techniques, enabling not only people with emotional and mental impairments, but also those with cognitive or learning-related difficulties, to get a user-friendly interpretation of cultural contents (Giusti).

Technological development is also apparent in the field of subtitling for the Deaf and hard of hearing (SDH), as well as sign language video production. Multimedia sign language based tours, such as captioned videos for sightseeing and museum and exhibition visits, offering multimedia tourist contents, are becoming more and more accessible to the public at large (see for example *VEASYT*).

In spite of the clear advantages all these devices represent in terms of access and inclusion for people with disabilities, it must be pointed out that the focus appears to be still on the needs, rather than on the valuable contributions of these individuals towards a genuinely 'new' perspective of 'tourism for all'. As we have seen in the first section of this article, the conceptual shift towards the social model of disability is constructively focused on difference, rather than on dysfunction, highlighting the necessity to implement strategies accounting for the individual needs of people with disabilities, as well as their resources, interests and potential contributions. Applying this perspective to tourism practices, Figueiredo *et al.* have claimed:

> It is to be expected that persons with different types of disabilities and body levels of functioning would also reveal diverse attitudes, desires, motivations and travel behaviours. However, few studies have dealt with this diversity up to now, focusing […] on the barriers and constraints persons with disabilities have to face, in general, when experiencing tourism and leisure activities. (535)

The authors above cite the example of visually impaired-tourists, who should not only be provided with the means enabling them to overcome their specific difficulty (i.e. Braille texts, use of audio guides, etc.) but should also be given the opportunity to exploit the use of their other senses and abilities, such as hear, smell, taste and touch. Conversely, strategies and devices emphasizing the sense of vision should be provided for the hearing impaired (Figueiredo *et al.* 535).

Hence, accessibility and inclusion here mean paying special attention to the abilities and inclinations of individuals with diverse types of disabilities and body and mind functioning, finding strategies to help them create new meanings out of tourism experiences. Besides, and this is certainly good news for the tourist industry, most of the

enhanced experiences produced by new technology and multimedia devices, such as audio-visual presentations or subtitles, can be effectively engaging for 'normal' tourists too.

A constructive emphasis on difference, to be understood as the necessity to produce context-specific theoretical reflections and interventions, lays the basis for a fruitful encounter between Disability, Tourism and Translation Studies. The links among the three are not new, as researchers working in the field of sign language and interpretation, subtitling and audio description have long demonstrated. What is arguably novel is the stress I would like to place on the fruitful combination of methodological insights derived from the fields of Disability, Tourism, and Translation Studies. The basic premise of this combination will be the assumption that lack or inadequacy of language and intercultural competence can be conceived as a kind of disability, as it does not allow the individual to function competently in a foreign context. The common threads among the three disciplinary fields are represented by the concepts of accessibility and inclusion, both as they are currently applied at a practical level, and in the way in which they may orient theoretical development.

ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

Although disability used to be a topic almost exclusively covered by specialized works in the field of Tourism, digital developments have changed and are still modifying tourism practices, up to a point that accessibility and inclusion have become rather fashionable terms in a considerable amount of tourism research focusing on museum, exhibition and even sightseeing tours.

These terms are also starting to be accommodated at theoretical level, as theoretical approaches like 'hopeful tourism' demonstrate. Hopeful tourism seeks to create socially inclusive tourism research and practice, committing itself to issues of gender, race, sexuality and class, as well as to disability (Pritchard *et al.* "Hopeful Tourism" 958). Disability is in fact one of its central concerns, as Richards *et* al. make clear when they write that their approach aims to

> confront ableist power geometries […] which prevent people with disabilities from full participating in and contributing to tourism […]. In this, we expose how people with disabilities are excluded from full participation in society […] and illuminate how social justice can be attained in and through tourism. (1098)

Hence, as it has been demonstrated in the previous section, theory is strictly linked with practice in the field of tourism, empirical research feeding into theoretical development.

An obvious question now concerns Translation Studies: what about research on translation and disability? Has the topic of disability ever been approached at a methodological and theoretical level in Translation Studies? There is no straightforward answer to this question, at least at first sight. Significantly, a Google search on the string "translation and disability" does not produce any result. However, when the search is made more specific, and certain types of disabilities are mentioned, especially hearing

and visual impairments, then results abound, since research specifically designed for this type of audiences is flourishing in Translation Studies. In fact, empirical studies in the areas of audio description, subtitling and audio-visual translation in general are increasingly being produced and published. Obviously translation is concerned with interlinguistic and intercultural communication, and therefore it has to do with all types of disabilities that may hinder communicative production and reception.

Audio-visual translation (AVT) is becoming one of the most developed fields of research and application in Translation Studies. It covers many different types of activities, such as dubbing, subtitling and screen and audio description. Particularly the latter two activities have a fundamental impact on people with disabilities, such as Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, as well as on all people with visual difficulties, that is blind and partially sighted persons.

Subtitling for the Deaf and hard-of hearing (SDH) is not limited to cinema, DVDs and TV programs, but it can also be applied to digital devices in general, as well as to any type of web interaction. As such, it can acquire an educational aim and target a very large audience. SDH can be either intralingual or interlingual (Gottlieb "Subtitling"). The difference between SDH and general interlingual subtitling lies primarily in reading speed and provision of additional information, such as the indication of the speakers, identified through the use of colours associated with them (Neves; Matamala and Orero *Listening*). Audio description (AD), on the other hand, is an intersemiotic type of translation, converting visual experiences into language. It consists in the narration of visual images of cinema, television or theatre events, or museum and art exhibitions. In SDH it is necessary to transfer not only oral communication into the written words, but also the whole aural context of communication, including sounds, tone and style of interaction. Audio describers work the other way around, turning not only visual elements, but also facial expressions and body language into an oral narrative (Patiniotaki; Matamala and Orero *Researching*).

Practices focusing on the development of digital technology and assistive tools, when applied to the needs of people with disabilities, have been recognized a central role among the activities promoting "accessibility as a right for all" (Patiniotaki 2014: 396). Assistive technology (henceforward AST), to be understood as "any item, piece of equipment, or product system […] that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capacities of individuals with disabilities" (United States, Congress), caters today not only for the needs of a series of disabilities affecting motor, visual, listening and cognitive functions, but also for needs related to learning difficulties.

Furthermore, AST, including AVT, can be applied to different contexts and to different purposes, an example being second language acquisition. In fact today several scholars consider lack, or inadequacy, of foreign language competence as a kind of disability, as it does impair communication. Hence, lack of competence in a foreign language can become a barrier to be overcome, particularly in a tourist experience, to the same extent as any other barriers of a more conventional nature. Díaz-Cintas *et al.* share this view when they write:

> On the one hand, language is undoubtedly a barrier. By means of various transfer modes that have been traditionally described and analysed within AVT studies (e.g. subtitling, dubbing, voiceover, interpreting, etc.), content is made accessible to those who do not understand the original language. Sensorial barriers are another hindrance, which are being overcome thanks to subtitling, audio description and sign language, just to name some of the main modalities which are at the core of media accessibility, a new research line which has been perfectly accommodated under the umbrella of AVT studies. (14)

So, although specific translation practices such as SDH and AD have been conceived for specific audiences, they are currently used by a much wider group of people today, including the elderly and, particularly, foreign language students. SDH is generally used in foreign language learning to improve reading and writing skills, whereas AD advances speaking and listening abilities. As eLearning is taking ground all over the world in secondary and tertiary education, services in overall accessible forms are becoming more and more available, and effectively used to different purposes.

According to Gottlieb ("Subtitles"), translation in audiovisual media can have three different functions:

1. It may substitute a text when an audience is unable to access the original "due to (*a*) sensory (e.g. loss of eyesight or hearing) or (*b*) linguistic impairment" (46).

2. It may function as a text enhancer. For instance, a screen advertisement may enhance its appeal by having captions inserted into the spoken message.

3. It may become a cognitive supplement when an audience has simultaneously access to the source text and the target text, and is able to understand the two languages. This activity is extensively practiced for language learning purposes but can also be extremely advantageous for people with cognitive impairment or learning-related difficulties.

At a theoretical level, AVT appears to challenge the traditional notion of 'text'. Remael *et al.* have pointed to the explosion of the boundaries of what is considered as a 'text' in AVT, due not only to the shift in terms of language mode (for example, from oral to written communication in the case of subtitling), but also to the nature of multimodality itself. Multimodality means that the meaning of a film, a tourism promotional video, a TV ad or a webpage is the complex product of several semiotic resources.

Translation Studies has initially found it difficult to come to terms with multimodality. O'Sullivan cites Reiss's early classification of the "audio-medial" function of texts as supplementary to the informative, operative and expressive functions. Only in 2000 Reiss modified her position maintaining instead that multimedial texts should be considered as a "hyper text-type," assuming any of the three functions of language, according to the context in which they are used (Reiss 164-5). As O'Sullivan puts it: "This revisiting of her approach speaks to the difficulty of incorporating multimodality into theories of translation which had until then been exclusively text-based" (5). Gambier has also argued that the dominant research perspective in Translation Studies is still unable to take into account the complexity of multimedia products, since "The multisemiotic blends of many different signs are not ignored but they are usually neglected or not integrated into a framework" (97).

On the positive side, however, AVT may help Translation Studies to move ahead and recognize that most text types nowadays combine writing with illustrations, for example tourist brochures, art books, instruction leaflets, exhibition catalogues, advertisements—to name just a few. Hence, ATV is positively encouraging Translation Studies to open its doors to contemporary multimedia technology and text types and this is producing a fundamental effect on the way in which translating is practiced nowadays. For example, in subtitling entire speech acts are focused on, rather than single lexical or syntactic units, and this grants the subtitler a considerable amount of linguistic and interpretative freedom. AV translators, on their part, tend to deal holistically with the text, its multimedia form and its semiotic context. While traditional theories of translation seem to be still primarily concerned with the transposition of verbal elements between different linguistic codes, AVT is compelled to deal with whole semiotic units, combining language with images, sounds and other digital effects. Di Giovanni has argued that in AVT: "verbal language has definitely lost its prominence and words have come together with visual references to form broader cultural units" (40).

So, if on the one hand, ATV is stimulating new methodological reflections, on the other, however, it brings an additional threat in terms of theoretical fragmentation into the discipline. In fact, translators appear to be more and more specialized, and AV translators even more so. Gambier defines them as specialized technicians, who tend to concentrate on well-defined areas: "subtitlers are not dubbers, interpreters do not practise voice-over, and so on" (92).

Yet the multifaceted character of ATV is nothing else than a reflection of the interdisciplinary nature of Translation Studies, which has been discussed in a myriad of studies and has become a cornerstone of this discipline. The very notion of translation itself is representative of the plural and yet characteristic identity of Translation Studies, as it overlaps with concepts such as adaptation, rewriting, intercultural transfer and remediation, to cite only a few examples. *Unity in Diversity* was the title of a successful collection of essays edited by Bowker *et al.* as early as 1998: since then the interdisciplinary, or rather, multidisciplinary nature of Translation Studies has been accepted beyond dispute (House). ATV could thus confirm and reinforce the multidisciplinary orientation of Translation Studies as Díaz-Cintas *et al.* have argued:

> In many ways, AVT could potentially elevate the status of Translation Studies thanks to the polymorphic nature of its research object and the fact that it makes use of knowledge from diverse fields, at the same time as feeding into fields of research that are equally diverse. (13)

Therefore, ATV should no longer be seen as a constellation of empirical studies based on specific experiences, but rather as a valuable methodological instrument to investigate the need for accessible, multimodal and multilingual communication. In this way, it could strengthen the theoretical orientation of Translation Studies by promoting a practice-oriented theory, rooted in best practice, and directed at improving service quality.

Moreover, the close connections of AVT with technology, tourism and the global economy industry at large ensure its visibility and impact on many areas, particularly the social area. Translators should in fact be less concerned with language dilemmas and more attentive to the effects and functions of their work at a broad social level. Accessibility, in the wide social sense of inclusiveness, availability and user-friendliness is a primary necessity and a right for all in a fast-changing world, as Gambier has aptly put it:

> Accessibility means that AV or electronic products and services must be available to all users, irrespective of issues such as where they live, their level of experience, their physical and mental capacity, or the configuration of their computer. Accessibility is not just an issue for the disabled: it does not only mean a barrier-free situation; it also means that services are available and that information is provided and easy to understand. (94)

Accessibility has thus become the translators' privilege and burden. Not only does it affect their social function and status but, as argued earlier, it also heavily impacts on the way in which translation activities should be understood and practiced in an advanced digital society. Pragmatic effectiveness has overthrown fidelity. This is a step forward in the target-oriented direction most Translation Studies have taken since the appearance of both *Skopostheorie* (Nord) and Toury's descriptive model of translation. And it is both the cause and the effect of the wide-ranging meaning accessibility has taken on, mainly as a result of AVT's and AST's developments.

CONCLUSION

In the course of this article disability has emerged not only as a social construct and an issue society and culture are called to tackle through new and effective interventions, but also as a theoretical perspective. By assuming that disability will probably affect all of us, on the long run, this issue takes on an urgency that stimulates thought and action as few other social and cultural topics do nowadays. It calls for creative engagement and participation as the forms and degrees that disability may take are countless.

Technology is a great asset in this respect, as illustrated in the previous sections, and more and more devices are being developed, bringing together technological competence and specialized knowledge in such diverse fields as medicine and health, architecture, education, pedagogy, entertainment, as well as tourism and translation. Hence, disability covers all these fields, and leaves none of them untouched.

The aim of this article has been to see whether and in which way disability, and particularly the notions of accessibility and inclusion, affect tourism and translation not just at the level of practice, but also in terms of theoretical reflection. Preliminary hints in this direction have been illustrated. In the case of tourism, the necessity of a new attention towards the needs as well as the resources and interests of tourists with disabilities has become apparent. At a time when active participation and even co-creation of the tourist experience is becoming a fundamental framework in tourism research, the competence and motivation of people with disabilities will certainly

stimulate reflection.

As for Translation Studies, the apparent fragmentation of empirical research on translation catering for the needs of people with disabilities is paradoxically having a strong influence on the development of the discipline as a whole. The redefinition of 'text' and the necessity for Translation Studies to develop tools to analyse its multimedia components are one effect of AVT. Another, derived from the first, is the emergence of a new translating strategy, less concerned with the rendering of single verbal elements than with larger semiotic units, which bring together language, sound, image, and possibly also smell and touch.

However, it seems too early to draw any definitive conclusions. Not only further theoretical research is needed to confirm these preliminary considerations, but also data from applied studies could be brought together in a comprehensive quantitative investigation, so as to stimulate reflection in the bottom-up approach characterizing most Translation Studies developments.

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