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Multimodal corpora input to translation training

Abstract

Subscribing to current views in that ignoring the image(s) means ignoring significant elements of a message potential, we set out to highlight some main features of multimodal texts that modern translators must decode as to deliver high quality translation products. Featuring the diachronic transformations multimodal texts underwent within different time frames, the present paper aims at mapping out the contemporary dynamics of multimodal texts with a view to the challenges and resources multimodal corpus-based investigations bring to the field of translation. Zooming in, we embark on the design of a translation training research trial in an attempt to test the applicability degree of dedicated software to multimodal corpus analysis. Raising students' awareness on the vaster and richer field of Corpus-Based Translation Studies, special attention is paid to the development of trainees' technological competence within the contemporary framework of the multifaceted translator's competence.

Keywords: *multimodal texts, Corpus-Based Translation Studies, dedicated software, translation competence*

1. Introduction

Before adhering to the latest vistas on the development of virtual translation environments and products, as well as their harmonisation with different sociocultural prerequisites, we highlight retrospectively the fundamental input of the *Representational Function of Language* as formulated by Bühler's (1934/1990) salient *Sprachtheorie*. The tripartite model developed by the German psycho-linguist methodises the three main functions of the linguistic sign underpinning each communicative event, i.e. the informative (Darstellung), expressive (Ausdruck) and vocative (Appell) function. In the same vein, Jakobson (1959/1966) tackles the functions of language and establishes six socio-cultural variables as main regulatory parameters to achieve verbal communication. According Jakobson (*ibid*), a theory of language is based on a theory of translation, and, each of the six parameters triggers a different language function. Thus, the communication context determines the referential function

(VÎLCEANU 2003), while the addressor stands in direct relation to the emotive function, reaching the addressee (the conative function) via a connection channel, i.e the phatic function, towards a shared communication code, respectively the metalingual function and the linguistic expression of the message - labeled as the poetic function (see MAYBIN & SWANN 2010: 45).

Premised on the early 1980's functionalist approach to map out a "framework for a general theory of translation" (NORD 2012: 27) that materialised under the collaborative effort carried out by Reiss and Vermeer (1984) in what prominent translation scholars would consider the paradigm shift towards modern Translation Studies, we share the re-interpreting views on *Skopostheorie* (VERMEER 1989), to meet the contemporary technology-driven societal needs.

Setting the extra-linguistic context and the purpose (*scope*) of the target language text (TT) as the key parameters to deliver successful product-and client-oriented translation services, current translation strategies tend to replace the target-reader objective with the realization of an integrative response, generated by a multimodal perception of the target culture audience. Based on Massaro's (1987) interpretation of the communicative event, we approach modern translation perspectives as joint interdisciplinary endeavours to code - decode and recode multimodal perceptions, since the target audience tends instinctively to process not only written messages, but also images, sounds and/or performances.

Modern translators have been constantly challenged not only to observe the source language text (ST) form, content and function transference into the target language (TL), but to successfully render the interplay of the modes the message and the function of a source-language multimodal text in order to secure at least as a high impacting reaction among the target-culture audience as with the SL audience. Subsequently, cognition is activated through the auditory and visual interface, while experiencing stimuli sent via various modalities. Under the circumstances, (MASSARO 1987) argues that an accurate interpretation of any communicative event would fail, if the nonverbal components of interaction (auditory and visual perception) were not taken into account.

2. Translating multimodal texts: a modern approach to earlier norms

Although programmatic initiatives to establish clear cut frontiers among long-established and young disciplines have been judiciously carried out throughout past and more recent decades, inter-and transdisciplinarity views have been reshaping traditional subjects' identities, fostering an integrative research approach that incorporates cooperation between scholars and practitioners within different fields of research. Functioning as a main representative of this perspective, multimodality has been addressed as a shared concept, "omnipresent in most of the communicative contexts in which humans engage" (VENTOLA *ET AL.* 2004: 1) ever since ancient times, if it were only to mention the Egyptian hieroglyphs that embodied visual, spatial and textual shapes transmitted via papyrus, clay, metal or leather support, depending on the content and the context a certain message was communicated (LUTKEWITTE 2020: 1), the Medieval manuscripts that incorporated multimodal messages via calligraphic and illustrative elements (JONES 2013: 3), or the more recent websites, audiovisual products and videogames.

Given this background, a translation-oriented approach to the concept of multimodality calls upon translation theorists and practitioners to cross disciplinary boundaries in the search of integrated research methods to meet the complex requirements of multimodal translation. In terms of translation, multimodality challenges scholars and professionals to simultaneously decode the written message and transfer into verbal information the visually perceived stimuli. We share Littau's (2011) perspective that once the introduction of state-of-the art communication modes - from papyrus and manuscripts to web-based texts and hyperlinking, theories of translation will undergo reconfiguration to upgrade critical and analytical toolkits, and test novel translation policies.

Defined by Gibbons (2012: 8) as "the coexistence of multiple modes" manifested in a certain background, or as the reflex process of a target audience to decode "the coexisting modes", contemporary translation-oriented views on the dynamics of *multimodal* texts enfold the pivotal contribution of the functionalist approach and link the multiplication of modern *multimodal* texts to the systematic classification of the four main text types as featured by Reiss (1971/2000) and adopted later on by translation scholars such as Newmark (1981) or Munday (2001). According to their

communicative intention, texts are divided into *informative* texts - as "plain communication of facts" (MUNDAY ibid: 73-75), aimed at transmitting factual information via a logical and referential language dimension; *expressive* texts that rely on the aesthetic dimension of language to communicate the author's intention to the readership, and *operative/vocative* texts (parallel terminology - see NEWMARK 1981: 15) characterized by "the inducing of behavioural responses" to persuade the resership/receiver of the message to act in a certain way. The fourth type of texts, as defined by Reiss (1971/2000), comes to supplement the above-mentioned functions with visual images, sounds and pictures, labeled by author as *audiomedial* texts.

Departing from the Katharina Reiss' (1971/2000: 164–165) initial classification of text types to meet the communicative function of the target text into the target language, *audio medial* texts have been ulteriorly featured by the same author as *hyper* texts that can either inform, instruct, persuade or enchant the target readership. However, further approaches to text type and language function in translation would emphasise the role of *hybrid* texts, since authors such as Reiss (1971/2000), Newmark (1981), Bassnett (1997), Munday (2001), Snell-Hornby (2006) argue that each text implies the coaction of at least two functions. Although the functions of the ST and TT text may change, multimodal aspects need to be detected and transferred into the target culture to meet the socio-cultural values, norms, expectancies of the audience. The target cultural dimension will give rise to further challenges, particularly with respect to what would not seem to get translated. Hence, beyond *intralingual* and *intersemiotic* translation (see JAKOBSON 1959/1966) of multimodal texts, Zanettin (2011) advocates that the visual elements of such multimodal texts are subject to alteration, editing and even removal, most often to comply with the target socio-cultural landscape.

In other words, we grow aware that the selection of the most appropriate translation strategy when commissioned with the translation of a multimodal text is rather challenging. Equipped with what until recently scholars would define as a text-based *modus operandi*, translators are now facing interdisciplinary requirements to accommodate a multimodal message into a target-culture. Accordingly, Snell-Hornby (2009: 44) features *multimodal* texts as complex messages aimed to circulate via different media, channels and modes among a target audience, taking into account that the design and development of such texts involve the fusion of visual and sound elements, alongside different graphic sign systems.

To put in a nutshell, *multimodality*, and *multimodal* texts correspondingly, would lack any impact at all, if the coexisting modes did not effectively interchange while being decoded by the target audience, since multimodality has been defined as the receiver cognitive-based perception of the interaction of modes (RODRÍGUEZ-INÉS 2017).

2.1 Multimodal shared objectives: TS and CTS

Engaged in the constant upgrading of the communication framework, which tends to be relocated within virtual environments via digitized modes, crowdsourcing and cloud-based platforms, translators need to keep up with both challenges and opportunities. Under the circumstances, the translation of multimodal texts does not only complement the service provision agenda of the translation market, but multimodality itself becomes a resource for translation. In this respect, López Rodríguez et al. (2013) highlight the crucial role played by images in the development of current thematic maps and word banks. According to the authors, the dynamics of the contemporary trans-disciplinary specialised and highly specialised terminology would not be properly understood, if both visual and written components were not taken into consideration. Similarly, the translation of audiovisual texts becomes, beyond the challenges commissioned, a resource for the translating team (translators, sound and image technicians, editors, etc.) to design and further develop specialised thematic maps, dedicated software and computer assisted tools.

The challenge and the potential generated by the translation of multimodal texts involves the active participation of Translation Studies researchers set out to develop tailor-cut strategies and tools best applied to transfer the interplay of text, image and sound from the source setting into the target cultural landscape.

Concurrently, challenging tasks have been carried out within the relatively recent field of Corpus-Based Translation Studies (CTS), geared towards message intertraffic from and into different sociocultural contexts "as a mediated communicative event". (BAKER 1996: 243) Under the new "conceptual paradigm", CTS ambitions to investigate and develop "complementary theoretical

approaches and methodologies grown out of the cross-fertilisation with new fields of studies as varied as pragmatics, critical linguistics, postcolonialism, gender studies and globalisation", while observing "well-established areas of enquiry" such as the polysystem, skopos, poststructuralism perspectives (LAVIOSA 2004: 29) seem to be more receptive to the stimuli conveyed by multimodal texts, although CTS experts still cannot answer all the questions regarding multimodality.

Endorsing that "multimodality cannot be described as a monolithic concept" as it "covers a wide variety of genres, forms of communication, and combinations of modes and semiotic resources", Tuominen et al. (2018: 4) subscribe Tymoczko's (2007, pp. 83–90) tagging of translation as a "cluster concept" and share the high applicability of this concept, since translation "cannot simply be defined in terms of necessary and sufficient features" (TYMOCZKO 2007: 85), particularly due to the diversity and pluriformity translation products manifest.

3. Featuring multimodal corpora: design and investigation issues

Transplanting the *cluster*-concept from the field of Translation Studies to Corpus-Based Translation Studies, we grow aware that the mission of a corpus designer and/or researcher involves the development of a multifaceted competence to meet the requirements of a wide range of interdisciplinary tasks with overlapping responsibilities. However, such an approach would contribute to the constant updating nature of CTS, faced with the investigation of most varied contexts, genres, and multimodal messages as well as their most appropriate transfer into the target language communicative framework. Moreover, such perspectives open the doors to adaptive investigation models to cover the broad spectrum of multimodal texts. Within this framework, contemporary corpus linguists and translation researchers plead for the design and testing of integrategrative analysis models that incorporate both verbal and non-verbal characteristics of multimodal messages (BAKER 1996, LAVIOSA 2004, PÉREZ GONZÁLEZ 2014, FANTINUOLI & ZANETTIN 2011, O'SULLIVAN, 2013; etc.) Translation scholars and corpora researchers argue therefore that the translation of multimodal texts involves first a close investigation of the connection between the visual and written components. Adopting this procedure, further expert recommendations envisage a hybrid-type analysis that relies

on internal and cross-disciplinary methods. Thus, for example, Baumgarten (2008) resorts to linguistics, visual analysis and cinematic narrative as she sets out to investigate the interconnection between visual and verbal elements in film translation. However, multimodal corpus design and investigation are still facing a series of conceptual and technological challenges with a view to the incorporation of multimodal analysis models within a corpus linguistics methodology.

3.1 Design and analysis issues

In terms of corpus design, multimodal texts are still raising some critical issues, when it comes, for example, to multimodal comparable corpora, since corpus designers claim that it is almost impossible to align an ST automatically with a TT, given the variations that may occur between ST and TT modes.

As far as corpus analysis is concerned, CTS researchers such as Olohan (2002), Laviosa (2010), Jones (2013), Rodríguez-Inés (2017) and others highlight the technological advances in translation-oriented corpus analysis and the reliable outputs generated via computer-assisted investigation of monomodal corpora. The achievement of valid results was secured following text structuring into paragraphs or lines, at different language levels (morphology, lexical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, etc.) or on structural aspects of a text (paragraphs, lines, etc.). It has been argued that even though cutting-edge technology has considerably contributed to the investigation of multimodal texts, enabling the user to establish some basic relations between image and text or image and sound, it seems that even the latest generation of dedicated software may still lack of options. A central issue in this respect is text partition into analysis segments, as such segments do not render, for example, the semantic annotation. Moreover, integrated research studies reported that current computer-assisted tools would need further upgrading in order to generate detailed semiotics-oriented results, particularly when a multimodal text involves the simultaneous analysis of wordings, images and sounds, i.e. the establishing of the semiotic codes before rendering it into the target language.

Also, previous investigations of multimodal corpora signaled the need for complex tagging algorithms. Although the annotation and tagging systems of monomodal corpora have become

completely automatic, generating resourceful information with a click of a button, multimodal text tagging remains a challenging task to accomplish. The complexity of such processes is mainly triggered by the socio-cultural dimension of the translation competence, and respectively by the identification of the word-image-sound culture-related interconnections and their accommodation into the target language. At text level, Valdés (2008) claims that localization could be a highly effective strategy to transfer multimodal messages and semiotic codes from one cultural background into another cultural setting. The author argues that in the case of advertisements, for example, we could keep the modes, i.e. images, but the TT would far more impacting, if we replaced the ST images with images more familiar to the TT culture. Again, we grow aware that a close study of the word-image and/or word-sound interaction specific to both ST and TT socio-cultural realities secures high-quality outcomes, even if, sometimes, we needed either cu cut or to ad images or symbols that do not exist in the ST.

However, even in such cases corpus researchers still need to perform the tagging stage manually, hence a rather cumbersome and prone to errors process that does nor secure coherent results. Sharing this perspective, Hovy and Lavid (2010: 30) claim that a lack of automatic tagging systems in multimodal corpus analysis may lead to controversy due to a lower degree of accuracy, and, implicitly, to less reliable theoretical frameworks. In the same spirit, Evison (2010) argues that such research approaches are applicable to only small and specialised multimodal corpora. Although, on the other hand, some insist on this particular feature of multimodal corpora, i.e. smaller size, to highlight the efficiency of comparison-based research methods that generated more filtered and accurate results to activate bottom-up analysis approaches towards a wider conceptual vision of the research question.

4.   **An integrated multimodal corpus analysis**

With a view to raise our students' awareness of the constant need to develop and update a "harmonised translator's multilayered competence" (VÎLCEANU 2016: 96)to meet the current translation market needs, we set out to run a task-based project work that builds up future translators' technological proficiency. In line with the 2017 EMT Competence Framework, we aim at developing our students "knowledge and skills used to implement present and future translation technologies",

guiding them to use the most relevant IT applications, and adapt rapidly to new tools and IT resources, so as to become independent and self-reliant users of search engines, corpus-based tools, text analysis tools and CAT tools that enable them "pre-process, process and manage files and other media/sources as part of the translation, e.g. video and multimedia files, handle web technologies" (https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/emt_competence_fwk_2017_en_web.pdf)

Our project envisages the design and investigation of a small multimodal corpus, in order to test students' involvement degree, on the one hand, and the applicability degree of dedicated analysis software to small multimodal corpora.

The project implementation was achieved via the MAXQDA 2020. As raw research resources we decided for a 2016 VPRO documentary - in English, with Romanian subtitling, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69JXP4tnBMo.

After importing both the source language video (EN) and the target language transcript (RO) into the software (see Figure 1 below), students were asked to segment and encode both the video and the transcript observing the research parameters illustrated in Table 1 below.
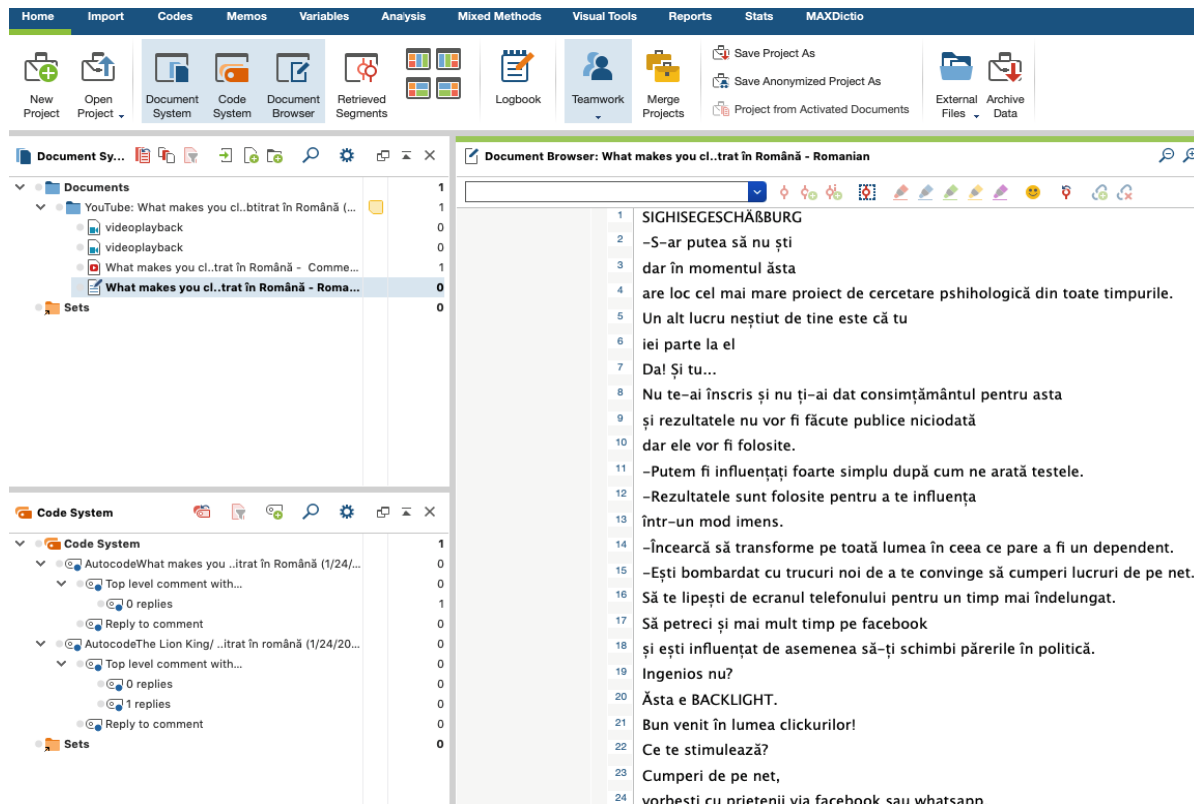
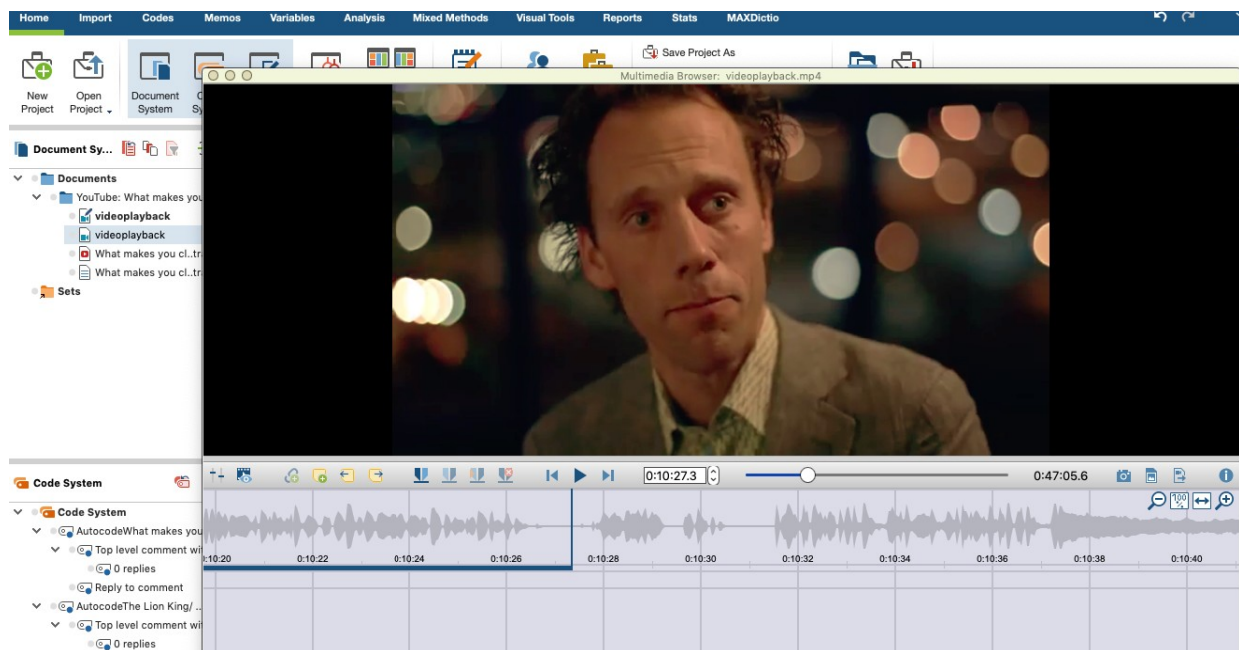**Figure 1a: Corpus design - Resource import**

Figure 1b: Corpus design - Resource import

Transcript (RO)		Video (EN)		
		mimics and gestures	mimics and gestures	mimics and gestures
lexical level	localisation	%	%	%
	exoticisation	%	%	%
	neutralisation	%	%	%
syntactic level	localisation	%	%	%
	exoticisation	%	%	%
	neutralisation	%	%	%
culture-related items	localisation	%	%	%
	exoticisation	%	%	%
	neutralisation	%	%	%

Table 1: Multimodal synchronization degrees

The features provided by the software enabled students to establish for each of the parameters set a degree of synchronization between the source language video and the target language transcript by analysing the translation strategy/strategies applied.

To achieve their objectives, students had first to segment the video and the transcript by selecting the Code System feature. At this project stage, students were able to allocate a colour-based code for each of the parameters set, hence to segment the multimodal corpus almost automatically.

Thus, a specific colour was assigned to each research parameter: localisation, exoticisation, neutralisation. Furthermore the Code System feature also assisted users to resort to tagging by adding a Code memo for each segment established (see Figure 2 and Figure 3 below).
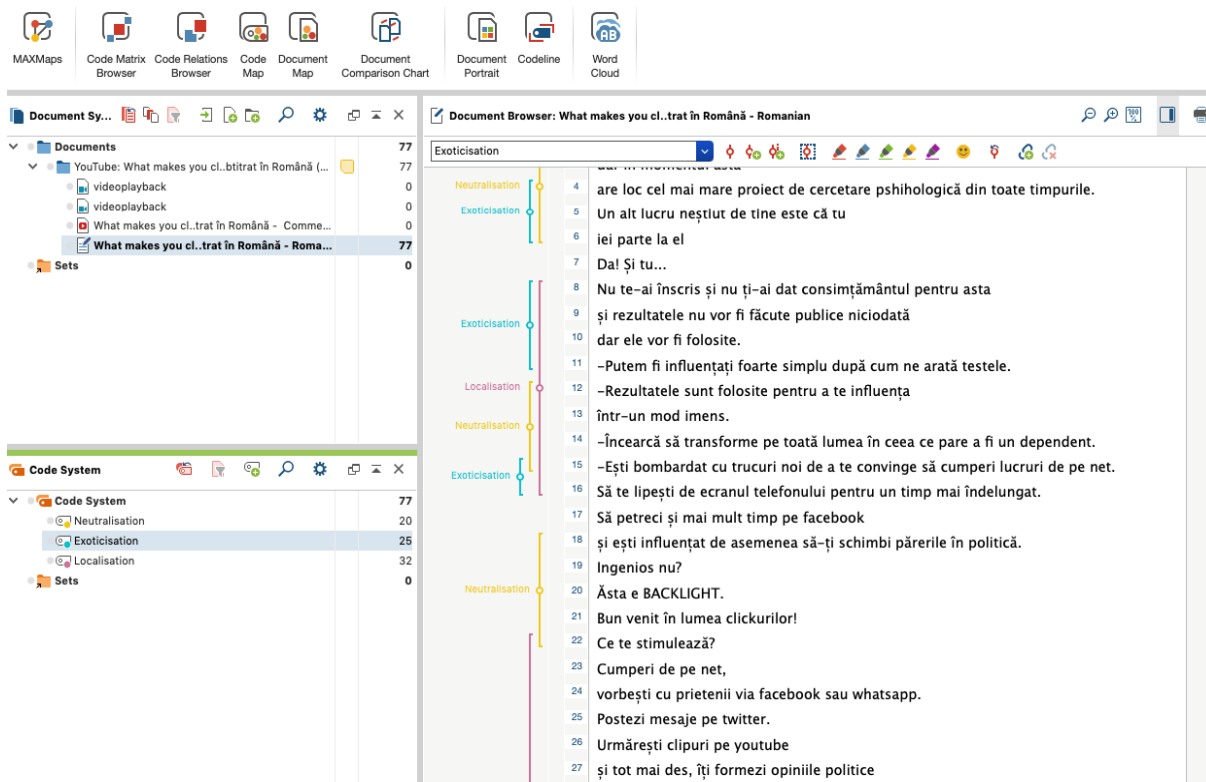
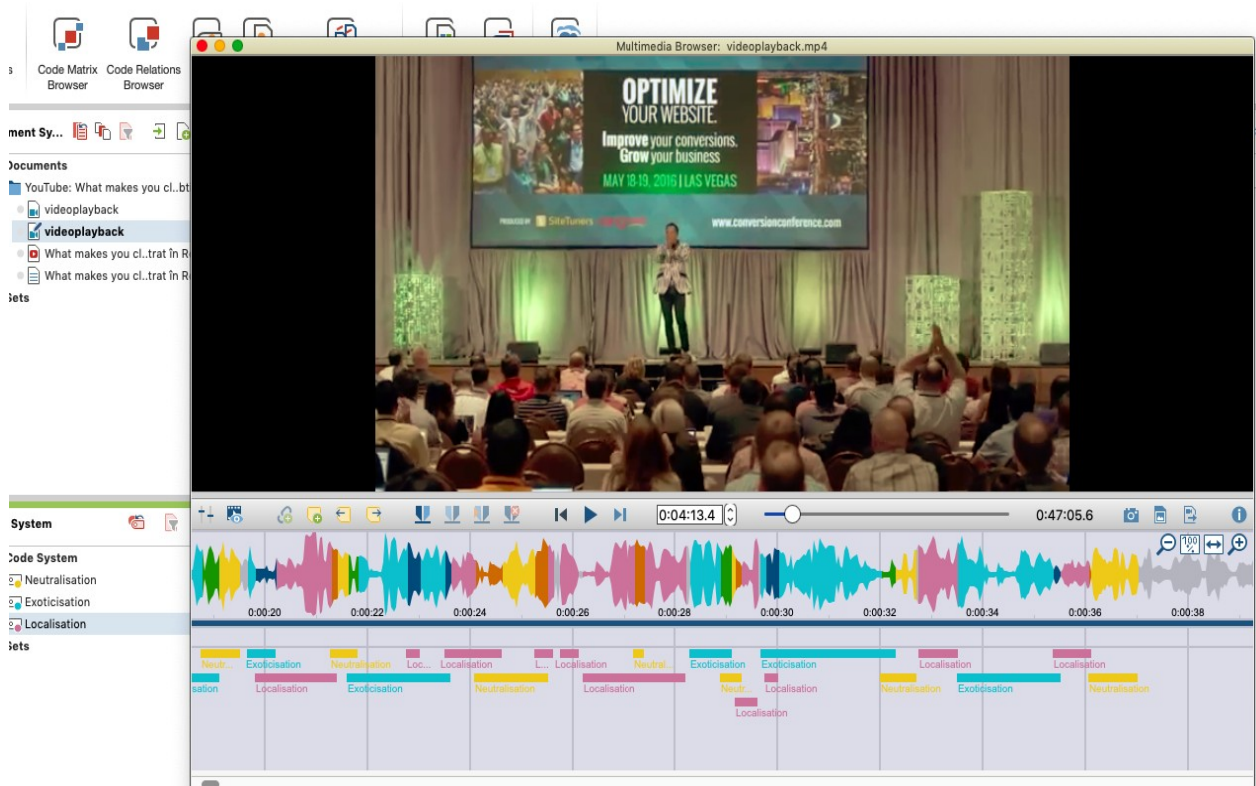**Figure 2: Text encoding - segment tagging**

Figure 3: Video encoding - segment tagging

After the segmenting and encoding stage, the students could select one of the Visual Tools features to automatically generate a Document Portrait, a Code Relation Map or a Document Comparison Chart, thus visualizing the multimodal synchronization degrees as related to the parameters set (see Figure 4 below).

It is worth mentioning that the software enables users to work simultaneously within the same project from different devices via the Teamwork feature. Thus, each project member can work on a part of the project, segmenting, encoding, taggig and kepp real-time communication with other team memebrs.
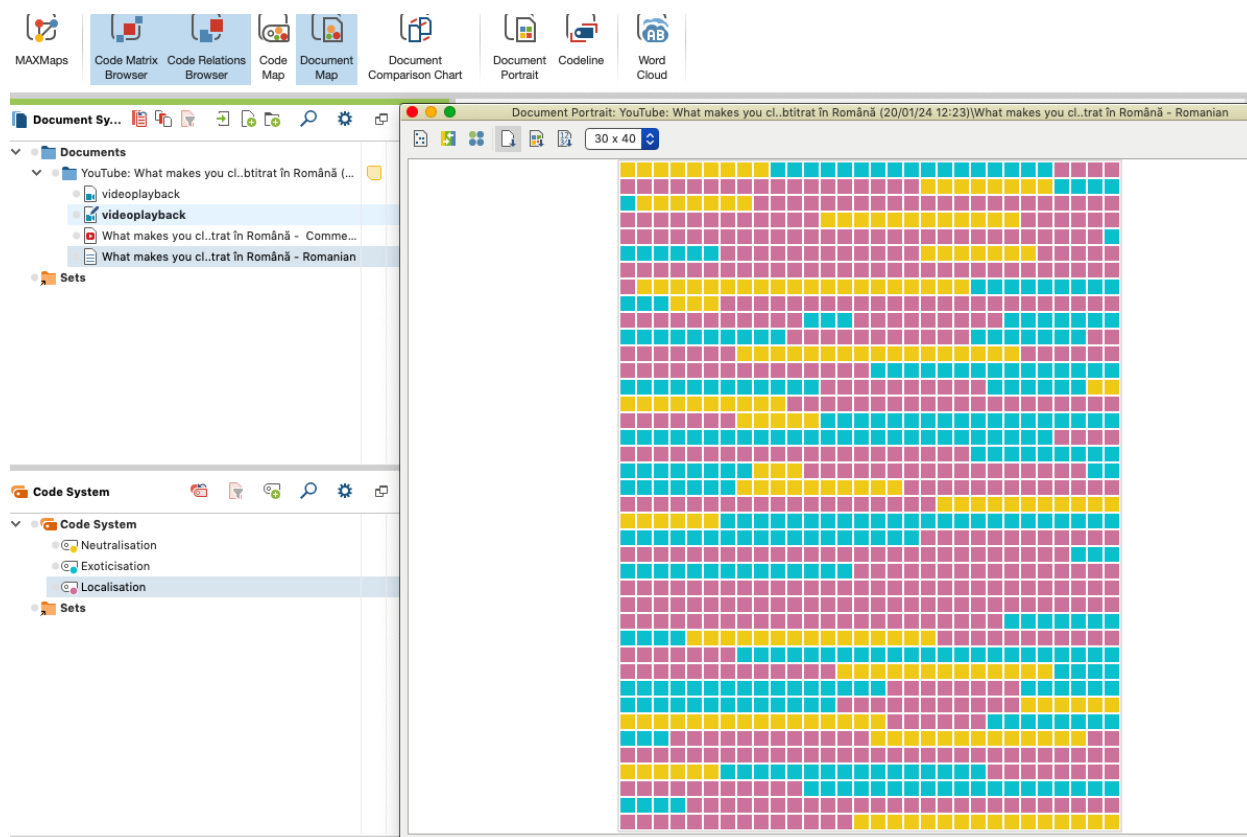
Figure 4: Document portrait

Interpreting the results obtained, the students could establish that the highest correlation degree between the source language multimodal corpus and the target corpus is achieved at lexical level, most frequently via localisation, while face mimics and gestures are synchronized with the transtex text. Syntactically, correlation was achieved by means of neutralisation, while synchronization was obtained in terms of image sequence vs. subtitling. In terms of cultural accommodation, no replacement, cut or image addition was encountered. However, the cultural inputs were transferred at language level, via localisation 54 % and exoticisation 46%.

In terms of students' active involvement in the research project, we could record a higher interest and cooperation compared to the more classical training methods. Beyond the novelty of the research project, we highlight that students' interest increased almost proportionally with the growth of the project, motivated by the user-friendly interface and the factual data generated by the software.

5. Conclusion

Profiled as an intrinsically versatile field of research, Corpus-Based Translation Studies brings in the spotlight contemporary design and development needs for cross-functional methods and tools to secure "the growing range of language services" (EMT COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK 2017: 4) to comply with the contemporary technological and societal upgrading trends. Moreover, the integrative approach fostered by CTS towards niche fields of research underpins a solid translator education and training to meet contemporary individual, societal or institutional requirements, enhancing at the same time the nature of translation as a target of research towards innovative and ambitious goals.

The theoretical framework and the development of our trial research project focused on the translation-oriented particularities of multimodal texts as revealed by corpus-based analysis. Although, corpus-based investigations of multimodal texts and, subsequently, of comparable multimodal corpora still require further technological developments in terms of mode alignment, segmentation and modes tagging, we share the perspective that corpus-based investigations have grown as reliable research strategies for sustainable multimodal translation research.

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