ANNA MATAMALA

Anna Matamala is a Senior Lecturer (Professora Titular d'Universitat) in the Department of Translation and Interpreting and East Asian Studies at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). She did her BA in Translation and Interpreting (UAB 1996) and her PhD in Applied Linguistics (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, 2004). She is also a member of TransMedia research group and TransMedia Catalonia.

In this interview, which took place in June 2016, she described some details about her long professional experience in Audiovisual Translation, especially in dubbing from English into Catalan, and we talked about many other things like her interest in lexicography, her point of view on some contemporary topics in Audiovisual Translation Studies: the use of technology, the relation between AVT and Accessibility Studies, AVT and Filmmaking fields, the importance of keeping in touch with other countries and even continents outside Europe, and she also gave some advice to the new generation of Translation students[1].

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INTERVIEW WITH ANNA MATAMALA

Cadernos de Tradução (CT): *What university did you graduate from, and why did you choose the Translating and Interpreting areas?*

Anna Matamala (AM): I did a BA in Translation and Interpreting at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). I chose this BA because I had a strong interest in languages. I didn't know whether to study classical or modern languages, and in the end I chose a BA in Translation and Interpreting, which was a very prestigious degree. I finished my BA in 1995. I studied English, French, and German. I have also studied Portuguese but not as part of my degree. I have mainly worked from English into Catalan, and did some work from English into Spanish and from French into Catalan.

(CT): *You have a long professional experience. Could you describe the different areas you worked in the beginning of your career?*

(AM): During the last year of my BA I was working as a language editor for a newspaper in Girona. Every Saturdays and Sundays I spent 8 hours editing the journal's articles. And for me that was a very good teaching training, working with lots of time pressure and with a wonderful supervisor (Anna Mir), who helped me enormously. So my linguistic skills improved a lot, which was very useful when I wanted to get another job. Then, when I finished my BA in 1995, I decided to live in Barcelona to do some additional courses, but my aim was to start translating for Catalan Television. I sent a thousand CVs. I did legal translation, technical translation etc. I was even got involved in a company who started to do websites. It is something normal when you finish your BA: spend one year doing whatever you can to gain experience.

(CT): *What about your experience as an audiovisual translator (1996 up to 2007). How did you start working on that?*

(AM): In 1996 there were tests to get into Catalan Television as a freelance translator, and I was fortunate enough to pass the first time. So just one year after finishing my BA without any specific training in audiovisual translation I started working as a freelancer for Catalan Television.

The system was as follow: there was a test for aspiring translators and, if you passed it, you were included in a list of official translators for Catalan television, and dubbing studios could only commission translations from these official translators.

So I was included on the list, and they put me in touch with a dubbing studio which was called Soundtrack at the time, and there I met a wonderful linguist (Núria Farré), who explained how it worked and guided me.

Catalan Television had already some guidelines and publications on how to translate for dubbing. They provided that information and I had to do the translation in a certain format. So I did not receive specific training but I got guidelines on what to do, and I also got good feedback from the linguists both at the dubbing studio and Catalan television. I could ask for the script so I could have a look at the mistakes I made and learn from that. I was very lucky because my first linguist was very good at telling me what mistakes I was making. So I could improve a lot by practicing.

I translated from English into Catalan taking into account certain formats and conventions and also taking into account the language model of my client, which was Catalan Television.

The process of dubbing in Spain includes a translator, a dialogue writer and a linguist, and also all the technical and artistic professionals. The three tasks (translating, adapting the dialogues and revising the language) can be done by three different people or one person can take more than one role, it depends. I started by doing only translations but then, at a certain point, when I was working for more than one dubbing studio, there was one that wanted me to

learn to be a dialogue writer and do the lip synch. So there I was given the opportunity to go into a dubbing booth and be trained by professionals. They gave me the opportunity to learn.

My dubbing translations during that period were a mix of American and British series, movies, and documentaries. I specialized in audiovisual translation. First only as a translator, later as a dialogue writer and then I passed the exams to be a Catalan Television linguist. So in a way I had different profiles during those ten years.

(CT): *Do you think that the Catalan broadcasting industry was and is a good area to start practicing translation?*

(AM): From 1996 up to 2007 I was a freelance translator, and my main client was Catalan Television through dubbing studios. That was my main job. Now the situation is not an easy one, as it is with many other fields. As far as I know, there are not many new possibilities in translations for dubbing into Catalan, although maybe in other languages or areas such as respeaking or subtitling there may be more possibilities. In fact, when I talk to former students, it is rewarding to see that they have found jobs related to this industry. I think the concept is trying as hard as possible, get as much experience as possible, and in the end try to find your own specialization. In my case, for about ten years, my main income came from audiovisual translation. I translated many series and movies. I do miss translating because I love being there alone with the audiovisual text. Now I teach translation but I'm not doing translations anymore because I have a full-time permanent job at university.

(CT): *After your Undergraduate course why did you decide to do your MA and PhD in Applied Linguistics?*

(AM): I decided to take my MA because I love learning and researching. The BA in Translation at Universitat Autònoma de Bar-

celona was very practice-oriented, so at that moment I felt that my knowledge in Linguistics was not that good. Also, although there was an opportunity to do a PhD at UAB in Translation and Interpreting, I wanted to move a bit from translation only and focus on linguistic aspects. At Pompeu Fabra University there was a good team of researchers at the Institute of Applied Linguistics (IULA), led by Prof. Teresa Cabré. They offered an interesting MA and PhD, so I continued my studies there. I was very much interested in applied approaches to linguistics, namely lexicography, terminology, language technologies, etc. So I did an MA in Applied Linguistics with a focus on lexicography and I took many courses in lexicography and terminology. And then I did a PhD and wrote a dissertation supervised by Dr Mercè Lorente in which all my interests came together: audiovisual translation, lexicography and oral language (more specifically, interjections).

(CT): *How did you decide to enter the academic area?*

(AM): While I was doing my PhD at the research institute I got a three year part time scholarship while also working as a translator. After three years of learning a lot I thought future opportunities at that university seemed to be very difficult. So I did not renew the scholarship and kept on working as a translator. I was very lucky because around 2002-2003, I contacted people from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona from the MA in Audiovisual Translation, which was just beginning. At that time Pilar Orero was the coordinator and I sent her an email presenting myself and offering to lecture at the MA and Pilar, who is an energetic woman, said that there was an opportunity, and I started teaching at the MA on Audiovisual Translation.

At the beginning I was not employed by the university but was just invited to teach some classes in the MA. Later, I was offered the coordination of the MA in Audiovisual Translation (2005-2010), I started working as a substitute professor in the BA (2005) and I

began the whole process to have a full time position, first a full-time non-permanent position (2007) and then a full-time permanent position (2009).

(CT): *Which knowledge area do you think Audiovisual Translation belongs to?*

(AM): Audiovisual Translation Studies was born from Translation Studies, both being multidisciplinary in their nature. Many people in the department where I work fought to have Translation Studies as an independent discipline from Philology, with its own department and both undergraduate and postgraduate studies. They were successful, and Translation Studies is recognized per se, at least in Spain. Still, when you apply for European funding, or when you are assessed nationally on your research outputs very often it is people from linguistics who assess us. I see that as a problem because our field has its own specificities and is different from linguistics or philology.

Still, due to the multidisciplinarity of the field, there are many ways of approaching our object of study. I very much liked the concept that Aline Remael mentioned in the Intermedia conference in Poland (2016) when she said that "hybrid" is the new norm. Our object of study can be approached from different perspectives, and we have to explicitly say where we position ourselves. An interesting case is that of audio description and accessibility studies. Ten years ago I started doing research on audio description, and my approach was to focus on the transfer from images into words, positioning myself within Audiovisual Translation Studies and using the established terminology and methodology of this field. Still, some voices are beginning to wonder whether we could talk about Accessibility Studies, or even Media Accessibility Studies. This is something worth thinking about. In fact, sometimes my interest lies more in the interaction of the user with the access services, and their usability, so methods from accessibility studies may prove more useful. All in all, I think

that our research is nourished by many disciplines, and, as I said before, depending on our aims, we will position ourselves and build our own framework for that specific project.

(CT): *Do you think that the techniques of audio description, dubbing, voice over, subtitling etc should be taught in other Undergraduate or Post Graduate courses besides the Translation Course? If so, which Undergraduate or Postgraduate Courses should offer this training?*

(AM): In our BA at UAB we only have one course in Audiovisual Translation. There is only one semester in AVT with three credits and it is not compulsory. So really it is not that much. But in MA level there are many more possibilities, both as a specific MA in AVT or within an MA in Translation and Intercultural Studies.
I think that having AVT in Translation BAs is positive because very often students are much focused on written texts, and nowadays audiovisual content is everywhere. So it is useful for students to learn to analyze and translate audiovisual content, although the specialization is at MA level.
I also think that it would be very interesting to include accessibility and translation (dubbing, subtitling, audio description, etc) in other BAs, even if the approach is different. For instance, I think that film studies students should learn about what Pablo Romero-Fresco terms "accessible filmmaking". And even engineers developing technical systems would benefit from a wider understanding of the translation/accessibility processes and user interaction. Three years ago I took part as a lecturer in an MA in Multimedia Ambient Intelligence, in which both translators and engineers were involved. It was a very interesting experience, although unfortunately it only lasted one year. In fact, it would be good to have something on accessibility in a transversal way, in a sort of "campus course". And I consider accessibility here in a broader sense, meaning people who cannot access the content due to both linguistic and sensorial barriers.

(CT): *Spain has a long history and tradition related to Translation Studies and then Audiovisual Translation including major Centres for Translation Studies. Many Spanish universities like Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona have projects funded by public and private institutions or agencies. Can you explain the reasons for this? Why did Spain in particular achieve such importance in Audiovisual Translation?*

(AM): I think that, as I said before, there was a strong interest in Translation Studies in Spain. As of the nineties many theses were published on audiovisual translation, and a number of conferences were organized, which allowed researchers to meet and discuss the field. In addition, we are a dubbing country but subtitling and voice over are also present, meaning that many modalities have attracted the attention of researchers.

As far as UAB is concerned, I think that we have a long tradition both in training and research. The MA in Audiovisual Translation was one of the first ones to be offered in the field and has attracted lots of students, who are now either professionals or researchers. Our research group, TransMedia Catalonia, led by Pilar Orero, has been running for more than ten years, and has been very active in terms of projects and internationalization, and I think this attracts more and more researchers. We cooperate with researchers in the UK, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Poland, etc., all over Europe, where many researchers are active in audiovisual translation. Of course we also have contacts beyond Europe, but probably due to the multilingual nature of Europe, I would say audiovisual translation has a longer tradition here.

(CT): *How do you (UAB) receive funding for project on Audiovisual Translation?*

(AM): We can apply for funding at different levels. First of all, there are funding opportunities from Catalan agencies. For instance, there

is a call to recognize research groups (SGR) at Catalan level which guarantees funding for a period of years. Secondly, you can get funding at country level, Spain, and there you have different funding schemes. Finally, you can get funding at European level. The competition and the complexity are higher, and these are normally big projects with many partners from both industry and academia. There are also other funding opportunities from private foundations or from the university itself, etc. Getting funding is not easy, and many proposals are not successful. The proposal must be very strong, with a clear impact, and you need to prove that you have a good research track and the right team. Also, the proposal needs to be aligned with the research strategies promoted by the agencies at the moment.

(CT): *How can you see Audiovisual Translation Studies outside Europe taking into account other continents like Africa, Asia, and South America?*

(AM): We need to know more about other countries. So far many of us have been euro centrist and we really need to make an effort to cooperate globally, probably trying to find some international funding opportunities.
I think that the "6th International Conference Media for All", organised by TransMedia in Sydney, was already one step in the right direction: we could get to know what professionals and researchers in New Zealand, in Australia and even in China are doing. In 2017 the Media for All conference will be held in Qatar so that will be another possibility to know a bit more about another part of our world.
In South America, I am not 100% familiar with the situation. Audiovisual translation exists, of course: there is dubbing, subtitling and voice over, but very often research on the topic is just beginning. This is what I could see when I was in Colombia recently. Still, I see many researchers from Brazil interested in audio description and coming to AVT conferences in Europe. And I am

also aware of a conference in Buenos Aires where audiovisual translation was given a very prominent position.

(CT): *According to you what are the "hot topics" or trends in Audiovisual Translation Studies nowadays?*

(AM): I think that accessibility in generally is a hot topic and especially the reception studies approach associated with it. We have done a lot of work over the last years using various tools (questionnaires, interviews, focus group, eye trackers, etc.) to see how people receive the outputs. It is not only about analyzing the quality of the outputs but also about how users receive this content. I also see technology as being a very important topic. And I think the involvement of users in the creation process through crowdsourcing is attracting the attention of many researchers.

(CT): *One of the main criticisms the translators receive in the media accessibility context (at least in Brazil) is that we provide audio description or subtitling without having any kind of disability. What is your view about this kind of criticism? Do you think we (professionals or researchers) must present every single AD and SDH product to its "real" audience before its release?*

(AM): There is a motto: "Nothing for us without us", I think this is true. I think that we need to cooperate with the users and associations. And we do that, we are in touch with many associations with disabilities and our PhD students go and talk to them, they do tests with them. We involve them in our projects and get back to them with results once the project is finished.
But I do not think that we need to have a disability to do a good job. You don´t have to be a writer to do research on literature. You need to know your user but not necessarily you need to have a disability to investigate or create audio descriptions or subtitles for

the deaf and hard-of-hearing. In fact, my view is that an accessible content can benefit all of us, so in a way we are all potential users of access services.

(CT): *You have been involved in more than 25 funded research projects varying from accessibility in the classroom up to semi--automatization of audio description. According to you[2], machine translation and technologies like speech recognition and speaker diarization may help audiovisual translators in their tasks. Using one of your projects as example, explain how the use of technology can improve the quality of an audiovisual translation without banning the human translator from of the whole process.*

(AM): I am not sure whether technology can always improve the translation quality, but technologies are used, so it is interesting to study them and see their effect both on the translator and the end product. About three years ago, I put forward a proposal for a project (Project ALST/reference code FFI-2012-31024), and it was successful. It was a very small scale project with very little funding but it has allowed us to investigate for the last three years (2012-2015) the implementation of speech recognition, machine translation and text to speech in two different modalities. On the one hand, audio description, and on the other hand, voice over in wildlife documentaries. I have been working with a team of rese-archers, especially with PhD students Anna Fernández-Torné and Carla Ortiz-Boix.

There was some previous research on subtitling and machine translation, and also on text-to-speech audio description, but we wanted to implement these three technologies in two transfer modes in Catalan

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[2] Delgado, Héctor; Matamala, Anna and Serrano, Javier. "Speaker diarization and speech recognition in the semi-automatization of audio description: an exploratory study on future possibilities?" *Cadernos de tradução* 35.2 (2015): 308-324.

and Spanish, and see what happened. And the approach was to use existing resources rather than creating our own. Due to the limited funding, the experiments were with a limited number of participants, but the results were interesting.

In speech recognition we did some tests with Héctor Delgado to automatically transcribe the audio description track. He first applied a diarization process to the audio track to select only the describer, and then, with a state of the art speech recognition engine, he generated the transcription of the AD, in this case in English, Catalan and Spanish. Engines were not trained specifically for this content, which also had many background noises, so results in the diarization process were positive but not so good in the transcription phase. It remains to be seen what the results would be with trained engines.

We also did another experiment on speech recognition, with Pablo Romero-Fresco and Lukasz Daniluk. In this case, we compared the time spent, output quality and opinions of professional transcribers when creating a transcription of a non-fictional content through three different systems: manual transcription, respeaking, and automatic transcription post editing. It was interesting to gather both objective and subjective measures, because we could see that although manual transcription is still the fastest, participants were very enthusiastic about respeaking. So I think at least we proved that the implementation of respeaking should be studied in other tasks, such as the transcription of non-fictional content.

In speech synthesis, we made two different sets of experiments in which users assessed text-to-speech audio descriptions (with Anna Fernández-Torné) and text-to-speech voice over (with Carla Ortiz-Boix). Although the human voice is still preferred, most users accept text-to-speech audio description and artificial voices get quite good assessments. On the contrary, when implementing text-to-speech in voice over, results were not so positive with a high variation depending on the voice.

Finally, regarding machine translation, we did two different sets of experiments. In voice over, Carla Ortiz-Boix compared human tran-

slations of wildlife documentaries with machine translation post-editing. We measured the time spent, the technical effort (i.e. keyboard action), and the cognitive effort (assessed through the pauses), and afterwards we developed a methodology to assess the output quality. In audio description, Anna Fernández-Torné compared the creation of audio descriptions with human translation and machine translation post-editing, and she gathered objective measures (time, technical effort, cognitive effort) but also subjective opinions. Overall it seems post-editing is faster and implies less effort, but data are not always statistically significant. It is also interesting correlate the objective data with subjective opinions, because participants are not always happy about post-editing and perceive the effort as higher and the task as more boring. So many research and training opportunities emerge. I think technologies are here to stay, many of them are mature enough. For instance, sometimes machine translation without human revision is acceptable, sometimes machine translation with human revision is the solution, and sometimes a fully manual translation is needed. If I am on Facebook and have got a friend writing down something, I am happy with the translation provided by an automatic system. If I go to the movies to watch a good quality movie on a cinema screen, I want good quality subtitles or dubbing. But even when the approach is a manual translation, I am sure translators could benefit from other technologies that can assist them in their task. For instance, terminology management systems when translating documentaries. I think that we have to keep an eye on technologies as researchers because new developments may have an impact on their usage. For instance, the implementation of quality estimation features in machine translation may improve the post-editing experience. But we also have to keep an eye as trainers: we need to train our students as post-editors, not only as translators.

(CT): *As a Professor of Translation, what advice would you give to this new generation of translators (a generation that was raised in*

Digital Era, students who easily deal with new technologies, social media and are good at multitasking)?

(AM): You are right that this is a new generation of translators that we have. Students are now digitally native, and they are seldom reluctant to use technology. The profile has changed compared to ten years ago: you don´t have many problems with students using software. Still, you've got to teach them that paper resources exist, that you can talk to people to solve problems, and that electronic resources often offer more than they think.
I think that this new generation, and in fact all of us, will need to keep updated with everything, keep updated with technology, with new working processes and see what they can offer in the current market, without forgetting accuracy and quality. Things are changing very fast, we will change. They will finish their BA, maybe their MA or even a PhD, but they need to keep learning and try to find what differentiates themselves from other professionals, probably not sticking only to the traditional audiovisual modes but expanding their services. I don't very much like giving advice, but I think that we all have to keep learning.