Another take on Culture, Adaptation and Translation: the Cultural Transduction framework

Enrique Uribe-Jongbloed
Cardiff University

Abstract

This paper brings a conceptual framework originally developed for the study of TV format trades as a tool for translation and adaptation studies to consider further aspects of culture embedded in institutional processes. It presents cultural transduction, explaining the origin of its constituent terms as a metaphor useful to understand how media and cultural products travel. It then draws on the concept of cultural configuration, as developed by Grimson (2011), to explain how the markets through which media and cultural products travel are understood, moving on to present with more detail the four tenets of cultural transduction: market, product, people and place. Then it showcases and interdisciplinary dialogue at the intersections of cultural transduction with cultural translation, audiovisual translation, and adaptations studies. The latter section evidences the common grounds for discussion and the input that the cultural transduction could bring into the debate, by drawing on Latin American communication and political economy of global flows.

Keywords: Cultural Configurations; Cultural Translation; Audio-Visual Translation; TV Format Trades; Adaptation

1. Introduction

Translation is the word often used to describe how one text has been changed from one language into another. Although this simplistic view has been shown as incomplete, it remains a considerably common interpretation (Gal, 2023: 178). Those involved in translation know that there is much more nuance than that. Words and structures are not enough to convey all the information within one language. Considerable amounts of cultural information are embedded within the use of the language and serve to identify and classify those who speak within a certain social group. When translation occurs a process of re-incorporating the indexicality in the new language takes place. Sometimes it fits pre-existent structures in the

target language, while sometimes it uses similar cases or originates new ones, making translation a creative process.

Books are often the texts that come to mind when discussing translation. The printed word is the common subject to our notion of what translation is. However, in the mediated world we live in, books are but a fraction of our media consumption. It is not as common to talk about the transformation of audiovisual media texts as a process of translation. This does not imply that translation scholars have not been concerned about it, but rather that there have been other ways to describe this process. Whether the talk is about adapting, dubbing, subtitling, versioning or remaking a given audiovisual product, there is a sense of transformation of which language is only one of the elements in the mix.

The purpose of this article is to present a development from media studies that has addressed the transformation of texts between different cultural spaces, sometimes coterminous with linguistic communities, although not necessarily bound by them, to offer a conceptual framework to address some of the concerns at the intersection of translation and adaptation studies. This framework, called cultural transduction, provides a complementary approach to advances in those scholarly traditions to comprehend how processes of translation are addressed through a cultural lens.

1.1 Studying the global trade of TV formats

The cultural transduction framework was developed to understand why some television shows and TV formats from Latin America had become successful in other countries (Uribe-Jongbloed and Espinosa-Medina 2014). Particularly, the success of the telenovela "Yo soy Betty, la fea" (RCN 1999-2000), which became a global hit as a broadcast product and as a format,[1] became a case study in academic publications about international TV and format trades (Uribe-Jongbloed and Espinosa-Medina 2014).

The study of flows of media products had shown that, despite evident imbalances, there was more than a unidirectional flow of audiovisual

[1] TV shows are usually sold as "cans" or finished audiovisual products for broadcast. They can also be traded as TV formats, which means a collection of documents (which may include scripts, background information, worldbuilding, guidelines, etc.), musical scores, logos and other images, and even contracted advisory or consultancy from the original creators, to be produced locally.

products stemming mainly from the US, Western Europe and Japan (see, for instance, Straubhaar 1991), and significant publications on the topic came from various disciplines and fields including economics, communication, business, semiotics, media, cultural, adaptation and translation studies. Despite similar research questions, occasionally drawing on each other's concepts, they tended to focus on using their own disciplinary terminology.

The cultural transduction framework was developed to disentangle those concepts, first, and offer a lexicon by refining definitions and limiting or constraining their boundaries. It provided an interdisciplinary reading of the phenomenon, not as a definitive model, but one that demanded iteration and academic debate (Uribe-Jongbloed, 2023). Its usefulness rests on how its design offers an avenue for translation and adaptation scholars to complement their research by providing a common language with media studies around debates anchored on the transformation of media products between different cultural spaces.

1.2. From TV formats to all media products

After originally applying the framework to study TV formats, transduction has also been used to analyse cases of video games (Uribe-Jongbloed *et al.*, 2016; Scholz and Stein, 2017), films (see Cattrysse, 2017; Cuelenaere, 2020; Wang *et al.* 2023), TV shows (Larkey, 2018; 2021; Bachmman, 2021; García Avis, 2017), comics (Uribe-Jongbloed *et al.* 2019), internet memes (Uribe-Jongbloed and Mora-Moreo, 2020), more than one medium (Uribe-Jongbloed and Corrredor-Aristizábal, 2019; Donoso Munita and Peñafiel Durruty, 2017; Breezer, 2023) and even artistic performance as protest (Walker, 2017).

Although films, TV shows, video games and comics are easily classified as media products, it is harder to use the concept of media product for memes or artistic protest. It appeared that the cultural transduction framework could be applied to other manifestations beyond media products. But some human activities are harder to define and study as (more or less) stable finished products.[2] Thus, in its most recent iteration (Uribe-

[2] Stability is used here to point out that media products might never be one single finished work or iteration. Despite the replicable technological nature of film or digital files, media products, such as a movie, a TV series, a song or a meme, have many different versions circulating at the same time, due to re-editions, versioning, format adequation, quality demands, ease of transfer, among many other things that affect how any product reaches an audience. Regardless of this situation, there is a

Jongbloed, 2023), cultural transduction has been presented as a framework to study media and cultural products.

2. Cultural transduction explained

2.1. What is transduction?

Transduction is a term used in a number of disciplines. For engineers, transduction can be defined as the process of converting one type of energy into another. Sound waves becoming electrical impulses thanks to a microphone and then back into sound waves is a process of transduction. In biology, transduction means the transfer of genetic characteristics from one organism to another via a viral agent. For semiotics, it describes the transfer of meaning between different modes of expression (Sindoni, 2016). Written information turned into an image or speech transformed into action would constitute this version of transduction.[3] These three definitions reveal a commonality: a central element or essence is kept and, through some process, the same element is expressed in a different form, context, space, or organism. This metaphor of keeping the essence (energy, genetic material or meaning) while changing the vessel (material, organism, or mode) (see also Silverstein, 2003), seemed to be fruitful for studying the transformation of media products such as TV formats.

Because the concept of transduction had already been used in engineering and biology, adding the adjective "cultural" served to limit and signpost the way the metaphor was being applied. The transformation was considered to affect the cultural characteristics of the product, rather than its physical qualities (Uribe-Jongbloed and Espinosa-Medina, 2014). Also, as pointed out by Gal (2023), the process of transduction does not simply create an analogy between the cultural spaces connected, but also provides epistemological transformations in the creative adaptation of other semiotic values. The process is thus not only one of replication, but of re-creation, in which "one kind of practice is taken as a model for creating/inventing another one, achieving similar effects in a different linguistic system or organizational realm, which is thereby transformed" (181). Transduction is not then only transposition, it is also inventive and productive.

tendency to think of those products as a unique, unaltered and absolute final version when they are discussed in everyday conversations and, also, in academic publications.

[3] A similar definition has been presented by Elleström (2017a, 2017b) for intermediality.

2.2. The culture in cultural transduction: drawing on cultural configurations

As explained above, cultural transduction was developed as a framework to describe and understand the phenomena surrounding TV format acquisition and adaptation. Formatology, as the study of TV formats has been named (Moran and Aveyard, 2014: 24), has looked at the various aspects involved in this process, which could be seen as a subset of international trade in television products. Most TV format negotiations take place between companies that see their respective Nation-State as their natural market, because broadcasting and media regulations are defined within those boundaries (Flew and Waisbord, 2015). Thus, trade between Nation-States is an example of exchange between different cultures.

Language has also been used as a proxy for culture (i.e. linguistic diversity as evidence of cultural diversity). Language enables many social practices related to meaning making, and although there is considerable variation in the use and meaning generated by its users, there is usually a consensual or standardised version which allows a high level of intelligibility. But even within languages there are different registers and genres, which classify or index the users or those described, by embedded cultural information that is contextually understandable within the user group (Gal, 2023). When a TV format acquired was in a different language than the one expected in the target market, there had to be some form of accommodation that included language translation. However, TV formats have been adapted in different ways in countries that share a common language, highlighting that there are a variety of non-linguistic cultural aspects in audience tastes, as well as recognising there could be variations in language registers and genres.

Both State and language seem insufficient to define a culture. The concept of culture has been used at once to describe a variety of things: the structure of symbolic interactions, values, activities and practices that human beings undertake, not based on their purely physical requirement (e.g. eating for survival), but in how they create and integrate value to the ways of undertaking those activities (e.g. a family dinner) (see Grimson, 2011; Conway, 2012; 2017; Martin-Barbero, 2011; García-Canclini, 2004). It is consequently used as a category to classify groups of people based on those symbolic interactions. This is what comes to mind when talking about Western culture or when someone speaks of a national, ethnic, indigenous, aboriginal, Latin American or First Nations culture. The problem is that not

all individuals of any collective group share all the symbolic elements at once. Within groups there are disputes, conflicts and debates about meanings and exchanges with other groups, power struggles, and territorial uncertainties implying that no group is as cohesively bound as a single unique and identifiable culture (Grimson, 2011; Martín-Barbero, 2011).

Historical territorial distributions, topographic complexities, natural disasters or emergencies, and the displacement and governmental actions to concentrate human beings in particular places (e.g. reservations) have led to some groups being disconnected from others, sharing symbolic elements internally that set them apart from other groups. The element of comparison is key here, because to be able to define them as different, one must mark the point of departure, draw the metaphorical line or the physically enforced boundary to create the "us" versus "them" that serves to separate the cultures. The lines drawn on paper or constructed on a landscape have always been artificial, even if their enforcement has produced cultural separations. However, cultural traits are not the sole product of conscious intervention. They are a mixture of many different interrelated activities.

Culture, understood as a discernible, separate, and a specific group of people becomes problematic and untenable. Nations and Nation-States exist, their borders exerting physical and cultural limitations upon their inhabitants. But history has shown that those borders are unstable. They have changed, become, or remain contested, and they are often porous. Migration continues to occur between places; cultural products are exchanged and carried across borders; and interconnected networks enable interaction at a distance, fostering hybridity (García-Canclini, 2000)[4]. As for the case of languages, institutions are established to maintain, or seek to achieve, a level of homogeneity for the "imagined community". This "community" might agree to be defined under a "national" identity (see Anderson, 1996)[5], or might give rise to ethnolinguistic nationalism (Gal, 2023: 184). Notwithstanding these efforts to create a national identity, nations remain contested both from within and from without, and their

[4] García-Canclini (1997: 111) argued that he "found it useful to speak about hybridisation to address the mixture of indigenous figuration with Spanish and Portuguese iconography … to describe the processes of independence and national construction in which modernising projects have coexisted to our days with traditions that are somewhat incompatible with what the Europeans have considered characteristic of modernity".

[5] Nationality or citizenship tests have always been a topic of debate when it comes to the imagined boundaries that make up a nation (see Conway, 2017).

symbolic values are reconstructed by internal agreements, struggles and protests, as well as nurtured by external impact and redefined as they develop.

2.2.1. Cultural configurations

A useful way to address the complex reality of symbolic social construction is to speak about cultural configurations rather than culture, thus breaking away from the essentialism embedded in the anthropological understanding of culture that presents culture as historically, geographically, and internally stable (Grimson, 2011). Grimson states that cultural configurations can be understood as "a notion of a framework shared by different or opposing actors, of complex articulations of social heterogeneity" (172). It is a definition that "instead of asking about traits and individuals, asks about spaces and regimes of meaning" (189). The Nation-State is a current cultural configuration but may also include internal cultural configurations (such as linguistic minority communities, First Nations, autonomous regions, migrant populations, queer neighbourhoods) and external configurations too (such as supranational allegiances, geo-linguistic regions and nomad groups). Cultural configurations do not necessarily correlate to identities or geographic demarcations, because not all identity allegiances are constituted as cultural configurations. Identity definitions might well be contested, enabled, or ignored within a given cultural configuration. For example, ethnic and racial identity ascriptions in the Americas differ considerably from State to State, and even within States. Indigenous populations in the Americas may consider their common plight against hegemonic views which allow them to identify with one another and try to find a collective voice of resistance (García Canclini, 2004)[6], yet their cultural configuration is their specific nation, rather than the overarching label of "indigenous"[7]. They may also participate within one or more larger cultural configurations in the form of Nation-States with whom they engage themselves in

[6] García-Canclini (2004) has mentioned that apart from White European oppression alongside Spanish and Portuguese languages, an abstract appreciation of Mother Earth as a defining cosmogony and the use of corn (maize) for food and ceremonial purposes, there are few other cultural characteristics that would set them as one single collective cultural configuration.

[7] For those expecting lineal historical continuity in current-day indigenous groups in Latin America might encounter them to be as internally different in cultural traits as the Nation-States they inhabit (see Rodríguez and El-Gazi, 2007). Their ways of engaging with modernity signal that "there is less nostalgic complaisance about tradition than is supposed and actually a greater awareness of the indispensable symbolic re-elaboration required to construct the future" (Martín-Barbero, 2002, p. 633).

dialogue, opposition, conflict or resistance. At the same time, they will all use a common symbolic framework, and they will share a variety of attributes, including a majority language, government institutions, historical cohabitation, media and cultural products.

2.2.2. Cultural configurations for cultural transduction

In the cultural transduction framework, the concept of market may be understood to correspond to any of the cultural configurations listed above. A TV format may be adapted for both the Flemish and the French-speaking broadcasters in Belgium. They would differ, as they are two markets with cultural configurations based on language, even though they share the larger cultural configuration of the Belgian Nation-State. Fan-subbing and fan-dubbing into Spanish might target the whole geo-linguistic region as a potential market, whereas a video game might hope to reach the whole globe at once by tapping onto international conventions. When a person is engaged with adapting a TV product or localising a video game in another place, they become gatekeepers of the game's cultural configuration. They decide which original elements to retain, which to change, and how to alter them. Their decisions represent their own understanding of the characteristics of the cultural configuration audience target, drawing on their experiences, assumptions, and, even, conscious, and unconscious biases. Their idea of what the "local" audience would understand might be based on stereotypes, disputed perspectives, or hegemonic generalisations (see Esser, 2016; Carlson and Corliss, 2011). Cultural configurations are stable, but not static, and they are in constant dispute, affected by hegemonic views and minoritized perspectives, with heterogenous perceptions despite common grounds or a common lexicon to define or configure their debates[8]. In the case of TV formats, the Nation-State appears to overlap with market given the fact that it often controls and regulates competition and broadcasting. However, it is important as well to

[8] A relevant example could be the Wayuu nation, whose members are at once citizens of Colombia and Venezuela due to the traditional lands of the Wayuu extending through the border. Depending on where they have spent most of their lives, Wayuu may be part of the Colombian or the Venezuelan Nation-State cultural configuration or even both, while also remaining part of their own cultural configuration as Wayuu. And these various configurations may become contradictory between one another, for instance, due to the matrilineal lineage of the Wayuu not translating well to patrilinear registry practices in Venezuela and Colombia. Thus, they may sometimes have two names, one they would use for legal procedures in both countries and one which is relevant within their community. At some point their names were modified at will by civil servants, sometimes in a derisory manner. Recent changes in policy have enabled the Wayuu to keep their traditional matrilinear names.

look at other forms of targeted consumption which may challenge a generalising national perspective of the market. This is true for media consumption, where "the reality is characterized by complex, diverse, manifold, and ever-shifting audiences, viewing preferences, and modes of reception, by audience configurations that both divide and transcend state borders" (Esser, 2016: 31). In other instances, such as those of internet memes, fan-subbing, or interactions within the video game metaverse, Nation-States might not be the best marketplace to investigate how these products have been exchanged.

The stability of cultural configurations allows for some assumptions to be drawn about the whole market, including its tastes and interests. There is a level of truth to stereotyping these groups. Writer Chimamanda Adichie (2009) has argued that the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete. Local, regional, and national stereotypes include some cultural traits that are common to a part of a population, while disregarding those people or groups that do not align with them. Any time the consumption of television is studied at the national level in Latin America, what emerges is that audiences prefer local (national) production, despite a growing cosmopolitan taste (e.g., Straubhaar *et al.* 2021). Simultaneously, international streamers such as Netflix, Hulu, Disney+ and Prime video are acquiring and making productions in those countries. At the same time, they are offering productions from elsewhere previously unavailable on broadcast television. This trend is leading to concerns about production practices inside those markets, whether in Korea (Kim, 2022) Europe (Iordache, 2022) or Colombia (Uribe-Jongbloed and Corredor-Aristizábal, 2020).

Cultural configuration is a useful conceptual category in that it can be correlated with the markets of consumption. An individual or group of individuals might not comply or agree with all cultural traits within their cultural configuration, but they will recognise those traits as part of a collective sense-making. Cultural configurations are fields of possibilities, where certain practices can occur, may even be probable, while other practices will be inconceivable (Grimson, 2011: 172-176)[9]. Individuals and groups also have established logics of interrelation within constituent parts,

[9] For instance, in most Western Nation-States polygamy or arranged marriages are unlikely and often legally barred, making them less acceptable, and even inconceivable for some of their members. Expected monolingualism in most Western nations is another example, despite the universality of multilingualism.

which may include other levels of cultural configurations. For instance, in multinational States there are roles assigned to each of the nations (e.g. constituent nations in the UK, autonomous regions in Spain), and similarly, in multilingual or multi-ethnic states, there will be inter-relations. These inter-relations might well involve internal hierarchies and hegemonic groups as for example, in the language ideology of policymakers and language advocates in New Zealand, where English, the colonial language, is the most used. At the same time, there is a "minority language hierarchy … with te reo Māori at the top, followed by New Zealand Sign Language, then Pacific languages, and finally other migrant languages" (de Bres, 2015: 691). But even these disputes draw on the terminologies that have been defined within the cultural configuration, making international movements under single definitions of characteristics difficult to transplant between cultural configurations, such as "Black Lives Matter"[10].

Finally, cultural configurations also change over time. Changes in boundaries, constitutions and definitions of participation also change, and what used to be acceptable becomes untenable. This change in internal values is never extreme nor clear-cut, and ambivalence occurs throughout the process. Just as linguistic registers evolve and certain usages gain recognition or value, so customs are also challenged and modified.

2.3. The cultural transduction framework and its four tenets

The framework developed for cultural transduction has sought to provide an easier approach to understand the way product exchanges occur. This was a response to the demand to undertake "research that considers the cultural complexities of audio-visual flows, without diminishing the attention given to imbalances in commercial power and the dynamic nature of ideology" (Iordache *et al.* 2019: 762).

The framework is divided into four interconnected tenets: market, product, people, and process (see Table 1). Any study about how media or cultural products travel may focus on one tenet exclusively or draw on as many as would seem appropriate, keeping the common lexicon that enables easier linkages between the tenets.

[10] The impact of the Black Lives Matter movement is undeniable, but determining which individuals identify themselves as Black is not equal in all places, because racial categories have been imposed, contested, and negotiated with differing outcomes within cultural configurations, through systems as diverse as census data collection practices in different countries, municipalities, or Nation-States

Market	**Product**	**People**	**Process**
The focus is on the relationship between origin and destination markets of products. The characteristics of the cultural configurations involved are studied to understand the likelihood of products moving between markets.	The characteristics of a product determine the complexity of movement between markets. It focuses on understanding the cultural elements that are shared between the product and an intended market (universals) from those that are not shared (lacunae)	This tenet is concerned with decision-making carried out by those who look for, select, assess, negotiate, and modify products for new markets. Recognising their tastes, values and motivations is key to knowing how they influence the movement of products.	Institutions or groups, whether formal media companies or informal internet communities, play a crucial role in introducing a product into a market. The structure, type of activity, interests and procedures will determine if and how products are brought to a market.

Table 1: The four tenets of Cultural Transduction framework (adapted from Uribe-Jongbloed 2023)

The first tenet focuses on cultural configurations as markets where the products are exchanged, and assesses the likelihood that products from one cultural configuration would be received in another. It draws on concepts such as cultural proximity, cultural discount, and cultural tolerance, described below. Cultural proximity (Straubhaar, 1991; 2021) assumes that similar cultural configurations consume similar types of content. For instance, the geo-linguistic region of Spanish-speaking countries in the Americas, including portions of the US, consume telenovelas and exchange them, because their cultural configurations share common colonial histories, dominant religions, and the same or a similar dominant language. Based on that closeness, cross-cultural predictability posits that any successful media product from one cultural configuration would likely be successful in a similar one, and that between the markets there is cultural discount (Hoskins and Mirus, 1988). This term suggests that there will be a loss of value or appeal for a product due to difficulties in understanding it as a result of the differences between cultural configurations. Cultural tolerance is defined as the likelihood that a market will accept a product from another market (Uribe-Jongbloed, 2023: 22). This can be measured by

assessing customs regulations, trade barriers, or social conventions levied upon cultural and media products, including tariffs, quotas, censorship, entry requirements, and socially accepted myths or assumptions that might enable or hinder access to imported products.[11]

The second tenet, focusing on the product, serves to understand which characteristics allow which products to travel. A product is more likely to penetrate other markets if the topic and themes are uncontroversial, if it contains familiar visual elements, adheres to pre-existing formats or genre expectations, and has marketing strategies tailored to its local audience. The particular qualities of a product can be evaluated by assessing first its cultural universals, such as themes, modes of production or paratextual elements understood or acceptable in another market. Secondly products may also contain cultural lacunae, elements that would be difficult to understand in the new market, including nuances, specificities, untranslatable names or unrecognisable places. Other types of cultural lacunae include specific customs, controversial or taboo content, topics, styles or aesthetics that are either not easily understood or accepted (Rohn, 2011). Clearly, reducing cultural difference will help to ensure entry into other markets. At the same time, it will also risk rendering a product as uninteresting, given that "cultural distance is a source of perceived novelty and has a positive effect on foreign media enjoyment" (Baek and Kim, 2016: 541). The balance between reducing or highlighting cultural aspects is one of the central issues for a product to be enjoyed in different markets.

The third tenet of the framework is the people tenet. This tenet focuses its analysis on the roles of those involved in the transduction process. This process is seldom an individual activity. It involves a host of actors, from the traveling salespersons and traders at media fairs, who will acquire and exchange products from various markets, to the final creative professionals such as localisers who will adapt the product for the new market. The transduction process is carried out by TV show distributors in international fairs as well as by volunteer translators for webtoon websites (e.g. digital comics). The analyses here draw heavily on those who have studied cultural intermediaries, gatekeepers, producers overseeing adaptation, and both institutional and non-institutional actors engaged with product modification and transformation.

[11] For instance, the US audience's supposed aversion to subtitles has been cited often to justify the need for local remake of foreign products, including films and television shows. However, current success of monolingual and bilingually subtitled hit series offered by internet streamers seem to prove that it is only a myth (see Ribke, 2023).

Finally, the framework's fourth tenet is the process. Transduction may flow through institutionalised channels, as when large Hollywood studios acquire and produce new versions of foreign films for worldwide cinema distribution, exerting a formal and institutional form of hybridity (García-Canclini 2000), or it may take place in fan conventions or websites, where voluntary and otherwise precarious work leads to bootleg dubbings, fan fictions or meme alterations in a process that has been called convergence (see Jenkins, 2006). Several media companies already have teams or departments dedicated exclusively to these initial creative inceptions or to more complete transformations. In the case of localisation companies transforming video games, transduction may also include platform adaptation and narrative retelling (Gao, 2022). These specialised teams or departments become valuable subjects of study for understanding transduction practices. Professionalism, formal industry standards and IP protection and enforcement all become integral parts of the process. The process is further shaped by standard practices, academic research, and experimentation in the market.

Cultural transduction, due to its origin in the study of the global trade of TV formats, tends to favour certain types of cultural products over others, and has been applied to popular products rather than niche works of art, although it could be equally applicable to them. It intersects quite clearly with other areas of research, creating an interstitial and interdisciplinary space of dialogue.

3. An interdisciplinary dialogue with cultural transduction

As transpires from the four tenets (see Table 1), the cultural transduction framework has developed from a variety of fields of inquiry. In particular, valuable input has come from the study of the political economy of media product flows–examining media ownership, information flow, distribution channels and technological infrastructures– as well as from those interested in textual transformation, such as art historians and media scholars The cultural transduction framework is employed to understand how media products travel and become transformed in the process.

Apart from the study of political economy of communication and media economics, two other contemporary areas of inquiry have been fundamental for the development of the framework: translation studies and adaptation studies (see Cattrysse, 2020; Canalès, 2020.) Canalès (2020: 72)

points to a traditional overreliance on comfort zones in the translation world: of interlingual translation in translations studies, and in book to film adaptation in adaptation studies. As a result, there has been "a certain reluctance to embrace convergence culture, new technologies, and non-verbal text, [which has] left room for other disciplines to appropriate these matters". Notwithstanding this reluctance, some of the advances in both disciplines provide important support for cultural transduction.

3.1. Cultural transduction and translation studies: Cognates or false friends?

Two strands within translation studies intersect with cultural transduction: Audio-visual translation (AVT) and cultural translation.

3.1.1. Audio-visual translation

Audio-visual translation (ATV) has addressed aspects akin to those observed in the cultural transduction framework, and although most of the work has been concerned with dubbing and subtitling strategies and practices, its remit has expanded to include other types of audio-visual products and modes in which the transformation takes place. Hernández Bartolomé and Mendiluce Cabrera (2005), for example, have classified 17 modes of AVT collected from various taxonomies. These modes include subtitling and dubbing practices, double versions and multilingual productions, where actors speak in different languages, and remakes.

A recent collection on AVT (Peréz González, 2019) also expands the traditional remit, as it includes a chapter on remakes and another on video game localisation. However, the main focus of the remaining chapters is on subtitling and dubbing. With regard to expansion: "research in AVT and media accessibility (MA) has gradually evolved from analyses focused on work processes and the description of the various translational practices to studies in which cognition and reception have taken central stage" (Díaz Cintas *et al.* 2023: 291). In particular, the authors highlight digitalisation, increasing media exchanges and platformisation of content as driving forces behind the growth in AVT practice and scholarship. This growth now includes more research on audience reception and participatory roles.

These aspects align well with the focus on the transductor roles and practices in the people tenet, as well as on the hybridity or convergence processes studied through the cultural transduction framework. Furthermore, Gambier and Jin (2022: 295) have claimed that a comprehensive history of AVT is an "ambitious endeavour [that] demands

an interdisciplinary research agenda whereby history, cultural history, sociology, ethnology, social psychology, media and film studies, and translation studies can cooperate in a constant scholarly exchange". This is the space where the cultural transduction framework could be put to the test, welcoming an interdisciplinary use of its model.

3.1.2. Cultural translation

Cultural translation, like cultural transduction, "starts from a quest for understanding – of some form of source material and in the sense that some cultural, political or social stimulus in the world sets in motion the interpretive work of translation led by a human actor" (Maitland, 2017: 25). It is more encompassing in its remit, because it is not limited to the interlingual transformation between institutionalised languages, as translation is understood in everyday usage, but it goes as far as claiming that "translation is therefore relevant to the study of all the ways in which we communicate the contents of the mind, whether we use words or not" (26), going well beyond the scope presented by cultural transduction. If "cultural translation is considered … as the traceable presence of hermeneutic gestures of reading and writing in the construction and reception of a range of cultural phenomena present in the public sphere" (28), then cultural transduction would only apply to a subset of those practices.

Conway (2012) has provided a useful matrix to address the aspects of concern for cultural translation, based on three definitions of culture:

1. Human ability of sense-making
2. Objects and artifacts which convey meaning
3. The communities which share them);

He also identifies two definitions of translation:

1. Translation as rewriting
2. Translation as transposition.

The matrix aligns with cultural transduction mainly in the cross section between the second definition of culture (objects and artifacts) and with both definitions of translation. This is because they address the transformation of a product in terms of characteristics as well as the newly rendered understanding of its content in the new context. Consequently, the third definition of culture, as in communities that share meaning, is akin

to the definition of cultural configurations. On the other hand, the first definition of culture, sense-making, would be beyond the remit of the cultural transduction framework.

Despite the overlap, cultural translation scholars focus mainly on the mobility of people; how they face new environments, and on the role of the translator in terms of authorship, ethical responsibility and creative input. The mobility of individuals demonstrates why the static concept of culture is untenable. The process of navigating and integrating into culturally established structures within any cultural configuration mirrors many of the aspects observed in understanding how products travel and adapt. Furthermore, the input of the translator goes beyond the simple transposition of terms and structures. There is a process of cultural encompassing involving a series of negotiations between cognitive spaces. In the end, "cultural translation requires us to strike a balance between finding things in common and respecting difference" (Conway, 2020: 127), as it is founded on the interaction of cultural configurations striving to establish a common ground. Importantly, too, in cultural translation, the translator is recognised for her authorial and creative input.

3.2. Cultural transduction and adaptation studies: Unfaithful yet similar versions

Adaptation has also been concerned with these issues of translation (see Perdikaki, 2018; Cattrysse, 2020) and transduction (see Cattrysse, 2017). Adaptation studies has shifted away from a limited analysis of the transformations and claims of (in)fidelity between written texts and performances or audiovisual products (Engelstad, 2018). It is even now recognised that though adaptation is still considerably dominated by literature-to-film studies, it is "a transhistorical, global phenomenon that also crosses forms, media, and genres" (Jellenik and Szwydky, 2023: 1),. Adaptation studies remain less concerned, however, about the materiality (such as the use of DVDs and software) and industrial procedures (such as the distribution channels) that relate to those transformations (Murray, 2008). The main focus is still on text analysis of the source and the end product. Adaptation studies also tends to treat the translator as an author in a similar vein to cultural translation theory. However, it has mostly neglected other aspects of the process such as acquisition of rights, corporate pressure and interests, and audience interaction.

Cultural transduction is a response to the call for "an emphasis on process [that] allows us to expand the traditional focus of adaptation studies

on medium-specificity and individual comparative case studies in order to consider relations as well among the major modes of engagement" (Hutcheon and O'Flynn, 2013: 22). The four tenets of the framework expand adaptation studies, since "a focus on the production side of adaptation will help shed light on why certain books are chosen for adaptation and not others, the functions adaptations fulfil from a producer's standpoint, and what governs the thinking behind an adaptation" (Engelstad, 2018: 26)[12].

Cattrysse (2020) has argued that adaptation would seem to be more encompassing than translation as an overarching space of debate, since it is predicated upon the common definition of "a change that leads to a better fit" (26). Although he acknowledges that adaptation has been erroneously reduced in Adaptation Studies to refer to literature to film adaptation, he sees its potential to overcome disciplinary boundaries beyond the humanities and social sciences. In that sense, Cattrysse seems to understand adaptation closer to the general definition of transduction. However, he has criticised transduction for its media and communication studies focus, as stemming from "research communities [that] have remained self-centred, and unaware or oblivious of each other" (39). This is something that new iterations of the framework have addressed.

The more open-ended vision for adaptation offered by Cattrysse (2020) and Jellenik and Szwydky (2023) seems to address the criticism levied at its fixation with textual comparison rendering it almost coterminal with cultural transduction. However, as it stands now, most research on adaptation, within adaptation studies, deals only with a subset of the elements that transduction covers.

4. Discussion: The limitations of cultural transduction and the way forward

The framework for cultural transduction has been shown to intersect with translation and adaptation studies. It addresses a subset of the whole array of intermedial possibilities between similar or dissimilar media (see

[12] For instance, the people tenet has been praised as a "broadly defined typology is that it is easily transposable to other industrial and cultural contexts" (Cuelenaere, 2020: 215), despite those conceptual categories not aligning one-to-one with current industry roles (García-Avis and Diego, 2018).

Elleström, 2014) mostly focusing on stable media products that cross borders.

Critics have pointed out the limitations of the framework. Its first version ignored similar discussions in adaptation studies (Cattrysse, 2017), an issue addressed in later versions of the framework (see Uribe-Jongbloed, 2023). By focusing on stable media products such as TV series and formats, it also neglected processes where new products are created for other markets rather than being transformed (see Espinosa-Medina and Uribe-Jongbloed, 2017). Furthermore, the application of the framework has focused mainly on national or linguistic media markets, leaving aside other possible cultural configurations, such as online multiplayer teams (Scholz and Stein, 2017). These concerns have been traced back to the disciplinary origin of the framework. In that sense, the framework helps to expand and provide additional perspectives that could be integrated into translation and adaptation studies. It offers a structure to address the questions raised by Gal (2023) about the social, political and linguistic commitments and agendas of institutions that mediate cultural exchange.

As Cattrysse (2020) has pointed out, geographical origin, administrative and political disciplinary boundaries, rather than epistemological differences, provide insights as to why different approaches develop over time. Similarly, Conway (2013: 33) has mentioned that "ambiguity surrounding ideas of cultural translation results not from a cynical desire to mark academic territory but from a series of intertwined, intersecting disciplinary histories". The need for interdisciplinary approaches that help bridge those gaps are clearly required.

Cultural transduction has drawn from international perspectives but has distinctive roots in Latin American communication studies and political economy of global media flows, including debates on cultural and media imperialism (see, for instance, Beltrán S. and Fox de Cardona, 1980; Mastrini, 2017; Miller *et al.* 2005; Mirrlees, 2013; Mosco, 2009). Cultural transduction has also profited from the debates in adaptation and translation studies. Aiming to provide a common lexicon to discuss similar issues, it is an interstitial space that fosters intercultural dialogue between disciplines, each with their own historical traditions engrained in their respective cultural configurations.[13]

[13] The fact that this document before you is written in English and that its form of interaction is a journal article, simplifies and limits the debate, placing it within a distinct academic tradition. These are some of the intercultural affordances accepted that make up the cultural configuration to which writer and reader of this piece subscribe, defining the parameters of what is possible, establishing the

As proposed by Martín-Barbero (1984) since the 1980s, the focus should be on the evident processes of communication that occur, rather than an obsession with pursuing the epistemological object from the different disciplinary perspectives. The communication environment continues to change, demanding an open toolbox to address the variety of the challenges unfolding. Instead of fighting for disciplinary ownership of the debate, the common ground found between these different perspectives should nurture academic pursuits. As shown before, the cultural transduction framework was only made possible by bringing together a multiplicity of disciplinary perspectives. Its usefulness rests in feeding back to them by providing a media studies toolkit to investigate how institutions, practitioners and their practices engage with defining cultural configurations as target markets and by recognising the impact of these activities upon the transformation, translation and adaptation of media products.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to César Mora-Moreo, Laura Sinclair, Jess Hoare and Toby Miller for their feedback on draft versions of this paper and to David Katan for a thorough editing of the final text. This work was supported by the UK Research and Innovation Strength in Places Fund project Media Cymru [grant reference SIPF99911].

References

Adichie, C. (2009). *Chimamanda Adichie: The danger of a single story*. TED Talks. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg

Anderson, B. (1996). *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso / New Left Books.

Bachmann, A. (2021). Hankering for iconic moments: Transduction and representation in *Skam fans'* anticipations about the remake *Skam Austin*. *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema, 11*(1), 133–147. https://doi.org/10.1386/jsca_00043_1

relationship between the whole and its parts, and providing the commonality of a space where shared meanings may be conveyed.

Baek, Y. M., and Kim, H. M. (2016). Cultural Distance and Foreign Drama Enjoyment: Perceived Novelty and Identification with Characters. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *60*(3), 527–546. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2016.1164166

Beltrán, L. R. and Fox de Cardona, E. (1980). Mass Media and Cultural Domination. *Prospect, 10*(1), 76-89.

Breeze, D. (2023) From sequel to series: the effects of 'Medium-Jumping' on narrative in *Umizaru* (2004–2012), *Japan Forum, 35*(1), 76-97. https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2022.2149835

Canalès, A. (2020). Transmedia, Translation and Adaptation: Parallel Universes or Complex System? *TTR, 33*(1), 55–78. https://doi.org/10.7202/1071148ar

Carlson, R., and Corliss, J. (2011). Imagined Commodities: Video Game Localization and Mythologies of Cultural Difference. *Games and Culture, 6*(1), 61–82. https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412010377322

Cattrysse, P. (2017). Cultural Transduction and Adaptation Studies: The Concept of Cultural Proximity. *Palabra Clave*, *20*(3), 645–662. https://doi.org/10.5294/pacla.2017.20.3.3

Cattrysse, P. (2020). Translation and Adaptation Studies: More Interdisciplinary Reflections on Theories of Definition and Categorization. *TTR, 33*(1), 21–53. https://doi.org/10.7202/1071147ar

Chaume, F., Ranzato, I., and Zanotti, S. (2018). The challenges and opportunities of audiovisual translation. An interview with Frederic Chaume. *Cultus, 11*, 10-17

Conway, K. (2012). A conceptual and empirical approach to cultural translation. *Translation Studies*, *5*(3), 264–279. https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2012.701938

Conway, K. (2013). Cultural Translation: Two Modes. TTR, 26(1), 15–36. https://doi.org/10.7202/1036948ar

Conway, K. (2017). Communication is translation, or, how to mind the gap. *Palabra Clave*, 20(3), 622-644. https://doi.org/10.5294/pacla.2017.20.3.2

Conway, K. (2020). *The Art of Communication in a Polarized World*. AU Press. https://doi.org/10.15215/aupress/9781771992930.01

Cuelenaere, E. (2020). Towards an Integrative Methodological Approach of Film Remake Studies. *Adaptation*, *13*(2), 210–223. https://doi.org/10.1093/adaptation/apz033

de Bres, J. (2015). The hierarchy of minority languages in New Zealand. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *36*(7), 677–693. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2015.1009465

Díaz Cintas, J., Rizzo, A. and Spinzi, C.G. (2023). Introduction: Audiovisual Translation in Context. *Translation and Translanguaging in Multilingual Contexts, 9*(3), 289-297. https://doi.org/10.1075/ttmc.00114.dia

Donoso Munita, J.A. y Penafiel Durruty, M.A. (2017). Transmedial transduction in the spider-verse. *Palabra Clave*, 20(3), 763-787. https://doi.org/10.5294/pacla.2017.20.3.8

Elleström, L. (2014). *Media Transformation: The transfer of media characteristics among media.* Palgrave MacMillan.

Elleström, L. (2017a). Adaptations as Intermediality. In T. Leitch (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies* (pp. 509–526). Oxford University Press.

Elleström, L. (2017b). Transfer of media characteristics among dissimilar media. *Palabra Clave, 20*(3), 663–685. https://doi.org/10.5294/pacla.2017.20.3.4

Engelstad, A. (2018). Playing the producer's game: Adaptation and the question of fidelity. *Adaptation*, *11*(1), 25–39. https://doi.org/10.1093/adaptation/apx023

Espinosa-Medina, H. D., and Uribe-Jongbloed, E. (2017). Latin American contraflow in global entertainment media: Kingdom Rush series and Zambo Dende as de-localised media products. *Media International Australia, 163*(1), 107–121. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X16686204

Esser, A. (2016). Defining 'the Local' in Localization, or 'Adapting for Whom?' In A. Esser, M. Á. Bernal Merino, and I. R. Smith (Eds.), *Media Across Broders* (pp. 19–35). Routledge.

Flew, T., and Waisbord, S. (2015). The ongoing significance of national media systems in the context of media globalization. *Media, Culture and Society*, *37*(4), 620-636. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443714566903

Gal, S. (2023). Rethinking translation and transduction. In A. Duranti, R. George, and R. Riner (eds.), *A New Companion to Linguistic Anthropology* (pp. 178-191). John Wiley and Sons.

Gambier, Y. and Jin, H. (2022). A connected history of audiovisual translation: sources and resources. In E. Bielsa (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and* Media (pp. 283-301). Routledge.

Gao, Q. (2022). Louder than words: Videogame localisation as narrative (re)telling. *Cultus, 15,* 94-114.

García Avis, I. (2017). La «glocalización» como rasgo definitorio del remake transcultural en televisión. *Fonseca, Journal of Communication*, 14, 91. https://doi.org/10.14201/fjc20171491111

García-Avis, I., and Diego, P. (2018). Perfiles profesionales en la adaptación de series televisivas. *Palabra Clave*, *21*(2), 310–337. https://doi.org/10.5294/pacla.2018.21.2.3

García-Canclini, N. (2000). *Culturas Híbridas: Estrategias para Entrar y Salir de la Modernidad*. Grijalbo.

García-Canclini, N. (2004). *Diferentes, Desiguales y Desconectados: Mapas de la Interculturalidad*. Gedisa.

Grimson, A. (2011). *Los Límites de la Cultura*. Siglo XXI Editores.

Hoskins, C., and Mirus, R. (1988). Reasons for the US Dominance of the International Trade in Television Programmes. *Media Culture and Society*, *10*(4), 499–504. https://doi.org/10.1177/016344388010004006

Hutcheon, L and O'Flynn, S. (2013). *A Theory of Adaptation*. Routledge.

Iordache, C. (2022). Netflix in Europe: Four Markets, Four Platforms? A Comparative Analysis of Audio-Visual Offerings and Investment Strategies in Four EU States. *Television and New Media*, *23*(7), 721–742. https://doi.org/10.1177/15274764211014580

Iordache, C., Van Audenhove, L., and Loisen, J. (2019). Global media flows: A qualitative review of research methods in audio-visual flow studies. *International Communication Gazette*, *81*(6–8), 748–767. https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048518808650

Jellenik, G. and Szwydky, L.L. (2023). Introduction: Adaptation's Past, Adaptation's Future. In L.L. Szwydky and G. Jellenik (Eds.), *Adaptation Before Cinema Literary and Visual Convergence from Antiquity through the Nineteenth Century* (pp. 1-18). Palgrave Macmillan.

Jenkins, H. (2006). Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide. New York University Press.

Kim, T. (2022). Cultural politics of Netflix in local contexts: A case of the Korean media industries. *Media, Culture and Society*, *44*(8), 1508–1522. https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437221111917

Larkey, E. (2018). Narratological approaches to multimodal cross-cultural comparisons of global TV formats. *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture, 7*(14), 1–21.

Larkey, E. (2021). German narratives in international television format adaptations: Comparing du und ich (ZDF 2002) with un gars, une fille (Quebec 1997-2002). *Digital Humanities Quarterly, 15*(1). http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/15/1/index.html

Maitland, S. (2017). *What is cultural translation?* Bloomsbury.

Martín-Barbero, J. (1984). De la comunicación a la cultura. Perder el objeto para ganar el proceso. *Signo y Pensamiento, 5*(1), 17–24.

Martín-Barbero, J. (2002). Identities: traditions and new communities. *Media, Culture and Society*, *24*(5), 621–641. https://doi.org/10.1177/016344370202400504

Martín-Barbero, J. (2011). From Latin America: Diversity, Globalization and Convergence. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture, 8*(1), 39–64. http://www.westminster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/93227/003WPCC-Vol8-No1-Martin-Barbero.pdf

Mastrini, G. (2017). Economía Política de la Comunicación e Industrias Culturales: apuntes sobre su vigencia actual [Political Economy of Communication and Cultural Industries: notes about its current validation]. *Revista Internacional de Comunicación y Desarrollo, 5, 139-148*. https:// doi.org/10.15304/ricd.2.5.3754

Miller, T., Govil, N., McMurria, J., Maxwell, R., and Wang, T. (2005). *Global Hollywood 2*. BFI.

Mirrlees, T. (2013). *Global Entertainment Media. Between cultural imperialism and cultural globalization*. Routledge.

Moran, A., and Aveyard, K. (2014). The place of television programme formats. *Continuum*, *28*(1), 18–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2014.870869

Mosco, V. (2009). *The Political Economy of Communication* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

Murray, S. (2008). Materializing adaptation theory: The adaptation industry. *Literature/Film Quarterly*, *36*(1), 4–20.

Perdikaki, K. (2018). Film adaptation as the interface between creative translation and cultural transformation: The case of Baz Luhrmann's The Great Gatsby. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, *29*, 169–187.

Pérez-González, L. (Ed.). (2019). *The Routledge Handbook of Audiovisual Translation*. Routledge.

Ribke, N. (2023). *Multilingual Fiction Series: Genres, Geographies and Performance*. Routledge.

Rodriguez, C., and El Gazi, J. (2007). The Poetics of Indigenous Radio in Colombia. *Media, Culture and Society*, *29*(3), 449–468. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443707076185

Rohn, U. (2011). Lacuna or Universal? Introducing a new model for understanding crosscultural audience demand. Media Culture Society, 33(4), 631–641. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443711399223

Scholz, T.M. y Stein, V. (2017). Juxtaposing transduction and transtraction: Pugging in international virtual teams. *Palabra Clave*, 20(3), 788-804. https://doi.org/10.5294/pacla.2017.20.3.9

Silverstein, M. (2003). Translation, transduction, transformation. In P. Rubel and A. Rosman (eds.) *Translating Cultures: Perspectives on Translation and Anthropology* (pp. 75–108). Berg.

Sindoni, M. G. (2016). "The Semantics of Migration". Translation as Transduction: Remaking Meanings Across Modes. *Hermes - Journal of Language and Communication in Business*, *55*, 27–44.

Straubhaar, J. D. (1991). Beyond Media Imperialism: Asymmetrical interdependence and cultural proximity. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, *8*, 39–59.

Straubhaar, J. D. (2021). Cultural proximity. In D.Y. Jin (Ed.), The Routledge handbook of digital media and globalization (pp. 24–33). Routledge.

Straubhaar, J., Santillana, M., de Macedo Higgins Joyce, V., and Duarte, L. G. (2021). *From Telenovelas to Netflix: Transnational, Transverse Television in Latin America*. Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77470-7

Uribe-Jongbloed, E. (2023). *The Travels of Media and Cultural Products: Cultural Transduction*. Routledge.

Uribe-Jongbloed, E. and Mora-Moreo, C. (2020). The transformation of a Disney princess into its parodic Meme: A case of the cultural transduction of the Cenicienta Costeña. In A. Weedon and N. Darwood (Eds.), *Retelling Cinderella: Cultural and creative transformations* (pp. 16–33). Cambridge Scholars.

Uribe-Jongbloed, E., Aguilar Rodríguez, D., and Suárez, F. (2019). Boogie, el aceitoso en la Colombia de los 80 y 90: el negro Fontanarrosa, Samper Pizano y el miedo al falso héroe. *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research*, *25*(3), 244–257. https://doi.org/10.1080/13260219.2019.1740455

Uribe-Jongbloed, E., and Corredor Aristizábal, M. A. (2019). The Adaptation of Don Camillo through the Cultural Transduction Framework: From Italian Bestseller to Franco-Italian Film to a Colombian TV Series. *Adaptation*, *12*(1), 44–57. https://doi.org/10.1093/adaptation/apy020

Uribe-Jongbloed, E., and Corredor-Aristizábal, M. A. (2020). Creative industries policies and conditions of cinema labor in Colombia in the 21st century. *Creative Industries Journal*, *13*(3). https://doi.org/10.1080/17510694.2019.1709016

Uribe-Jongbloed, E., and Espinosa-Medina, H. D. (2014). A clearer picture: Towards a new framework for the study of cultural transduction in audiovisual market trades. *Observatorio*, *8*(1), 23–48.

Uribe-Jongbloed, E., Espinosa-Medina, H. D., and Biddle, J. (2016). Cultural transduction and intertextuality in video games: An analysis of three international case studies. In C. Duret and C.-M. Pons (Eds.), *Contemporary Research on Intertextuality in Video Games* (pp. 143–161). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-0477-1.ch009

Walker, C.S. (2017). Madness, dissidence and transduction. *Palabra Clave*, 20(3), 686-701. https://doi.org/10.5294/pacla.2017.20.3.5

Wang, T., Suboh, R. and Alizadeh, F. (2023). When Stories Travel: A Review of Transcultural Film Adaptation. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH), 8*(9), e002511. https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v8i9.2511