

The Impact of In-house Guidelines on Subtitle Quality: A Sample Study of TED Translators in the FAR Model*

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Abstract

Audiovisual Translation develops and expands around products with a multi-layered structure; nevertheless, the conclusions that the quality of subtitling is negatively affected by the existence of different practices and the adoption of heterogeneous approaches have paved the way for steps taken for standardization. In this direction, codes on subtitling norms have been produced, research has been conducted on different scales and homogeneity in subtitles has been tried to be achieved. Generalized subtitling standards, which failed to meet the requirements of each translation project, have resulted in the introduction of localized in-house translation guidelines prepared specifically for the translation task. Although in-house guidelines that address technical, linguistic and stylistic considerations of subtitling in the light of local norms are much more functional than generalized guidelines in ensuring quality, it has remained unclear to what extent these guidelines are able to fulfil this function. This study has examined whether the subtitling rules set by the in-house guidelines for TED's crowdsourced translation project are followed according to the FAR Model (2017) proposed by Jan Pedersen, focusing on volunteers' translations into Turkish. The audiovisual material sampled from the project have first been subjected to qualitative analysis under the Readability category of this Model, and then quantitative results have been evaluated in terms of subtitle quality. The results have revealed that the in-house guidelines are not able to bridge the gap between volunteers with different translation backgrounds, prevent in-group variation, and ensure a certain level of quality, suggesting insights for crowdsourcing projects as well.

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1. Introduction: Moving from Subtitling Standards to In-house Guidelines

Gideon Toury (2012) emphasizes the importance of “negotiation, making agreements and establishing conventions-cum-routines” in the formation or continuity of a group (p. 62). Toury (2012), who also recognizes the function of norms in translation, defines them as “performance instructions” and states that these “instructions” provide information about “what is prescribed and forbidden, as well as what is tolerated and permitted in a certain behavioural dimension” (p. 63). Patrick Zabalbeascoa (1996), as mentioned by Toury (2012), argues that it is advantageous to adopt “priorities and restrictions” in translation, where priorities set out the goals within the framework of a translation project while restrictions are challenges that serve to explain the choices made and the solutions found (p. 243).

Translation norms, which can be determined by a party such as an individual, institution, or academia, can be considered as “translational constraints” (Bogucki, 2020, p. 26) that contribute to guiding translators’ preferences and thus improving the translation process and performance. Bearing in mind that the act of interlingual translation, which takes place in at least two languages and between two different cultures, and therefore has at least “two sets of norm-systems on each level” (Toury, 2021, p. 199), it is inevitable that there are more “translational constraints” to be taken into consideration when translating audiovisual texts with a multimodal dimension and a multi-layered structure.

Implying that even though there are many constraints to Audiovisual Translation, these constraints need to be overcome, Jorge Díaz-Cintas and Aline Remael (2021) suggest that heterogeneous approaches and the lack of a consensus have negative effects on quality (p. 91). As for subtitling, which is a particularly “intermodal” (Gottlieb, 1997, p. 95) form of Audiovisual Translation, the “Code of Good Subtitling Practice” (pp. 157-159) published as an appendix by Jan Ivarsson and Mary Carroll in 1998 can be regarded as an exemplary attempt at subtitling standards in this direction. This Code is an important step forward for both the translation industry and academia, and it has achieved widespread acceptance. On a more specific level, some translation scholars have also tried to standardize subtitle outputs by setting parameters based on region (see Karamitroglou, 1998) or language pair (see Díaz-Cintas, 2003). Jan Pedersen (2018), however, draws attention to the growing importance of in-house guidelines, observing that “[i]nitially prescribed norms, set out with the general requirements and in the various language versions, are currently being localised by adding local norms describing local practices” (p. 97).

Today, there are grounds to argue that subtitling does not have a set of fixed and well-accepted guidelines for use by different agents in different settings and for various audiovisual

material – instead, localized guidelines tailored to the purpose of the translation task and the language pair are now more functional. The extent to which these specially tailored in-house translation guidelines fulfil their function is, nevertheless, an issue that has not been addressed thoroughly enough. To this end, this study aims to find an answer to the question of whether in-house translation guidelines are effective to ensure “homogeneity” and achieve standardization of quality in subtitling practices, focusing on a crowdsourced translation project where volunteer translators with different translation experience collaborate under the guidance of in-house guidelines.

2. Theoretical Background: Technical Considerations of Subtitling

Subtitling, as part of today’s “AVT proper” (Okyayuz, 2017, p. 115), can be defined as the conversion of information from the acoustic channel into a visual element and its superimposition on the image, usually in two lines at the bottom of the screen, but its characteristics transcend a simple definition.

Indeed, this type of audiovisual translation practice is distinguished by being “diasemiotic by nature” (Gottlieb, 2004, p. 86), having an “additive nature” (Bogucki, 2016, p. 35), and by the fact that the original soundtrack remains always accessible (Okyayuz, 2017, p. 127), thereby justifying the term “constrained translation” used by Christopher Titford (1982) in reference to subtitling. The shift from speech to writing, the text reduction that may be required due to the maximum number of characters, the position and alignment of subtitles, the number of characters per line, the style of subtitles, spotting and synchronization, the reading speed of the audience, and the duration of subtitles (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2021, p. 89-117) can all be recognized as technical specifications that subtitlers should consider in the decision-making process, which is deemed important in Audiovisual Translation according to Łukasz Bogucki (2020, p. 26). In addition to these specifications of subtitling, it should be noted that general expectations such as the adoption of a “target-oriented translation method” (Gottlieb, 2009) and the production of “subliminal subtitles” (Béhar, 2004) have also persisted.

Several translation scholars have examined the aspects that need to be considered in the subtitling process and typically emphasized similar constraints, as roughly listed above, in different categorizations. In his book on subtitling for TV programs, Jan Pedersen (2011) claims that subtitling decisions made without knowledge of “the semiotic switch from spoken to written language”, “the spatial and temporal constraints”, and “the condensation that these bring with them” would be meaningless (pp. 18-19). Zoé de Linde and Neil Kay (2014), on the other hand, indicate that “the integration of text, sound and image, the reading capabilities of target viewers, and the restrictions which these two factors place on space and time” are the

main challenges of subtitling, but they classify these challenges under the categories of “spatial restrictions”, “temporal restrictions”, and “synchronization” (pp. 5-7) and present a different approach than Pedersen (2011). Meanwhile, Marie-Noëlle Guillot (2019) puts stress on “spatial and temporal factors”, yet acknowledges that the aspects of “readability”, “the shift from speech to writing”, “multimodality”, and “cultural a-synchrony (Manhart, 2000)” also have an impact on these factors (pp. 34-36). Jorge Díaz-Cintas and Aline Remael (2021), both similar to and different from other scholars, focus first on “the semiotics of subtitling” and then on “spatial and temporal features” (pp. 64-117).

A close examination of the approaches of these important scholars reveals different considerations guiding the decision-making processes in subtitling, with varying recommendations and practices being covered. For example, de Linde and Kay (2014) report that subtitles usually have a maximum of 40 characters (p. 6), while Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2021) declare that 42 characters per line (cpl) is no longer extra-regular (p. 97).

In the light of technological advancements, it can be reasonably maintained that many changing and evolving parameters, from screen sizes to distribution channels, affect the technical restrictions on subtitling. These dynamic conditions, therefore, not only explain the different approaches, but also point to the fact that there are still no conventional, established subtitling rules that can be adopted by everyone. This, again, points to the importance of preparing task-specific, customized guidelines.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Data

The previous sections have underscored that subtitles can be subject to technical constraints based on a number of parameters, and therefore it is not possible to talk about a standardized set of practices; instead, specially prepared translation guidelines need to be issued. It is known that this need has been recognized by both industry and academia, and steps have been taken along these lines. The aim of this study, however, is to examine the extent to which in-house guidelines, which are specifically designed for the translation task and deal extensively with the technical aspects of subtitling, are able to fulfil their role.

In order to serve the aim of the study, selected subtitles produced within the scope of a crowdsourcing practice will be evaluated for quality assessment and analysed in terms of their technical specifications. The study, which will be conducted as a mixed-methods research, will sample from the TED Translators program, one of the initiatives of *TED*, a non-profit organization. Operating since 2009, the TED Translators program is an example of a crowdsourced translation project launched to enable volunteer translators to translate audiovisual contents published on the organization’s official website from the original

language into other languages. It has a well-structured subtitling workflow, integrates with an online subtitle editor and provides translators with resources such as in-house guidelines and tutorials to ensure subtitle quality.

The audiovisual material to be analysed for quality have been selected according to a set of predetermined criteria. Following this, the TED Translators profiles of volunteers with at least 5 translations into Turkish have been reviewed. As a way to measure whether in-house translation guidelines blur the distinction between different groups, volunteer translators have been categorized into two groups: professional and non-professional translators, on the basis of shared and verified information, and have been evaluated according to their expertise. To further narrow down the data, translators who have translated in the “TED-Ed Original” category of animated lessons have been identified, 4 professional and 4 non-professional TED translators have randomly been selected, and their translation of one TED-Ed Lesson has been included in the corpus of this study.

3.2. Method

3.2.1. The FAR Model (2017)

Focusing on a crowdsourced translation project where professional and non-professional translators collaborate, the quality assessment of subtitles produced by volunteers will accordingly be carried out based on the FAR Model (2017) proposed by Jan Pedersen.

The FAR Model is a quality assessment framework that intends to examine subtitles in three different areas: “Functional Equivalence”, “Acceptability”, and “Readability”. Taking inspiration from the NER Model developed by Pablo Romero-Fresco and Juan Martínez Pérez (2015) for intralingual live subtitles and introduced for interlingual subtitles, this framework is applied to the end product with a “viewer-centred” (Pedersen, 2017, p. 215) approach. The most important reason why it has been adopted as the research method for this study is that it is “a general model that can be localised by feeding it parameters with data from in-house guidelines, best practice or national subtitling norms” (p. 215), and it provides researchers with flexibility as well as reliability for each material to be analysed. In this regard, Pedersen (2017) argues that evaluating materials with different characteristics within the framework of certain translation norms is not a correct practice (p. 224).

As a tripartite quality assessment framework, The FAR Model focuses on specific points in each category in which subtitles are investigated. Accordingly, the first category of the model, Functional Equivalence, assesses the extent to which the essence and intent of the original dialogue is accurately conveyed in the translation; the second category, Acceptability, assesses whether the translation is fluent and natural in the target language; and the last category, Readability, assesses the legibility and comprehensibility of the subtitles and whether

they comply with the technical constraints set in this regard (p. 217). The detected errors are penalized with recommended scores, and those labelled “minor”, “standard”, and “serious” are assigned scores of “0.25”, “0.5”, and “1” point respectively. These scores are doubled only for semantic errors identified under the Functional Equivalence category (p. 218). This tentative scoring system, just like the parameters included in the in-house guidelines, can be localized and customized as required by the researchers in their studies. The FAR Model measures an “approval rate” (p. 224), which is the sum of the error scores determined in the initial qualitative analysis divided by the total number of subtitles, so that audiovisual materials of different lengths can be evaluated at the same time. Briefly, the generalized structure of the model allows researchers as much freedom as possible to achieve a reliable result for all materials subjected to interlingual quality assessment.

This study will address the audiovisual materials in the corpus under the Readability category of the FAR Model, focusing on the extent to which the technical parameters of the in-house guidelines provided by the crowdsourcer are fulfilled by professional and non-professional volunteer translators. The overall approval rates obtained are expected to shed light on whether these guidelines are sufficient to ensure and standardize quality.

3.2.2. The In-house Guidelines of TED

The subtitle quality assessment will be conducted in accordance with the subtitling rules laid down in the TED Translators program’s in-house translation guidelines. For this reason, it would be appropriate to have a brief overview of TED’s in-house guidelines and the framework they set out.

The TED Translators program has published different manuals and tutorials on various platforms for volunteer translators to consult in this project. These include their official website where all resources can be accessed, their YouTube channel, their portal in Wikipedia format, and various guides available online. Through these resources, considerations such as TED Style, subtitling tips, techniques, basics and good practices that should be taken into account in the crowdsourcing project are shared with translators and a specific framework is drawn for the project. In addition to these practices, certain technical requirements are defined in CaptionHub, which is currently used by the TED Translators program, with the effort to automate the subtitling process.

The basic rules for volunteer translators producing interlingual subtitles under this program are that subtitles must be no longer than 2 lines, no longer than 42 characters and must not exceed the reading speed limit of 21 characters per second. Translators can employ the condensation strategy to meet these conditions, provided that linguistic units are not split, the beginning and end of different sentences are not combined in a single subtitle, line-length

balance is maintained and segmentation is avoided unless necessary. As one of the most important technical aspects of subtitling, spotting should be accomplished in accordance with the flow of the original dialog, and the text should appear on the screen in synchronization with the speech. TED's in-house translation guidelines additionally provide information on word choices and translation approaches, offering suggestions to volunteers on how to maintain project style and ensure quality. Furthermore, the Program also prepares specific guidelines for the languages translated in the program, and gives instructions to translators by citing official authorities.

To recapitulate the methodology of the study, the audiovisual materials collected from the TED Translators program according to certain criteria will be evaluated under the Readability category of the FAR Model (2017), the extent to which subtitling rules set by TED's in-house guidelines are applied will be examined, and an assessment will be conducted to explore the impact of the guidelines on the overall quality.

4. Data Analysis

This part of the study will analyse the interlingual subtitles in terms of quality, present examples of the identified errors in a mixed set with their rationale, explain essentially the process of collecting quantitative results, and then share the results obtained, i.e. overall approval rates, in the next section. As the samples have randomly been selected from the subtitles produced by both professional and non-professional translators, it has been deemed appropriate to assign a code to each material in order to refer to the relevant group and audiovisual material. The TED-Ed Lessons translated by the professional translators are accordingly abbreviated with "P", those translated by the non-professionals are abbreviated with "NP", and the videos are ordered from 1 to 4 (e.g. P1, P2, NP1, NP2, and so on).

The data analysis, to reiterate, will focus on the Readability category of the FAR Model (2017) developed by Jan Pedersen. This category examines whether subtitles are fluent, processable and readable in light of what Pedersen (2017) calls "technical norms and issues" (p. 221), and for this purpose, subtitles are evaluated under three headings: "segmentation and spotting", "punctuation and graphics" and "reading speed and line length". The errors will be investigated under the respective Readability topics, listed according to their severity, and justified by the parameters set out in TED's in-house translation guidelines.

4.1. Segmentation and Spotting Errors

Proper segmentation and synchronous spotting of subtitles with speech are important requirements for the TED Translators program, as they are for all translation projects. In the TED Translators Wiki, a comprehensive in-house guideline with language-specific guidelines, the organizers explicitly specify that subtitle lines should be synchronized with the video (see

How to transcribe TEDxTalks in 10 steps, 2017) and that text segmentation should be done only when necessary, and if necessary, while preserving linguistic units (see TED Translators Cheat-sheet, 2017).

In his article introducing the FAR Model, Jan Pedersen (2017) suggests that minor errors are detected within a sentence or segment, while instances that occur between subtitles can be categorized as standard errors (p. 222). This approach is known to be based on Henrik Gottlieb’s definitions of “macro segmentation” and “micro segmentation” (Gottlieb, 2012, p. 41). Pedersen (2017) also states that serious errors can only be assigned to spotting shifts found in multiple subtitles (p. 222).

Below is the first of the examples identified under this category, an example of a minor spotting error.

Table 1

Minor spotting error example

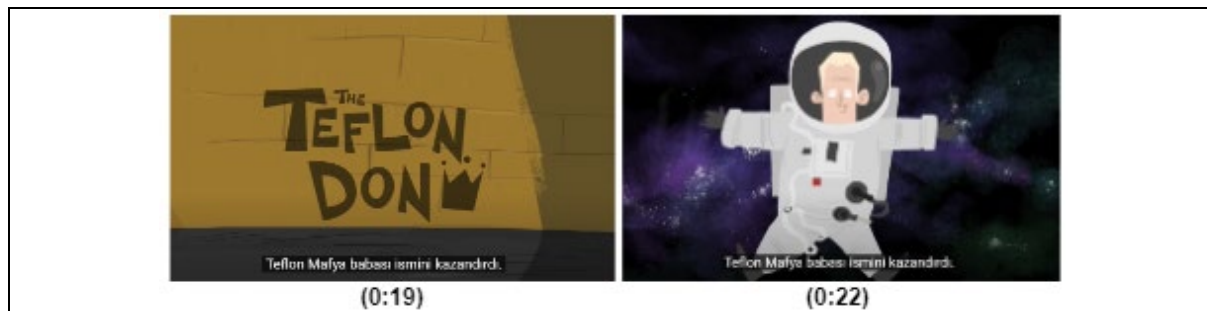
Segmentation and spotting error in Readability	
(NP3) 0:19	Teflon Mafya babası ismini kazandırdı.
0:22	Teflon aya inen Apollo mürettebatının üzerindeki uzay elbisesinde vardı,
Minor error → 0.25 point	

Produced by a non-professional translator, the subtitle excerpt coded NP3 is about Mafia boss John Gotti, who goes by the name “the Teflon Don”. At 0:19, the bold subtitle is incorrectly synchronized, which caused it to shift to the next visual that appears on the screen. However, as stated in TED’s in-house guidelines, subtitles should not stay on the screen longer than needed and the viewer should be given time to comprehend the video itself.

Figure 1 shows the corresponding visuals for this case.

Figure 1

Screenshots of the minor spotting error



Screenshots with a single subtitle on two different visuals demonstrate that there is a spotting error at timecode 0:22. Following the framework of the FAR model, this shift makes a difference of one second and is therefore considered a minor error.

Table 2

Minor segmentation error example

Segmentation and spotting error in Readability	
(P4) 2:44	bu da onu başka bir kaybetme katı yapar.
Minor error → 0.25 point	

The case presented in Table 2 gives an example where the subtitle highlighted in bold is produced in two lines. This subtitle, coded P4 and produced by a professional volunteer translator, contains a sentence of 40 characters which is below the line-length limit of 42 characters per line as specified in the in-house translation guidelines of the crowdsourcing project. TED’s official website warns volunteers not to “split sentences if not necessary for length/speed” (see Subtitling Tips, n.d.), so the selected example is categorized as a minor segmentation error and penalized with 0.25 points for violating the guidelines.

As recommended in the FAR Model, segmentation errors within a single subtitle entry are regarded as minor errors, while those between subsequent subtitles are considered standard errors. Table 3 provides examples of minor and standard segmentation excerpts together to illustrate the errors assigned a score in this context.

Table 3*Minor and standard segmentation error example*

Segmentation and spotting error in Readability	
(P1) 1:10	bu yüzden beyin diğer kaslardan yardım ister.
Minor error → 0.25 point	
(NP1) 3:12	İç kanal, ışığın en ufak çarpışmalarını ya da
Standard error → 0.5 point	

In the table above, the bold phrases of both examples denote that they are placed in the wrong segment according to the available in-house translation guidelines. The segmentation error example coded P1 represents the unit “diğer kaslardan”, which is an equivalent of “other muscles” in the original TED-Ed Lesson. This unit, which should not be broken in accordance with the guidelines, can only be segmented correctly if the word “diğer” is placed in the bottom line so as to maintain the balance between the lines. Therefore, the incorrect line-breaking is categorized as a minor segmentation error because it is contained within a single subtitle entry. The NP1 example, on the other hand, constitutes a violation of the TED guideline for Turkish subtitles, which requires subtitles not to end with conjunctions and instead to add them to the next subtitle. The conjunction “ya da (or)” in bold is an error related to “macro segmentation” (Gottlieb, 2012, p. 41) and penalized with a standard error score, given that it should be in the next subtitle entry.

Table 4*Serious spotting error example*

Segmentation and spotting error in Readability	
(NP4-en) 4:40	no matter how hard it sounds to your ears."
(NP4-tr) 4:43	ne denli zor gelse de."
Serious error → 1 point	

The exemplification above, taken from the TED-Ed Lesson coded NP4, illustrates that there is a shift in the timing of the subtitles, as evidenced by the timecodes. This subtitle entry, corresponding to the last sentence in the Lesson, appears 3 seconds later than the original transcript; however, it is worth noting that the verbal element in the audiovisual material ends at timecode 4:42. Thus, this example, which is not only an unacceptable synchronization error in terms of the rules stipulated by the project's in-house guidelines, but also significantly impairs the audience's comprehension, is evaluated as a serious error when taken into account together with the considerations of the FAR Model.

4.2. Punctuation and Graphics Errors

The guidelines prepared by *TED* for its crowdsourced translation project also provide volunteer translators with specific instructions for the representation of auditory information, including rules on the use of punctuation marks so that subtitles can be easily read by the audience and reading speed is not affected. These guidelines are accordingly important for preserving the TED Style and standardizing the format of audiovisual materials.

The following are some examples of punctuation and graphics errors identified during the qualitative data analysis process. The FAR Model does not make any recommendation on the penalization of this error type and indicates that it should be decided based on the relevant guidelines (Pedersen, 2017, p. 222). In this study, therefore, the cases directly related to audiovisual content and preventing readability are classified as serious errors, while paratextual examples are classified as standard errors.

Table 5

Standard graphics error example

Punctuation and graphics error in Readability	
(NP4) Title	Aristophanes'e neden "Komedinin Babası" denilmiştir?
Standard error → 0.5 point	

The TED Open Translation Project Learning Series, published on the project's YouTube channel, has released a video on editing titles and descriptions, which details the formats for TED, TEDx, and TED-Ed talks (see OTP Öğrenme Dizileri 09: Başlıkları ve açıklamaları düzeltme, 2016). It appears that the titles of TED-Ed animations should include the name of the Lesson and the lecturer, separated by a dash. The example in Table 5 does not contain the lecturer's name, which is a case against the guidelines provided by *TED*, so the paratextual problem here is penalized with a standard error score.

Table 6*Serious punctuation error example*

Punctuation and graphics error in Readability	
(P2) 4:00	politikanın tüm ulusta veya –gezegende– nasıl işleyeceği
Serious error → 1 point	

The use of punctuation marks in subtitling practices may differ from the standard language as well as among various projects. The TED Translators program sets out some directives and points that marks such as dashes, hyphens, dots, etc. should not unnecessarily be used and that standard text should be followed (see English Style Guide, 2020). Another set of guidelines prepared for the program also suggests that the accentuation in subtitles is not considered to be essential (see How to use sound representation, 2020). In the light of all these resources, the excerpt from the material coded P2 is found to be an improper practice and is scored as a serious punctuation error, which affects the values for reading speed and characters per line.

Table 7*Serious punctuation error example*

Punctuation and graphics error in Readability	
(NP2) 2:44	Vivaldi, karmaşık füglerle (Besteleme tekniği) ilgilenmedi.
Serious error → 1 point	

This excerpt above is an example of the use of a translator's note in a subtitle. The phrase in bold and in brackets has been transcribed by the volunteer translator as an explanation of the preceding phrase, “karmaşık füglerle (complicated fugues)”. The TED Translators Wiki, nevertheless, suggests that translator's notes should not be employed and that paraphrasing is preferable if clarification is needed (see How to Tackle a Translation, 2015). As noted earlier in this section, this example, in which the terminological language is clarified using translator's notes, is categorized as a serious error because it has deviated from the guidelines and negatively affected both the reading speed and the audience experience.

4.3. Reading Speed and Line Length Errors

Jan Pedersen (2017) asserts that the issue of reading speed is “a varied and often contested” one (p. 223). The reading speed taken as a basis can indeed vary for different types of translation projects and different audiences. The TED Translators program has adopted the rule that the maximum reading speed can be 21 characters/second and, accordingly, subtitles can have a maximum of 42 characters (see Subtitling Tips, n.d.). Such rules have also been defined in CaptionHub, an online subtitling editor that manages the subtitling processes within the crowdsourcing project, providing a partial quality control mechanism for the translation process. In addition, further norms such as that the length of one line should not be shorter than 50% of the other, the balance between lines should be maintained (see How to break lines, 2020), compressing and simplifying can be done either to avoid breaking linguistic units or to facilitate reading (see How to Compress Subtitles, 2020) have also been shared with volunteer translators through TED’s in-house translation guidelines.

The qualitative quality analysis has not revealed any instances of exceeding the reading speed or violating the maximum line length rule, and this is attributed to the fact that the subtitling process is partially automated through an online editor. Nonetheless, different examples have been identified that fall into this category, and those that negatively impact at the level of meaning are considered serious errors, while those that remain at the structural level are considered standard errors.

Table 8

Standard line length error example

Reading speed and line length error in Readability	
(P4) 1:56	Bu da sıra sana geçtiğinde su seviyesinin 1, 3 veya 4'te
Standard error → 0.5 point	

The TED Translators program, as already outlined, recommends that translators should adhere to line-length balance and that there should be no significant discrepancies between the lengths of lines. The example of P4 presented in Table 8 shows that a situation emphasized by the in-house guidelines has nevertheless resulted in a line length error being committed. The given subtitle entry consists of two lines, the first line with 41 characters and the second line with 14 characters. In light of this information, the bottom line, which is 65.8% shorter than the top line, is segmented in a way that disrupts the line balance in the subtitle and

negatively affects the viewers' experience of reading the subtitles. Since this is a technical error and does not change the content of the message, this example is scored as a standard error.

Table 9

Serious reading speed error example

Reading speed and line length error in Readability	
(NP3-en) 4:19	That prompted the head of the FBI office in New York City to announce,
(NP3-tr) 4:19	Bunun üzerinde New York şehrindeki FBI bürosu başkanı şu duyuruyu yaptı:
Serious error → 1 point	

Subtitling can be subjected to text reduction processes in order to optimize reading speed while preserving the core message in the speech in accordance with technical dimensions. This method can therefore be a necessity for audiovisual translation practices compared to other types of translation. TED's in-house translation guidelines inform volunteer translators on this issue, emphasizing that compression and simplification strategies are a way to overcome considerations such as line-breaking (see How to break lines, 2020) and reading-speed (see How to Compress Subtitles, 2020).

The bilingual excerpt from the TED-Ed Lesson abbreviated with the code NP3 represents an example of the translator adopting a verbatim translation strategy instead of compression. Looking at the linguistic units marked in bold in the excerpt, it can be argued that the audience's reading speed will slow down due to the excessive wording in the Turkish subtitles, and therefore they will not be able to focus on the visuals and their attention may be distracted. On the other hand, omitting “şehrindeki (city)” and “bürosu (office)” will not make any difference in meaning and will improve readability. This subtitle, which is an example of both semantic and technical error, is labelled as a serious error.

5. Results and Discussion

The previous part of the study has provided representative examples of the interlingual quality assessment focused on the Readability category, which is part of the FAR Model (2017), and explained how the error identification process has been quantified in the light of the subtitling rules set out in the in-house guidelines for the TED Translators program. This section aims to gain insight into the extent to which the in-house guidelines used in the crowdsourced

translation project are sufficient to standardize quality and the possible reasons for this, based on the quantitative results obtained.

The approval rates have been calculated for the Readability of subtitles across multiple datasets, and these results are tabulated in Table 10.

Table 10

Results of the interlingual subtitle quality assessment

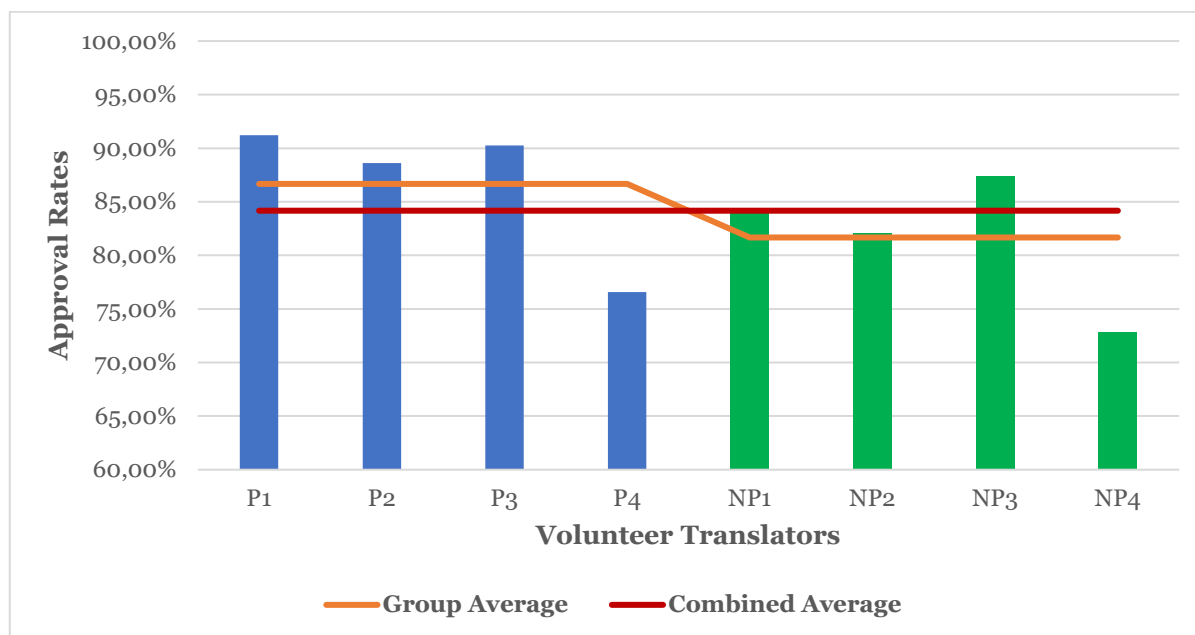
Audiovisual Material (Professional Subtitles)	Approval Rate	Audiovisual Material (Non-professional Subtitles)	Approval Rate
P1	91.22%	NP1	84.41%
P2	88.61%	NP2	82.03%
P3	90.26%	NP3	87.35%
P4	76.58%	NP4	72.87%
Average of Professional Subtitles	86.67%	Average of Non-professional Subtitles	81.67%
Combined Average of Interlingual Subtitles → 84.17%			

The quality of the subtitles produced by the volunteer translators forming different translator groups has first been analysed and their individual results have been recorded, the group averages have been calculated, and then the approval rates of these two translator groups have been combined to obtain a general conclusion about the crowdsourcing project based on the sampled group. As a result, it has been found that the professional translators have scored an approval rate between 91.22% and 76.58% in the Readability category, while the range of results for the non-professional translators is between 87.35% and 72.87%. Whereas the professional translators have achieved an average quality score of 86.67%, the non-professionals have an average score of 81.67%, a difference of 5 percentage points. Overall, the quality assessment of the sampled TED-Ed Lessons has showed that the subtitles produced by the volunteers according to the in-house translation guidelines have an approval rate of 84.17% in terms of technical considerations.

The quantitative results of the qualitative data analysis are also illustrated in Figure 2 to offer a more representative view of the quality assessment.

Figure 2

Approval rates of the volunteer translators in the Readability category



The present study reveals more than one finding. First of all, the fact that there is a score difference between the translators with different translation experience in this crowdsourcing project leads to the conclusion that attempts to standardize quality within the project are not fully effective. An argument could be made that this score difference arises from the fact that the professional translators have undergone a specialized training and are more familiar with subtitling norms as a group with more translation experience, including educational background, than the non-professional translators. This suggests that the use of in-house guidelines is insufficient to override specific parameters such as training and experience.

According to the results, there is a difference of 14.64 percentage points between the professional translators who have achieved the highest and the lowest approval rate in the Readability category, while this difference is 14.48 for the non-professionals. This quantitative data indicates that there are no significant variations between different groups; however, the subtitles produced by the volunteers belonging to the same group may also be of different technical quality, thus limiting the impact of guidelines even on a particular audience. The fact that some translators are below the average approval rate of their group (e.g. P4 in the Professionals and NP4 in the Non-professionals) stands as evidence of this conclusion.

The finding that all translators whose interlingual subtitles have been subjected to quality analysis have achieved a quality of 84.17% when segmentation, synchronization, reading speed and similar technical considerations are taken into account also points to the lack of steps taken to ensure quality in the context of crowdsourcing projects. In a translation

project sourced from a pool of volunteers with different backgrounds, initiatives such as a structured subtitling workflow, clear descriptions of volunteer roles, a set of criteria for participation, the use of an online subtitle editor integrated into the project, and the availability of comprehensive in-house translation guidelines that are written in plain language, explained with examples and also prepared in a language-specific format are still insufficient in terms of quality. In addition to these initiatives, it can be argued that new practices such as the organization and periodic delivery of trainings by crowdsourcers and the establishment or improvement of feedback mechanisms would have a positive impact on both the translation competencies of volunteer translators and the quality of project outputs. The current results demonstrate that the in-house guidelines are used at the initiative of the translators and the resources are not consulted sufficiently because the correct practices regarding the identified Readability errors have already been explained by the guidelines.

6. Conclusion

Audiovisual Translation is a field that cannot adhere to a uniform standardization due to the existence of various products, the different requirements of these products and the fact that it is a practice that involves a great deal of creativity. This has paved the way for localized approaches, which are already being adopted, and has led to the production of in-house guidelines tailored to the translation project. In-house guidelines specify the parameters that translators and other members of the workflow should observe, and include technical specifications as well as linguistic, stylistic and other considerations. These guidelines are intended to bring the quality of translation projects to a certain level and to maintain this quality across all outputs.

This study has conducted a quality assessment of the interlingual subtitles sampled from a crowdsourced translation project in order to reveal the extent to which in-house guidelines fulfil their purpose and whether they alone are sufficient to ensure quality. For this purpose, within the framework of the Readability category under the FAR Model (2017), a quality assessment model that can be used by making use of any set of norms, selected TED-Ed Lessons translated into Turkish under the TED Translators program have been examined focusing mainly on the technical side of subtitles. Having both professional and non-professional translators in the data source and selecting the material accordingly have contributed to the evaluation of the results obtained from multiple perspectives.

The qualitative quality assessment in the light of TED's in-house guidelines has been carried out as suggested by the FAR Model and then quantified. The quantitative results have revealed that the in-house translation guidelines fail to blur the differences between the professional and non-professional translator groups, fail to prevent in-group discrepancies,

and in the overall picture, the Readability rate of subtitles remains around 84%. The approval rates do not have an acceptability threshold, but since the subtitles, which are the products of the crowdsourcing project, have been found to be contrary to the rules prescribed by the in-house guidelines, it has been argued that these resources are insufficient in maintaining these norms and should be supported by additional initiatives such as periodic training and feedback loops.

Having been conducted on a limited corpus in a specific context, this quality assessment does not provide any generalizable findings on the impact and adequacy of in-house translation guidelines, which is the starting point of this study, but it sheds light on the prevailing conditions and provides insights on various issues ranging from the quality rates of different groups in an organized project to the nature of the errors detected. Further studies in this field such as a closer examination of crowdsourcing practices, translators' reception of guidelines, and the evaluation of different categories of errors in the light of the relevant guidelines are expected to expand on the findings of this research.

Disclosures

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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