Towards multimodal literacy in translation studies

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Abstract. Contemporary culture is characterized by the dominance of audiovisual factors. This has forced translation studies to broaden their vision of what texts are. This recontextualization has made it possible to study multimodal and intersemiotic translations in depth. However, despite the proliferation of analyses of multimodal translations, we have not yet managed to standardize the theoretical foundations that allow us to study this phenomenon from translatology and, more specifically, to teach it in the classroom. Therefore, this article reflects on the need for multimodal literacy in translation studies. It also presents a reconceptualization of the notion of equivalence applied to multimodal translation analysis. The purpose of this is to legitimize the role of the translator in studying, teaching, and facilitating multimodal translations.

Keywords. multimodal translation, intersemiotic translation, equivalence, post-translation, transcreation

ᴱˢ Hacia la alfabetización multimodal en los estudios de traducción

Resumen. La cultura contemporánea está marcada por la dominancia del factor audiovisual. Esto ha obligado a que los estudios de traducción hayan tenido que ampliar su visión de aquello que es un texto. Dicha recontextualización ha posibilitado que se comiencen a estudiar en profundidad las traducciones multimodales e intersemióticas. Sin embargo, a pesar de la proliferación de análisis sobre traducciones multimodales, aún no hemos conseguido normalizar los fundamentos teóricos que nos permiten estudiar desde la traductología este fenómeno y, más concretamente, enseñarlo en las aulas. Por ello, este artículo reflexiona sobre la necesidad de una alfabetización multimodal en los estudios de traducción. También presenta una reconceptualización de la noción de equivalencia aplicada al análisis de traducciones multimodales. Todo ello tiene el propósito de legitimar el papel del traductor a la hora de estudiar, enseñar y propiciar traducciones multimodales.

Palabras clave. traducción multimodal, traducción intersemiótica, equivalencia, postraducción, transcreación

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1. Introduction

The irruption of the new textual dynamics of the Internet means that we can no longer understand contemporary cultural drift in the same way we have understood it until now. In the era of social networks, transnational communicative networks, streaming, metacommentaries and collective creation, it is legitimate to affirm that new textual forms, such as video games or Internet memes, are more influential at a cultural level among generations Y, Z and Alpha than traditional forms.

In this regard, Hayles and Pressman suggest in *Comparative Textual Media: Transforming the Humanities in the Postprint Era* (2013: vii) that the Internet has challenged the print medium by questioning "its long dominance within Western culture". This statement has several implications: first, it highlights the logocentric nature of Western culture; second, it alerts to the urgency of finding, studying, and understanding the alternative textual forms that the global era has brought with it; and third, it invites reflection on the sociocultural, semiotic, and post-translational implications of these new texts.

Despite the heterogeneity of these new textual realities, we can identify a common characteristic in their creation: to a greater or lesser extent and as postmodern cultural objects, they are multimodal palimpsests.

This article is an extension of the communication presented at the II International Congress on Translation and Cultural Sustainability, which took place in April 2024 at the University of Salamanca. In it we sought to highlight the need in our field to explore the transtextual and multimodal factor of the cultural heritage of the 21st century. Therefore, these pages present the basis of an intersemiotic approach that allows us to analyse multimodal translations, particularly regarding the didactics of translation.

In these lines we will try to clarify whether multimodal literacy is possible in the training of translators and how this approach can broaden their working horizons in the changing cultural context of the 21st century.

First, we provide a brief theoretical context to the proposal. Second, we discuss the need to standardize multimodal literacy among Translation and Interpreting students. Third, we propose a conceptual twist to the classical notion of translatological equivalence to understand it and locate its usefulness from intersemiotic and multimodal approaches.

2. New horizons in translation studies

The successive turns that our field of study has undergone since the mid-20th century have provided not only systematized terminology for translation studies, but also fertile ground from which to analyse translation as a product and as a medium in its cultural and social context. The trajectory of translation studies from the school of manipulation to the power turn has allowed us to identify the translator as creator, translation as creation and culture as text.

In the 1950s, with the rise of linguistics, translation was assimilated as a sub-branch of applied linguistics, which led to an expansion of prescriptivism within translation studies. This, although positive for the advancement of our field of study, limited academic perspectives to purely lexical-semantic issues. The turn towards descriptivism in the 1980s allowed us to begin to move away from visions of equivalence anchored in utopian univocality while paying attention to the transcultural dimension. The post-structuralist influence allowed us to reinvent our doctrine of study from a new approach with a universalist and syncretic pretension, far removed from the concretism of formal linguistics. The most direct consequence of this change of approach is the liberation that translatology experienced when the question of equivalence was pushed into the background. Despite having been the cornerstone of translatology, descriptive studies evolved to the point that equivalence, like everything else that surrounds the work of translation, is subject to the interpretation of the recipient who observes it. Thus, gradually, it began to lose the sacrosanct value that had been attributed to it since the origins of the field of study. We were beginning to move, in the words of Vidal Claramonte (Martín Ruano & Vidal Claramonte 2016), towards a translation "sin ónfalos" in which meaning depends on the receiver and the text is *energeia* and not *ergon*.

Michel Foucault himself proposes heterogeneous visions of meaning *in Les mots et les choses* (1966) and suggests the need for a hermeneutics open to plurivocity and the questioning of centralized discourse in *L'archéologie du savoir* (1969: 13, 14):

> Ces problèmes, on peut les résumer d'un mot : la mise en question du document. Pas de malentendu : il est bien évident que depuis qu'une discipline comme l'histoire existe, on s'est servi de documents, on les a interrogés, on s'est interrogé sur eux ; on leur a demandé non seulement ce qu'ils voulaient dire, mais s'ils disaient bien la vérité, et à quel titre ils pouvaient le prétendre, s'ils étaient sincères ou falsificateurs, bien informés ou ignorants, authentiques ou altérés. Mais chacune de ces questions et toute cette grande inquiétude critique pointaient vers une même fin : reconstituer, à partir de ce que disent ces documents — et parfois à demi-mot — le passé dont ils émanent et qui s'est évanoui main-tenant loin derrière eux ; le document était toujours traité comme le langage d'une voix maintenant réduite au silence, — sa trace fragile, mais par chance déchiffrable.

The establishment of this hermeneutic dynamic inevitably leads us to question the translatological tradition and its quest for perfect equivalence. Hermans (1999: 47) summarizes the common feeling of descriptive translation studies by stating that "the more closely one looks at what constitutes 'equivalence' in translation, the more problematic the notion becomes"; any incursion into the semantic content of a text, including (and especially) that which is made from translation can only return the version that has been filtered by the interpreter's judgment (Steiner 2001/2002: 65), which in turn forces us to be aware of the role that imitation, adaptation and versioning have exercised in the construction of culture throughout history (Barthes 1984/1987: 69, 70; Gentzler 2017: i-xii). Translation is, in this way, nothing but the confirmation of difference from what is socially imposed as equal. But, if only the original can be the original, meaning must be seen as the starting point of analysis and an incentive for the deconstruction of text and interpreter rather than as the *sine qua non* of identity (Tymoczko 2007).

Absolute equivalence can only exist as a dogma in a humanistic world that grants ontological validity to the individual. Every text is as many texts as readers consume and interpret it. The views of prescriptive studies, which advocate the possibility of absolute equivalence, are already negationist; theories that delve into the Platonic and deny the advances of semiotics in the last fifty years, even though authors such as Foucault, Derrida, or even Husserl demonstrated more than a century ago that every sign is variable according to context. However, it is equally undeniable for translation studies that the question of equivalence is, by its own merit, the cornerstone of translatology. Therefore, we must ask ourselves what it is, to what degree, and how it has been achieved.

If we accept that absolute equivalence is only a chimeric concept, we must also recognize that all equivalence is relative. We can accept that the transfer of meaning can occur from some of the significant foci of a text, but never from the conjunction of all of them; translation depends on who consumes the text and how they understand it. Likewise, someone who approaches a text with the intention of translating, transcribing or recreating it must, logically, penetrate the text completely and understand it at all possible levels. That rewriter/transcreator permeates the text until they master it and then chooses which semiotic fraction of it they want to (or can) transfer, given that in every translation the meaning of the original is augmented, diminished or manipulated, as proposed by descriptive studies (Gentzler 2017, Hermans 1985, Álvarez Rodríguez & Vidal Claramonte 1996, Eco 2008, Gentzler & Tymoczko 2002, etc.). It is also elucidated that equivalence is not only relative but also selective. If equivalence, which is the central axis of any definition of translation, is selective, the translator cannot be seen as a passive agent because they are in charge of selecting the semiotic objects to which they will grant equivalence. These notions are fundamental for analysing multimodal translations.

With all of the above, by breaking free from the reductionist essentialisms surrounding the study of translatological equivalence and approaching translation from the vast field of cultural studies, several authors (Vidal Claramonte 2017, Bassnett & Johnston 2019, Gentzler 2017, Cronin 2017) began to see the need to redefine the concepts around which translation had traditionally revolved. Thus, the outward turn emerged, which suggests that the cultural dynamics of the contemporary global era demand that translation studies redefine its concept of text and contemplate it from multimodality, as the Internet has displaced the prevailing logocentrism of Western society. In this way, they argue that if the working tool, the text, has mutated, so has the practice of translating itself.

Descriptive studies point out that this paradigm shift was related to the mutual influence that translation and society were beginning to exert on each other. For this reason, Edwin Gentzler, in parallel with other authors close to him, warned of the need for a shift in the conceptualization of translation. Thus the theory of post-translation was born. Post-translation arises from Gentzler's approach, inspired by authors such as Nergaard or Arduini, to contemporary translation studies as excessively limited and logocentric: after more than half a century of translatological analysis, translation studies still did not seem to be open to the semiotic codes used. Translation studies, according to the author, despite moving towards universalism and the amalgamation of cultures, seem to be "too narrow, text-centric, and based upon European definitions and models derived in the 1970s and early 1980s" (Gentzler 2017: 1).

Looking at his field from this perspective and from the dawn of the globalized era of culture, Gentzler seems to join Cronin's (2003) proposal in accepting that translation cannot be studied in the same way as it was before the advent of globalization, particularly before the advent of the Internet; he also seems to realize that the study of translation can not only help us to understand the work of translation itself, but can be an exceptional tool for understanding the progress of culture and, therefore, of human society in an era of blurring boundaries and ever-expanding definitions. The time had come to create a new definition of the object of study that would contemplate the plurality of results and contexts that translation provides and in which it develops. It was necessary to approach translation from an integrative, non-binary, anti-essentialist perspective, focused on heterogeneous conclusions, insofar as the act of translating, understood in the breadth required by globalized culture, takes place in non-binary, fragmented spaces, open to constant change.

In this context, the parallel irruption of the outward turn proposed a research path in accordance with the textual evolution of contemporary generations. Bassnett & Johnston (2019) underline the urgency with which translation studies need to exercise exotropic gazes that allow us to understand new signifying pathways to detach ourselves from the blight of the prevailing logocentrism and thus be able to contextualize ourselves in a constantly changing sociocultural environment. In addition, the arrival of post-translation brought a breath of fresh air to a line of studies that was beginning to seem stagnant.

Thus, we appreciate that the post-translation approach is closer to cultural studies than to translation studies: unlike the cultural or power turn, it does not propose a way of looking at translation through culture, but the other way around. Post-translation aims to demonstrate that translatological work is a starting point for understanding global cultural development. For Gentzler, Nergaard and Arduini (who coined the term "post-translation"), ours is a translated culture, and its historical development and its contemporary and future perspectives can only be understood through translation. In this sense, the North American author's proposal is closer to the precepts of cultural sociology than to those of more conservative translatology.

In an almost identical manner to that proposed by the outward turn, post-translation suggests the beginning of exotropy in translation studies. The ultimate goal, of course, is to broaden and improve our knowledge of the activities of the human spirit that underlie the society in which we live. However, in a tangential, almost veiled way, both the outwards turn and post-translation are theories that point more than any other to the central role of translation in the development of global culture. Thus, Gentzler & Bassnett finally achieved, through these looks outside the classical boundaries of translation, that *mise en relief* originally motivated the birth of descriptive translation studies.

3. Multimodal literacy

Several factors in the 21st century invite us to reflect on what translation is today and what its future is. The progress of automatic translation tools and artificial intelligences, as well as the sociocultural paradigm shift towards audiovisuals that we have experienced since the advent of Web 2.0, have allowed us to reflect not

only on translation but also on the nature of concepts such as text. With the arrival of the Internet era, the ways, means and dynamics of cultural consumption have fluctuated towards the frenetic consumption of audiovisual texts. As soon as we analyse these new textual trends in the network, we immediately appreciate that they all have a post-translated background (Arroyo Bretaño 2023). The theoretical precepts presented in the previous section allow us to study representative network texts, such as memes, video games, series and movies, social network posts or fanart as multimodal translations. Although this analysis is perfectly extrapolable to any form of expression or communication in which intertextuality mediates, it is the overwhelming influx of multimodal texts from the web that makes us find a fertile field for analysis.

The contextualization of these challenges, as well as the growing concern for the sociocultural factor in translation, has favoured, as we have already seen, the proliferation of numerous reflections on the validity of multimodal translation (Torop 2002; Kress 2010; Elleström 2021; Campbell & Vidal 2019, 2024, 2025; Boria *et al.* 2019; Vidal Claramonte 2017; Desblache 2019). In turn, this has allowed us to broaden the horizons of our field of study not only to further understand its nature, but also to shed light on the future of professional translation (Bassnett & Johnston 2019; Gentzler 2017, Katan 2015). It seems clear that multimodal translation is an academic and occupational approach with a future, and yet most of the current reflections on multimodal, intermedial, transmedial or intersemiotic translation have been more concerned with analysing cases to justify the validity of their study from translatology than with fostering the creation of an academic framework that looks at these realities aprioristically and toward translation, rather than from it. So far, we have focused more on describing intersemiotic translations than on promoting them or teaching how to do them, despite the fact that we inhabit a historical context marked by a remix culture (Jones 2016) in which this type of translation is constantly emerging in the hands of agents that have little or nothing to do with translation studies.

If we understand, with authors such as Gentzler or Hutcheon, that adaptation and translation can operate as functional synonyms, we consume multimodal translations recurrently in our daily lives. Let's think of series or movies that are reboots, remakes or free adaptations. As for music, we listen to songs on the radio that pretend to emulate sounds or textures of the music of the seventies, eighties, nineties or two thousand. Going further, we can even reflect how the way in which both individuals and companies communicate on social networks such as Instagram or TikTok is, very often, a repetition and recontextualization of textual templates and patterns. Just as memes, which are nothing but intersemiotic translations, are strongly rooted in sociocultural contexts.

In this sense, over the last few years the figure of the transcreator has become popular as a creative professional, usually from the advertising field, whose work consists of giving new lives to texts in new semiotic environments. It is worth asking why, in a context in which multimodal translations are proliferating, most translators do not carry them out.

We believe that to bring about this change, translation students should be trained in semiotic principles that make multimodal translations possible. Because such principles exist: if the translation student learns basic principles of colour theory, audiovisual or musical language, to name a few, they will be able to identify equivalent semiotic values between media.

After a brief review of the curricula of Spanish public universities that offer Translation and Interpreting courses, we have only found one that includes a subject on multimodal translation in its syllabus. There are seminars and specialty courses on intersemiotic translation, transcreation and adaptation, both in public universities and private schools, but given the social prevalence of the phenomenon of adaptation, we wonder if it is enough.

It is clear that, in the 21st century, the profession of translation has mutated. As it seems logical to train translators in computational linguistics in light of the progress of machine and AI-mediated translation, we believe that, given the cultural context we live in, students of Translation and Interpreting could benefit from training that includes the study of multimodal translation.

In order to promote a change that integrates multimodal visions in the teaching of translation, we believe that it is necessary, first and foremost, to foster multimodal literacy in the student body.

Just as human speech is a construct strongly influenced by social and historical conventions, all other communicative paths that can form texts are composed of semantic impulses that create random signifiers derived from canons and artistic traditions. In other words, if there is musical language and visual language, we must be able to draw equivalences between one and the other.

For example, in Western musical tradition, there are seven modes or scales that can be used to compose music. Each of these modes conveys a specific feeling to the listener. The most popular, the Ionian and Aeolian, have come to be called major and minor modes, respectively. And it has traditionally been accepted that the major mode conveys a feeling of joy and happiness, while the minor mode conveys a feeling of sadness (Hevner 1935).

On the other hand, it is accepted that colours convey different meanings depending on the culture (Trovato 2023). As a simple example, in the Western pictorial tradition warm colours, such as yellow, red, and orange, are associated with positive and happy feelings, and cold colours, such as blue, are associated with sad images.

Therefore, although it is a somewhat generic statement, we can draw a link of equivalence between warm colours and major modes, and between cold colours and minor modes.

Similarly, the history of cinema allows us to observe semiotic tendencies in the use of shots. As viewers, we can see that a fast zoom on a character generates a dramatic effect, whereas a slow zoom escalates

tension. If one use of the camera articulates a clear meaning, it should be possible to trace equivalence in any other communicative system.

These are just a few obvious examples that underscore the possibility of intersemiotic translation. However, even if the different semiotic modes are established and understood contrastively, it is worth asking how equivalence is produced between one and the other.

We acknowledge that such a shift in translation training is challenging at both educational and institutional levels, and it requires time and resources. Nevertheless, the existing literature on the topic should suffice to foster research groups and innovative educational projects that, slowly but surely, could begin to transpose theory into practice. While overhauling an entire degree syllabus to incorporate a new perspective may be a lengthy and gruelling process, we can start generating momentum in this direction through courses, lectures, seminars, and workshops —or even through slight modifications to existing subjects.

4. The concept of equivalence in multimodal texts

Therefore, the second objective to be pursued in order to integrate intersemiotic and multimodal approaches in translation teaching is a reconceptualization of the classical view of translatological equivalence.

As anticipated, our field has managed to rid itself of absolute notions of equivalence. Although we see it as the centre of our work, we understand that it is relative, that it is subject to temporal, geographical, cultural and social conditioning factors. We also assume that equivalence is, above all, subjective and lies in the individual: the translator is the one who ultimately decides that two signs are equivalent in a specific semiotic overturn due to a given hermeneutic criterion subject to a specific context.

On this basis, it is somewhat complex to theorize about what equivalence is, beyond being able to affirm that it is a pragmatic instant rather than a tangible objective: equivalence is generated, not pursued. Even so, it is easy to locate and discuss it when faced with spoken or written texts when we work on interlinguistic translations, since the nature of the linguistic sign makes it easier to adapt new representations to referenced objects if the translator is able to mimic the interpreter's gaze. In other words, the existence of dictionaries means that, although debatable and malleable, terminological equivalence between languages is always possible and easy to find.

Therefore, when we begin to explore the intricacies of multimodal translation, it becomes more complex to glimpse what equivalence is, how it happens, and when it occurs. While the texts by Gentzler (2017) and Hutcheon (2006) allow us to broadly understand any intertextual adaptation as an intersemiotic translation and make it possible to speak of multimodality in translation, the analyses falter if we cannot encircle the ways in which an adaptation is functionally equivalent to the text on which it is based.

Returning once again to the prosaic example of the dictionary, it is difficult to assert that an actor corresponds to the description of a character in a novel or that a poem equates to a melody (as seen in *L'après-midi d'un faune* and its various intertextual iterations) without a logical foundation that establishes a connection between the two. Intersemiotic translations particularly expose the subjective reality of equivalence, where the creative implications of the adapter, rewriter, or translator become most evident. Therefore, the key to theorizing about multimodal or intersemiotic equivalence appears to lie in the subjectivity of the interpreter.

Moreover, there seems to be an imbalance between what can be considered a translational unit in interlinguistic translations and what has traditionally been treated as a translational unit in intersemiotic translations. While interlinguistic translation seeks to reflect a term or, in specific cases, a phrase accurately in the target language, the myriad significant semiotic forms unrelated to words complicates the reduction of translatable elements to a singular unit across semiotic systems.

Thus, we propose that the conceptualization of multimodal equivalence asks for a polyphonic deconstruction of texts. To systematically analyse intersemiotic translations, we must focus not on when or how equivalence occurs, but rather on what is being sought as equivalent, rooted in the hermeneutic subjectivity inherent in the very concept of equivalence. Due to the inherent limitations of modal shifts, it is impossible to generate the appearance that a target multimodal text equivalently represents its source text at all levels within the destination culture. While we might venture to assert that the English translation of *Don Quixote* occupies the place of the original within Anglophone cultures (without disregarding transcultural nuances), we cannot claim that the translation of a poem into a painting or a melody into a dance equivalently reflects their originals within target cultures. This is because the purpose of such forms of rewriting, unlike interlinguistic translations, is not to replace the original in another culture but to extend the reach of the original within the same culture from which it originates.

The foundation of interlinguistic translation, particularly since the 1980s, has involved associating languages with the cultures in which they are used. However, multimodal perspectives on translation are intriguing precisely because they subvert this paradigm. The notion of prolonging the life of texts in these translations is not contingent upon facilitating comprehension but rather stems from individual creative impulses. Although these impulses are not immune to late capitalist economic dynamics, analysing the translational foundation of these impulses is refreshing, as it broadens the horizons of our field of study.

When we begin to ask what elements are chosen for translation in intersemiotic rewriting, we quickly encounter the notion that translation in these cases arises from the translator's desire to rewrite, rather than from the original text's need to be translated. Intersemiotic and multimodal translations emerge strictly from the authorial agency of the interpreter-transcreator. Therefore, to locate the equivalences that occur, we must analyse the interpreter's perspective.

Due to the aforementioned constraints, in intersemiotic translations, it is essential to strategically select significant features to transpose into another semiotic system. To understand how this occurs, we must deconstruct the texts at play through three potential values: the text as pretext, the text as hypertext, and the text as hypotext.

The very idea of a text is highly malleable. Depending on the communicative context, an isolated word from a five-hundred-page novel can attain textual value if subjected to appropriate analysis. Similarly, understanding a film as an audiovisual text allows us to analyse its soundtrack independently as a musical text. This malleable conceptualization of text forms the basis of the deconstruction we propose: any potentially translatable text serves as a pretext. Within that text, infinite subtexts exist depending on where the interpreter chooses to focus their attention; each of these subtexts serves as potential hypotexts that collectively form the hypertext that functions as the pretext.

Thus, the entirety of a video game can be understood as its hypertext, composed in turn of the hypotexts of the soundtrack, the gameplay, and the visual elements. Moreover, those same hypotexts can function as hypertexts if a hypothetical interpreter chooses to focus on the individual hypotext of each song, the orchestration of the soundtrack, or the colour palette and cinematics in the visual aspect (Arroyo Bretaño 2023).

From this perspective, it becomes relatively easy to identify which significant element someone has chosen to translate and for what purpose, or, in other words, which hypotext that person has selected as the pretext for developing a derived hypertext.

And so, returning to a previously mentioned example, to understand the intersemiotic transformation that Debussy enacted on Mallarmé's poem in *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, we must comprehend which significant elements of the poem (phonetic cadences, metrical feet, use of images) Debussy selected as hypotexts to create a transcreated hypertext that expands upon the original.

It is therefore urgent, in order to conceptualize a transmedia equivalence that allows us to analyse this translational genre, to understand equivalence as the selective and subjective hermeneutic moment that emanates from the will of the interpreter-transcreator. We must begin to perceive translations (in general, but with particular emphasis on intersemiotic ones) as summative accumulations of recontextualized hypotexts into newly minted hypertexts.

Ultimately, this compels us to understand every translation as a transcreation in which the translator mediates between the original author and the consumer of the text. While debatable, this authorial implication of the translator (whether we call them a rewriter, transcreator, or adapter) can vary based on purpose and assignments. However, given the specified peculiarities, the rewriter's signature carries more weight in intersemiotic translations, since equivalence is less subject to agreements about linguistic signs and is more influenced by the perspective applied to widely malleable artistic canons. Indeed, while there are general agreements across all artistic languages that mediate implicit communicative forms, those semiotic continents generally lend themselves to sophisticated linguistic tools with broad applicability.

In musical language, for instance, modes impart character to melodies: the Aeolian mode is perceived as nostalgic and mournful, yet it is the responsibility of the interpreter-transcreator to apply it in various ways to recreate, according to their vision, the melancholy of an expressionist landscape or the bitterness of an elegy. Similarly, certain instrumental timbres can suggest specific contexts: brass instruments convey a regal and military quality, as do certain types of percussion, but it is the subjectivity of the interpreter-transcreator that decides whether Prince Hamlet is represented by these instruments or others.

These decisions stem from a knowledge of the canon that articulates the use of these languages, as well as a filtered understanding of the original text. By examining the degree of attention that the transcreator intends to give to different details, we can comprehend which significant elements of the original have been given their own textual entity for use as transcreable hypotexts; we can study how the underlying sememe has been channelled to transport it to a new semiotic environment. In this way, we can analyse what is genuinely of interest to translation studies in intersemiotic translations: why certain elements have been transcreated and in what manner.

This reconceptualization of equivalence pushes us to shift the angle of translational criticism, which underpins descriptive approaches in our field: it becomes more challenging to speak of good or bad translations when the transfer has an intermedial nature because judgments cannot be categorical when we acknowledge that equivalence arises under the authorial signature of the one establishing it. For instance, a transcreator's opinion that the blue colour of the night in a nineteenth-century landscape equates musically to a broken cadence from the fifth to the sixth degree may be critiqued on a stylistic level but never in terms of meaning, since that meaning emanates from the author of the translation. Thus, the aim of this reconceptualization is to promote a didactic approach grounded in analytical understanding rather than critical judgment.

Should future manuals on intersemiotic or multimodal translation be developed, they would necessarily be understood as manuals of adaptation. This, far from being a failure for translation studies, would be decidedly positive because the value of such manuals would lie in exploring and teaching the art of semiotic transfer through inherently translational tools. Compiling volumes with an encyclopedic aim for the study of intersemiotic translations would foster, on the one hand, the recognition of our field of study and, on the other, a new shift in translation studies that consolidates the already established certainty that translation is, at all times, a creative act. Creating from something already created, creating with full intertextual awareness, yes, but ultimately, creating.

To achieve this, as we propose, the reconceptualization of equivalence relies on two precepts developed herein: first, we must expand the notion of text to a polyphonic understanding that assumes every text is divisible into as many texts as the interpreter-transcreator's vision requires, as well as acknowledging that every sign is potentially a text under the scrutiny of someone who grants it such a dimension; second, we must accept that equivalence, although grounded in canonical precepts, cannot aspire to absolutism in multimodal communicative environments because it consistently depends on the authorial impetus of the one who facilitates it.

5. Conclusions

If we make future translators aware that equivalence is merely an intersubjective hermeneutic moment, we can enable these translators, guided by the principles of multimodal literacy in their education, to draw creative equivalences between semiotic systems. This would allow for the adaptation and transcreation tasks typically carried out by individuals outside the field of translation to be effectively undertaken by trained translators.

Multimodal literacy, for its part, is relatively straightforward to achieve and is based on the same didactic criteria as the awareness of spoken language that arises during instruction in spelling, grammar, and literary traditions. Given the sociocultural significance that the audiovisual medium has acquired, the two primary languages for potential literacy development would be musical language and visual language.

In both cases, these are complex disciplines that justify their own training pathways. However, as an introduction, just as future translators are not expected to have detailed knowledge of universal literature during their training but rather a general and critical overview that allows them to explore their craft, there are fundamental aspects in both codes that are easily acquired and could broaden students' cognitive horizons.

In musical language, a basic understanding of harmony, the compositional traditions of source and target cultures, and the timbral characteristics of common instruments, for example, could help comprehend how a soundtrack intersemiotically relates to a film's footage or to the dialogue of its characters.

In visual language, foundational knowledge of colour theory, Gestalt psychology, visual syntax, and cinematic language could similarly assist students in contextualizing adaptation processes. Authors such as Kress (2010) have studied the phenomenon of visual multimodality in depth, and their work can be extremely useful when dealing with this didactic approach.

These examples, focusing on visual and auditory elements, are fundamental and have been presented somewhat simplistically. However, there are also gustatory codes that foster a rich culinary semiotics, which is particularly relevant today. Touch, too, is governed by codes that can help in understanding concepts such as "bookishness", as discussed by Jessica Pressman (2020).

There are as many complex semiotic codes as there are ways in which humans have found to express themselves artistically and socially. While acquiring in-depth knowledge of each of these codes may be unfeasible within a four-year degree program, we believe that providing students with basic literacy in the most common semiotic modes, apart from verbal language, during an era when the audiovisual is central to culture, can significantly expand their academic and professional horizons.

Moreover, if we continue to foster broad perspectives on equivalence from the classroom that help us understand that, far from absolutism and binary thinking, the selection of equivalent pairs always depends on the subjective and individual choices made by each translator based on their own experiences and interests, we will be able to recognize the most fundamental principle of multimodal translation: it is always an adaptation that, like any other work, involves shared authorship.

Studied in this manner—as a hermeneutic moment and a process rather than as a result—we can untangle the intersemiotic complexities of multimodal adaptations. This perspective on equivalence, which arises from the polyphonic deconstruction of the idea of text based on the translator's viewpoint, also enables a shift in focus in translational analysis, which facilitates the study of intersemiotic transposition from a translational perspective.

While academia has spent considerable effort debating the limits of translation, the level of respect owed to the original, and what is acceptable or not as translation, those who have facilitated multimodal translations outside of translation studies seem to grasp this intuitively: there are as many Spider-Men as there are individuals willing to adapt Spider-Man; as many Batmen as trends demand, and as many Ghostbusters as it is financially viable to produce. And this is merely to cite obvious examples.

We can also discuss how musical artists like Rosalía have fused a medieval novel, Kanye West's take on trap music, and Camarón's flamenco into a single album through translational processes. Additionally, the rise of contemporary culinary experiences has led to an increase in culinary rewritings that allow one to experience the fusion of Madrid and Tokyo.

Furthermore, we can analyse the existence of countless content creators who have built careers studying how Dua Lipa is bringing 1970s funk into the present, or how John Williams anticipates narrative developments in *Star Wars* through his music, which is at the same time clearly inspired by Holst. All of this indicates that there are countless creative and commercial possibilities in which translational and intersemiotic perspectives have much to contribute.

This study aims to initiate a discussion around the theoretical challenges of intersemiotic and multimodal translations. We believe that the growing academic interest in intersemiotic transposition facilitates the implementation of multimodal translation pedagogy. Therefore, we contend that, through courses and seminars, if not all subjects within curricula, it is possible to normalize the expansion of the semiotic horizons of translation students. This, in turn, would promote the professionalization of an increasingly prevalent form

of translation in the day-to-day life of the 21st century. Just as current Translation and Interpretation degrees assume that students are literate and knowledgeable about the oral and written traditions of the languages they command, we must encourage multimodal literacy to guide translation practice toward a broad and multimedia cultural future in which our field and our work extend beyond mere words. This, linked to a view of equivalence as a hermeneutic moment, could elevate the status of translators as authors.

The goal of this shift is primarily to enhance the agency of translation studies within contemporary textual dynamics; to ensure that, if culture in the Internet era is post-translated, intertextual, and multimodal, our field of study can foster and claim it to expand its horizons. While works on transmedia creation, experimental translation and palimpsestic rewriting are already widening the academic scope of the discipline Translation Studies, there is still much to be done on a didactic level. If we get to normalize such visions on the classroom, we will be promoting the arrival of a generation of professionals well prepared to meet the semiotic challenges of the intricate postmodern cultural landscape. This can be achieved by incorporating notions of multimodal semiosis in the training itineraries of translation degrees, courses and seminaries.

As we propose, acquiring multimodal literacy during formative stages is essential for the inclusion of translators in the palimpsestic processes that shape 21st-century global culture. To this end, it remains necessary to promote the development of courses, workshops, seminars, research groups, and innovative educational projects on the subject that can begin to transpose theory into classroom practice.

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