"Omnibus": A cross-modal experience between translation and adaptation

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ABSTRACT

We consider the notions of translation and adaptation, and the challenges and limits of achieving new representations in other media that do justice to the original. Our discussion focuses on a cross-modal translation and adaptation experience that breaks new ground in its attempt to transmit concepts and emotions simultaneously through various channels. We present "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017), a co-created multi-sensory performance incorporating vertical dance, sound scape, and bilingual audio description. This was based on children's drawings inspired by Roald Dahl's writings and Quentin Blake's illustrations. We discuss the challenges of such a multi-step transfer that incorporates elements of both adaptation and translation. By considering prominent issues in Translation Studies such as the challenges of balancing fidelity and creativity, we identify parallels and joint principles as well as specific challenges encountered in our multimodal experience. We conclude that with enhanced levels of transfer, some direct translation of meaning might be compromised; however, the multimodal version allows for much wider accessibility and enhanced experience for all audiences, and more creativity for those involved in creating new translations.

KEYWORDS

Multimodal translation, adaptation, vertical dance.

1. Introduction

The notion of translation is complex; there are many ways in which to interpret the basic idea of transferring something to something else. To start with, most people will intuitively understand translation as a transfer from one language to another with the aim of achieving a representation that corresponds to the original to the extent possible (O'Halloran *et al*. 2016). Indeed, most literature on translation to date discusses it as an entirely (or predominantly) linguistic phenomenon, in spite of the fact that cultural elements have been forcefully brought into attention since the so-called 'cultural turn' in the 1990s (Snell-Hornby 2006).

Where other media and communication channels are incorporated, this mostly concerns the challenges of embedding language translation in audiovisual settings, such as simultaneous interpretation and subtitling (Gambier and Gottlieb 2001). Where the medium of language is *replaced* by other means of communication, the notion of translation appears to merge with notions of adaptation, although the possibility of translating between different semiotic systems was already explored by Jakobson (1959). In spite of the relevance and frequent practice of such intersemiotic translation, this phenomenon remains under-explored (O'Halloran *et al.* 2016). Here, we aim to contribute to its exploration primarily from a

practical perspective, by reporting experience gained from the highly multimodal performance of the dance performance "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017). The creation of "Omnibus" incorporated many levels of transfer between modes such as written stories, drawings, dance, music, and audio description, as well as between the two languages English and Welsh. As such, this experience represents a unique case study for reflection on notions of intersemiotic translation and adaptation.

The area in which intersemiotic translation has probably received most attention is the field of audiovisual translation (AVT) in multimedia contexts (Gambier and Gottlieb 2001), which primarily incorporates subtitling (Cintas and Remael 2014), dubbing (Chaume 2012), and some related forms of translating visual information into text such as voice-over, or providing a written translation of speech in a different language through surtitling (Chiaro 2009). While these forms of translation are clearly not novel and have been researched fairly extensively, Gambier and Pinto (2016:187) noted that "a truly multimodal framework of analysis has still not been developed within AVT, one capable of accounting for the different modes at play in the translated audiovisual product and the multimodal relationships established between them." In our case, the multimodality of the "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017) experience takes us even further, inspiring us to consider notions of translation and/or adaptation between *any* kinds of media – linguistic, sensory, technological, or other. One goal of this endeavour is to begin to identify common underlying principles that characterise the challenges of any translation exercise, independent of its medium (or media) or degree of complexity. Our case study thus serves as inspiration towards discussing the more general principles that may apply to the study of translation – and cross-overs with the notion of adaptation – at a larger scale.

In the remainder of this section, we set the stage by considering a range of issues relevant in the context of our case study: fidelity, creativity, adaptation, multimodality, and art. After that, we describe our case study called "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017) in Section 2, a dance performance that developed over time based on a series of translations and adaptations starting from children's stories written by Roald Dahl. We reflect on the experiences and features of these translations in Section 3, discussing what it means to translate between media, languages, and sensory channels. In Section 4, we take a closer look at Roald Dahl's original writing compared to the various outcomes of translation in the "Omnibus" performance, and in Section 5 we widen the scope to the challenges and features of cross-media translations and adaptations more generally, focusing primarily on audio descriptions of visual information. Section 6 offers a discussion of our findings in light of the state of the art, and we conclude by summarising the main insights gained from our analysis.

1.1 Between fidelity and creativity

One of the main challenges faced by anyone who attempts a translation of any kind, even in the relatively simple case of transferring from one language to another within the same medium (oral or written), is to do justice to the original. Traditionally, since the times of Humboldt (1816/1909), this challenge is referred to as fidelity. The problem is that no matter how closely related the two languages are, there will never be a simple one-to-one correspondence between linguistic systems – as any aspiring translator will soon realise (Robinson 2004). As a result, much research focuses on decisions a translator faces when aiming to reconcile the goal of fidelity to the original with the constraints and features in the target language, using moderate creativity as appropriate for the purposes at hand (Boase-Beier and Holman 1999), aiming to achieve translational equivalence to the extent possible (Toury 1982). As an effect of this challenge, translators cannot help theorizing; any process of translation involves theoretical considerations concerning equivalence, purpose, uncertainties and other factors affecting their work (Pym 2014).

To some extent, translations can therefore be regarded as creative products in their own right (Hardwick 2004), recognizing the conceptual efforts the translator puts into the process. The notion of creativity in translation is controversial as it appears to oppose the traditional goal of being faithful to the original (Hewson 2006). However, the more source and target diverge, the more creative solutions will need to be found to do justice to the original. As Kussmaul (2000:120) observes: “Being guided by the principle of fidelity, we will try to preserve the notions and concepts of the source text in our translation, but we may change the point of view from which we see a concept and/or we may focus on different elements of a concept.” Such a change of perspective is frequently necessitated by the divergent properties and features between source and target. Research in this area specifically addresses the shifts away from the original in the target text, marking the translation as creative (Rojo 2017).

As is well established in the field, far from producing a direct equivalent that would be disconnected from the languages and cultures in question, translations are embedded in social contexts (Wolf and Fukari 2007) that fundamentally affect the new products that emerge from the creative translation process. Depending on the translator’s strategies, fidelity in translation can become ‘abusive’ in the sense that the target version may ignore the idiosyncrasies of the target language and/or culture, as well as exposing structures of the source text in a way not equally perceptible in the original (Venuti 2013).
Clearly, translations are thus not neutral; the dynamics of cultural and social interactions will inevitably affect how any product is conceived and perceived. These effects are captured by various research models and methods that target diverse aspects of the culturally enriched creative

process of translation (Olohan 2017): some focus on fidelity, comparing how similar source and target are; others address the different sequential stages during the process of translating; yet others aim to capture the reasons and motivations underlying the process of translation as well as the effects of such cognitive, situational and sociocultural factors on the outcome. According to Gambier (2016), not only does the field of Translation Studies increasingly account for this rich diversity of effects, but translation itself, as a process, rapidly changes due to the changing communication needs in the modern world. Further, reflecting the fact that the target product may diverge substantially from the original as a result of the tension between fidelity and creativity, Adaptation Studies emerged as a relatively new branch of Translation Studies, with particular relevance to multimodal and/or art-related contexts. The next section will take a closer look at multimodality and associated challenges and notions in the larger field of Translation Studies.

1.2 Adaptation, multimodality, and art

The extension of the notion of translation to multimodality has been recognised for a long time, and comprehensive accounts of audiovisual translation (AVT, e.g., Pérez-González 2014) follow similar lines as those discussed in language-to-language translations (Olohan 2017), showing how procedural, comparative and causal factors interact in the process of producing cross-media translations. However, discussions of AVT often still prioritise language, exploring the particular challenges of translation between languages in a multimedia context (Gambier and Gottlieb 2001). Jakobson's (1959) suggestion of intersemiotic translation originally presupposed the source text to be written, with translations into other semiotic systems or media. Today, this idea has expanded towards a transferred or metaphorical understanding of translation which much more generally means a "process of change or a passage from one state to another" (Chew and Stead 1999:2), with 'intermedial translation' a particular case that raises questions concerning "the degree to which the transformation process also implies modification and alteration, and to what extent intermedial translation is either total or partial" (Schober 2010:166).

Inevitably, further complications adding to the challenges already known from inter-language translation emerge with the recognition of further modes and media as possible targets of translation, beyond the linguistic level. What makes translations between modes special is the very nature of the modes that are involved in the translation. Even if only language is considered, there are clear limitations to translation between modes: not everything that is expressed in spoken language will be written down (for example, detailed tone of voice and inflections), and not all aspects of written language are verbalised (such as visual structures); also, written language when spoken is modified by the intonation, accent, volume,

rhythm of speech, etc. of the speaker. These well-known facts give rise to extensive research on the meanings and scope of mode-specific features such as gestures (McNeill 1985) and emojis (Alshenqeeti 2016) in relation to language as well as translatability.

The associated challenges expand considerably when, as part of multimodal translation, further aspects of the source mode are included in the target representation, as in audio descriptions of visual events, film dubbing, subtitles and the like (Pérez-González 2018). Taylor (2016) discussed research on multimodality in translation from the point of view of multiple semiotic resources that are drawn upon as relevant in the context of translation. While text is central in these approaches, multimodal translation needs to systematically account for aspects that go fundamentally beyond the language of the text itself. This is actually also true for inter-language translation, considering the nonverbal or multimodal elements like intonation and speed of speech, or typography and layout (Kaindl 2013). Crucial issues in this field concern the extent of cultural embedding and sociocultural context dependency of multimodal aspects during translation, as well as the various ways in which text interacts with other modes and modalities in co-creating meaning.

Considering the causes and social contexts of translation, one central element of multimodal translation is the common motivation of producing a version that is accessible to everybody, or specifically to those who do not have access to one of the main sensory channels. Audio descriptions are primarily produced for the blind, replacing visual with auditive information (Fryer 2016). Subtitles in the same language support the deaf or hard of hearing by supplying visual information for what they cannot perceive. Ultimately, this is a natural extension of the most common original motivation for translation between languages in the first place; translation from English into another language would typically be provided for those who do not speak English. The common goal is to enhance accessibility by providing a cross-modal representation that makes the inaccessible modality or medium available in a new way.

In complex real-world contexts such as museums, audio descriptions do not aim at a direct translation but generally facilitate and improve the experience for people with visual impairments (Perego 2018). In spite of their obvious limitations, technological advances increasingly facilitate the installation of audio descriptions across a wider range of contexts. As a result, multimodal translations have become far more common over recent years, with some people developing a taste for reading subtitles while watching films in spite of being entirely capable of hearing, and audio tours being made widely available and used independently of any impairments. In line with the freedom to transcend modalities without a direct need to do so, translation between modes now extends into new art forms. As it does so, the notion of translation intersects with that of adaptation, based

on the growing understanding that translation involves much more than only an attempt to 'faithfully' transfer a product in one language to an 'equivalent' product in another. Hutcheon (2012:16) suggests that "because adaptations are to a different medium, they are re-mediations, that is, specifically translations in the form of intersemiotic transpositions from one sign system (for example, words) to another (for example, images. This is translation but in a very specific sense: as transmutation or transcoding, that is, as necessarily a recoding into a new set of conventions as well as signs." In this view, there are no clear boundaries between the notions of translation and adaptation, and the more intersemiotic elements need to be transferred (or translated, or adapted), the more interpretation and artistic creativity may be required.

Compared to the more traditional notion of *translation*, the notion of *adaptation* entails more freedom and creativity, and also overlaps with further concepts such as borrowing, remaking, and intertextuality (Cardwell 2018). As a consequence, the notion becomes more broadly embedded within cultural studies in a wider sense. Some authors actually argue that adaptation is distinct from translation in that it takes place across media rather than cultures – thus, in effect, denying that translation can happen across media, or that adaptation can involve trans-cultural layers. Along these lines, the debate continues (Raw 2012).

While it is challenging enough to translate a visually rich experience such as dance into an adequate audio description (Margolies 2015), a dance performance itself may be created as a translation or 're-invention' from a different source (Franko 1989). This view of cross-modal translation (and/or adaptation) between various media and purposes, ranging from aspects of accessibility to expression and re-invention of art, is what motivated our research as described in this paper. In the next sections we will present and discuss our multi- and cross-modal art experience that involved various elements of translation and adaptation, aiming to shed some light on the limits and boundaries of translation, as well as the challenges of integrating multimedial resources for adaptation.

2. "Omnibus" case study

"Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017) was a vertical dance[1] work created in 2016, performed in the foyer space of Galeri theatre in Caernarfon, North Wales. The theatre director, Mari Emlyn, proposed a project to celebrate the centenary of Roald Dahl's birthday. Her innovative idea was to ask local primary school children to draw pictures of their favourite characters from Roald Dahl's stories and to provide four words to describe these characters. They were asked to choose non-human characters as we thought this would give more scope for creating movement.

The choreographer (the second author) chose four characters from the writings and drawings, based on a mixture of the popularity of the character with the children and the quality of their drawings. These were Sophie (from Roald Dahl's *The BFG*), the Crocodile (*The Enormous Crocodile*), the Fox (*The Fantastic Mr Fox*) and the Giraffe (*The Giraffe, the Pelly and me*). The three animal characters were played by dancers and the fourth, Sophie, appeared as a small rag doll. The choreography was developed in collaboration with the performers, drawing inspiration from the characters and the words written by the children.

A new, simple story was developed around the idea that Sophie was dreaming. In her dream, she entered the world of these creatures. She was abducted by the Crocodile and then all three creatures fought over her, suspended in the air above the foyer of Galeri. Sophie fell to the ground and all three creatures crouched over her in concern. To their relief, they saw that she was asleep and they tucked her up in the giraffe's skin (which the dancer playing the giraffe had been wearing) and crept away. The simplicity of the narrative allowed the performers to fully explore the characters through dance, a typically abstract art form.

The production included dance, costume and a soundscore that incorporated audio description. The dance, music and costumes were developed first through discussions between the choreographer, composer and designer. A film of the dance with soundscore was sent to the audio describer, who wrote the text in English, this was then translated into Welsh and subsequently recorded by the female audio describer (English) and a male actor (Welsh). The bilingual audio description was then added at precise points into the soundscore by the composer directed by the choreographer.

The dance was developed through tasks given by the choreographer to the dancers, largely in response to the words and drawings of the children. The crocodile was described as 'dramatic, sharp, sly and vicious'; the giraffe as 'enormous and slow' and the fox as 'sly, clever, mischievous and lively'. Each dancer developed a short aerial movement solo from the words associated with their character, with music and dance composed to fit with the character's main features. The choreographer constructed the storyline and conveyed this to the dancers, the composer and the costume designer and also designed the aerial space, allocating different areas for each of the characters. It was essential that the dance was very precise so that it would fit with the music and, ultimately, the audio description. This is an unusual process as audio description is typically conducted live, with the audio describer, out of sight, interpreting the action directly into the ears of the visually impaired audience member. Here, in contrast, the audio description was integrated with the music and therefore directly contributed to the art experience for all audience members.

The audio description text explained the context and development of the project and introduced the four characters. Relevant physical aspects of the performance space were then described: "Galeri foyer is … a large modern building with tall windows making it light and airy. Its materials are glass, steel, and wood. It stretches up 15 metres, from the ground level where the bar is, up past two galleries." This description allowed visually impaired audiences to understand the space and concurrently guided the attention of sighted audience members. The metaphorical ascriptions to the space were then explained: "Hanging high above the central area we find a rope, which represents Giraffe's tree, a trapeze, which is Crocodile's branch, and a Hoop, which is the entrance to Fox's home." These were embellished with further descriptions: "Fox lives …above the bar, perched above a green convex wall [where] there is a cocoon of purple fabric, with a bushy fox's tail sticking out of it." The physical attributes of the characters were then described: "Crocodile, Giraffe and Fox are played by female dancers in costume; although in our story, the Fox is male; the dancers wear harnesses and are suspended from ropes hanging from the ceiling. They are all barefoot. Sophie is a doll with yellow hair, wearing a red dress."

As the performance began, more information about the costume and movement of each dancer was added, for example, Fox has "big pointed ginger ears, orange long sleeved coat, waistcoat, orange leggings" and he "runs in the air, fleet of foot." The dancers' relationship to each other in the space was described, for example: the giraffe "ascends higher, past the level of the ever-observant Fox" and "Giraffe dances Sophie along the top of the wall as Crocodile scurries after her." The dance was described in concise, precise and vibrant language: "Fox springs from the handrail and flies through the air, holding the hoop" and "Giraffe pauses, dangles mid-air, lying back, … strong yellow legs twist and turn, crossing one over the other, bend and flex with poise and grace." As the piece reached its climax, the description featured short repeated words: "Fly out, Reach, Back, Fly out, Reach, Back," conveying the increase in pace and urgency of the choreography as the dancers fought over Sophie in the air.

3. Crossing media, languages, and sensory channels

The process employed to create "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017) comprised transfers from texts by Roald Dahl to drawings, from drawings to dance, and from dance back to text in the audio descriptions, including inter-language translation in this last step. Arguably some of these transfers go well beyond common notions of translation and are more adequately described as adaptation, while others relate more directly to translation. However, in our experience there was no clear distinction between these transfer processes, because the underlying goal remained consistent: creating a new piece of art based on Roald Dahl's stories that encompassed various multimodal layers. As we can already observe in some formulations used in the previous section, intuitively, some of these

transfer processes are adequately captured by the term *description* (as in the commonly used term *audio description*), whereas other cases (e.g., *explain, respond, embellish*) are less clear – aptly reflecting the tension between various related notions such as translation, adaptation, intertextuality, representation, transformation, borrowing, and so on that we found in the literature (see Section 1).

The sequence of translations and adaptations from Roald Dahl's original stories can be described as follows (with the people in charge given in brackets):

- Text (Dahl) to drawing and words (children guided by their teachers);
- Dahl texts and children's drawings and words to new narrative, expressed as dance and soundscore/music (the choreographer in collaboration with composer, costume designer and dancers);
- Dance to written version of the audio description (audio describer);
- English to Welsh (director/initiator of the project);
- Written to spoken audio description (audio describer and actor);
- Spoken word to soundscore (composer).

The initial process of translating Dahl's stories into drawings undertaken by primary school children produced what we initially thought represented children's reception and impression of Dahl's work, after having read, or listened to, his stories. Yet their drawings were also clearly influenced by the illustrations of Quentin Blake, whose work notably enhances and embellishes Dahl's writings by creating a 'meaning-multiplying' (Bateman 2014) interplay between text and image. Unsurprisingly, children did not distinguish between text and image when asked to draw images of Dahl's stories, and they might have been inspired more by Blake's illustrations than by the stories themselves. For example, several children (ignoring the request to choose only non-human characters) re-drew an image of the BFG with Sophie in his hand that is shown on the cover of some editions of the story.

Next, the children's pictures formed the foundation of the costume development. Whilst the costume for the Fox was fairly directly taken from the images, the other characters required more creativity: the long neck of the Giraffe was signalled by a long piece of giraffe skin fabric attached to the dancer that extended as she climbed a rope, and teeth were attached to the arms of another dancer's jacket to symbolise the Crocodile's jaws. The children's words were built upon in the creation of movement vocabulary and character development and in the creation of the musical themes. For example, the instructions to the composer for the Crocodile theme were "full of suspense, slithery and slimy," the Fox "frisky, fun and mischievous," whilst the Giraffe was described as "graceful, smooth, stately." This phase of translation gave physical and audio form to the stories, and elements that were impossible for the human form to embody

(long neck and long jaw) required the creative use of symbolism. Likewise, the music interpreted the choreographer's instructions, such as 'dreamy' for the opening and ending sections to signify Sophie's dream world and 'tangoesque' for the Giraffe's leggy solo.

The conversion of the dance back into audio description text was not a simple return to the original Dahl stories. The narrative was new, although the characters maintained some of their original attributes except that the Crocodile was a less menacing character in the "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017) work. The task was not simply to tell a story, but to describe the action of the dancers, or indeed to *translate* physical movement into text in a concise, clear and vibrant way. The audio describer balanced the need to describe the action and the space clearly to a visually impaired audience member (and guide all listener's attention in significant ways) with the need to fit the description into a very limited time, compounded by the need for the description to be bilingual. The translation of the text into Welsh was subject to the more common challenges of language translation. Whilst this might be seen as the most direct translation process in the whole project (within the same mode: language), it did require finding suitable idioms in the destination language to reflect meaning accurately and intelligibly. For instance, a crisp and poetic phrase like "She pads away, knees lifting high" does not have a direct equivalent in Welsh; the translation *Mae hi'n ymlwybro i ffwrdd gan godi ei phenliniau'n uchel* is far more wordy and would literally translate back to "She makes her way away while lifting her knees high."

The recording of the text added another layer of meaning through the rhythm and inflection of the voices. This was then stitched into the soundscore by the composer, giving further punctuation to the 'text'. Thus, the audio description itself was a multimodal construct of text, spoken word in two languages, and music. The aim of incorporating the audio description in the soundscape was to enhance every audience member's experience through the unique combination of various media, sounds, and words. The fact that Welsh sounds very different to English gave the soundscore a rather unique character, which would have been perceived differently by those who understand Welsh (perhaps half of the audience) and those who do not.

There was never an intention to faithfully convey or reconstruct Dahl's work, rather to use it as a springboard to make a new creative work, to 're-invent' it (Franko 1989). The idea of faithfulness arose in relation to creating an audio description for "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017), not for the original Dahl work. Real time movement takes less time than its description and this meant that attempts to be fully faithful in translating from the mode of performance to the mode of spoken word were futile. The bilingual aspect placed further constraints on the time available to describe the movement. We were guided by trying to understand what

a non-sighted person would need to know, for example the shape of the space, where the dancers were in the space and what they were wearing, alongside a desire to convey the spirit of the performance through language and vocal delivery, alongside composed music.

Reflecting on the whole project highlights the transitions between translation and adaptation across modes into a multimodal artistic outcome. Aspects of this project clearly go beyond translation in terms of a direct and faithful rendition of one text in another language and may be more adequately described in terms of adaptation; however, the challenges and principles observed at the various levels throughout this project are not necessarily distinct from those frequently discussed primarily under the heading of translation. As with translation in the more traditional sense, the various adaptations between modes that were undertaken in our project involved the usual tension between creativity and fidelity, with some compromises needing to be made due to the nature of the modes that meanings were transferred into.

Additionally, the notions of authorship and readership both expand in this multi-step 'translation' to include not just the artefacts produced, but the actions involved in producing them and interpreting them. "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017) had several authors (children, composer, choreographer, dancers, audio describer) responding in direct and indirect ways to reading, listening to and looking at Dahl's stories, prompting the question voiced by theatre practitioner John Wright (2002) in relation to collaborative devising processes: 'who's writing this anyway?'. It is impossible to ascribe single authorship to "Omnibus," and as we have seen, the children were clearly equally inspired by Dahl's stories and Blake's illustrations.

Overall, we can characterise "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017) as a multi-sensory and multi-translatory experience that aimed at increased accessibility for the sighted and the blind, for children and adults, and for English and Welsh speakers. The intended effect on the audience was a sense of (and a homage to) the general spirit conveyed characteristically by Roald Dahl's work, in spite of the complete absence of an adopted narrative or any direct quotes in the descriptive language. In the next section, we take a closer look at the linguistic aspects of this multi-translatory achievement, which after all are at the core of what is typically understood as translation (proper).

4. Away from language and back again: Comparing Dahl's stories with audio descriptions

The "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017) performance represented characters taken from four Roald Dahl stories that differed substantially in length as well as style. *The BFG* is a book-length tale of

how orphan Sophie was captured by the Big Friendly Giant, a dream catcher who gets abused and tossed about by his much larger peers. The other three stories are much shorter, with both *The Enormous Crocodile* and *The Fantastic Mr Fox* incorporating fears of getting caught followed by unexpected rescues. *The Giraffe, the Pelly and me* is the only truly happy and positive story, where nothing life-threatening happens and things develop in a most fantastic, dream-like fashion. All four stories end well, with all problems solved. The Crocodile is the only negative character from these stories who features as a main character, and was used in "Omnibus".

In spite of being easy to read and highly accessible for young children, Roald Dahl's writing is characterised by creative and innovative language throughout, with neologisms like 'babblement' for "a nice gossipy conversation" (found in *The Giraffe and the Pelly and Me*), word plays such as 'human bean' for 'human being' (*The BFG*), and alliterations that are cleverly combined with rhythmic repetitions and humorously semi-offensive language, as in "I hope the buttons and buckles all stick in your throat and choke you to death" (*The Enormous Crocodile*). Together these features create the unique unmistakable style that led to Roald Dahl's world-wide esteem – including being named "the greatest storyteller of all time" by a UK-wide poll (Helmore 2017).

As explained, there was no attempt to directly translate either the stories or the linguistic style into any verbal aspects of the "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017) performance. The adaptation was designed to happen at a more abstract level, namely taking Dahl's stories as a starting point for creative development on various levels. Nevertheless, some of the features in the original linguistic products can be traced in the linguistic products that emerged after several acts of translation and adaptation: the bilingual audio descriptions.

Several key themes and notions are reflected in the audio description that can be recognised from the stories. It is not only the characters themselves that are represented, but also the notion of a 'dream' (*BFG*), the action of tossing somebody about (*BFG*), the Fox's habit of watching actions closely and finding solutions to problems (*Fantastic Mr Fox*), the prominence of the vertical dimension which (rather unlike the real world) features in various ways in all four stories: the giants and the giraffe are exceptionally tall and high, the crocodile ends up flying higher and higher up in to the sky, and the fox and his family build fantastic underground tunnels. These thematic allusions clearly worked to support the notion of 'translating' (in a wider sense) Dahl's original ideas into new forms of expression, without aiming for direct equivalence yet never losing track of the sources from which this new piece of art was developed.

Early on in the English audio description, the sentence "Omnibus is the dream of Sophie, an orphan, as she meets Crocodile, Giraffe, and Fox" hints

at Roald Dahl in multiple ways: *Omnibus* is the name of a famous Roald Dahl story collection, the notion of *dream* and the name *Sophie* hint at the BFG story, and the three animal characters point to the remaining three stories. This densely compiled statement leads up to a direct address to the audience, encouraging them to make the connection to the original stories ("Maybe you know which stories they are from?") before describing the physical context for the danced narrative. This is the only question asked of the audience by the audio description, and it echoes Roald Dahl's style in that, even though the audience is clearly in the mind of the storyteller, he doesn't often address them directly. One exception can be found in *The BFG*, in "If you can think of anything more terrifying than that happening to you in the middle of the night, then let's hear about it."

Like Dahl's writing, the audio description also primarily features relatively short sentences that are easy to understand and follow, without being overly simplistic. There are alliterations and wordplay, as in "twiddly twitching" and "fleet of foot", as well as poetic repetitive rhythms in the syntax as in "Fox watches from his hoop - Crocodile settles onto her wall - - majestic, stately. Giraffe, one arm high, pads along the walkway." Overall, the style pays homage to Dahl in all these respects; the language itself is interesting and entertaining as a work of art, rather than purely descriptive of the story.

Unlike Dahl's stories, however, this is only true for parts of the audio description – namely those that accompany and represent the dance performance itself. These parts are enclosed by several minutes of the more narrative and prosaic introduction (e.g., "The choreography, costumes and music have been inspired by their [the children's] work, which is displayed in the foyer"), and a brief moral at the end: "Sophie has learnt that the most powerful jaws are also the most tender." In Dahl's stories, no such breakouts of stylistic patterns can be observed within a story, though the styles of the different stories do differ (the details of which are beyond the scope of the present analysis). However, the book-length *BFG* tale ends with another one of the rare direct addresses, transferring the reader back into the real world with the words: "You've just finished reading it."

Further interesting parallels to Dahl's stories concern the characterizations of the animals (as outlined in Section 3). Descriptions of the fox are characterised by alliterations and relatively short words, as in "fleet of foot", "hangs within his hoop", and "stealthily spins out of the hoop, back to his wall". The crocodile's descriptions sound different, with inventive negative-sounding words such as "gnarly", "slithers", "licking her lips", and "snatches" that are reminiscent of the negative role played in *The Enormous Crocodile*, even though the crocodile does not represent a bad character in "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017). This is reinforced by frequent occurrences of sibilants ('s' sounds), as in "Slow and steady", "swishing, she swings from her trapeze", and "Sits Sophie on the

trapeze, like a super high swing". Again, in contrast, the Giraffe is characterised in a far less dramatic way, with adjectives such as "elegant" and "graceful"; the slowness of this larger animal is also represented by more extended movement descriptions such as "She ascends, past the level of the ever-observant Fox, then lowers herself easily to the ground; She stands, one arm high and straight, like the giraffe's long neck; She pads away, knee lifting high" and "Giraffe rises up, extends her head over Crocodile's wall."

Contrasting with all of these, Sophie, in keeping with the fact that she is represented by a doll in the dance performance, is typically not an actor or agent in the descriptions at all and therefore lacks direct linguistic feature associations. She primarily appears in syntactic subject position in the more narrative introductory and concluding parts, where her thoughts and dreams are explained.

The bilingual nature of the audio description represents the most traditional aspect of the various layers of translation explored here: translation between two languages. These happen to be etymologically as different as they possibly could be within the overall scope of Indo-European languages. There is very little actual overlap between Welsh and English, neither in grammar nor lexically except for borrowed words. In this light, it is interesting to briefly examine the faithfulness of the translation not only with respect to the representation of meaning (which is straightforward enough in this context) but specifically with respect to the features just explored: Can features of Roald Dahl's writing still be detected in the Welsh audio description, despite the fact that Dahl (who was born in Wales from Norwegian immigrant parents) wrote exclusively in English?

Of the various parallels between the English audio description and Dahl's writing explored in this section, only the key themes and notions are easily transferable to another language. Indeed, they can equally be identified in the Welsh parts of the audio description – including the exceptional direct address to the audience. Although short English sentences will also be relatively short in their Welsh translation, Welsh versions in general tend to be longer in expression than their English equivalent, affecting the effects of crisp language as in the example of "She pads away, knees lifting high" given above.

Perhaps the most striking effect, however, is that the prevalence of alliterations, word play, and poetic repetitive rhythm is greatly diminished in the Welsh version. This is a clear case of preferring semantic function over form. The content was faithfully translated, whereas the conveyance of a linguistic style reminiscent of Dahl's writing was clearly of secondary importance – avoiding the effects of what Venuti (2013) called 'abusive fidelity'. Aside from the length of sentences and distinctive content, therefore, the change in style apparent in the English version does not

transpire in the Welsh equivalent to the same extent. It should be noted that Welsh speakers in the audience will almost certainly have been following *both* language versions, as hardly any monolingual Welsh speakers exist in modern Wales. Thus, the interplay between different styles represented in the two languages will have been accessible to the Welsh-speaking audience, adding to the overall multi-layered experience. Similar observations hold true for the distinctive descriptions of animal characters, where no particular patterns of alliterations and word choices can be discerned. Semantic patterns, again, do prevail; the slowness and gracefulness in the Giraffe is again opposed to a more dramatic description style in the Fox and the Crocodile; and Sophie remains just as appropriately passive in the Welsh descriptions as in the English version.

5. Challenges and features of cross-media adaptation and translation

Focussing on "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017) as a case study, we have so far been exploring how various levels of translation and adaptation can relate to the original product (here: Roald Dahl's legacy) in a creative performance that incorporates bilingual audio description as part of its design. We are now in a position to consider this unique piece of art within the wider landscape of translation. Our aim is to identify potentially generalisable principles, by differentiating challenges and solutions that are specific for "Omnibus" from those that are more generic and at work in a range of translation contexts – perhaps most prominently audio descriptions, which are more generally recognised as instances of translation from the visual to the verbal.

As with "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017), recent writing about audio description already extends notions of translation by inserting the description process into the artistic process (Cavallo 2015), and proposes that making audio description whilst creating artistic work can increase accessibility and challenge artists' creativity in worthwhile ways (Carter 2018). Cavallo (2015), in particular, demonstrated that audio description in the context of creative performance can be much more than its original form as an overlay on an already completed performance for the visually impaired (e.g., Fryer 2016:1, defined audio description as "a verbal commentary providing visual information for those unable to perceive it themselves"). Audio description that is integrated into the performance from the start serves a different purpose: it affects and influences all spectators while simultaneously widening access to the entire performance to a broader audience in a far more inclusive fashion. This may mean a challenge for artists who aim to construct meaning across an inter-locking web of modes of communication.

Our case study performance "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017) was created with a very similar mindset whilst adding to accessibility

on another level with the addition of a second language. Note also that the performance took place in a non-traditional setting, a café environment in which the audience almost surrounded the performance, with no actual stage present. As a result, the performance would have been perceived very differently depending on the location and abilities of the individual perceiver: people would have had visual access to different degrees and in different ways, even without impairment; and, as mentioned, not everybody in the audience would have been able to understand both languages to the same extent.

The function of audio description, in this context, was therefore not only to allow the visually impaired access to the performance, but much more generally – for everybody – to fill in some gaps in the perception, to build up a multimedial experience, and to use language as a pointing function, supporting the perceiver to become aware of certain aspects, or perceive some features in a new way. There is, obviously, no 'optimal' way of perceiving such a performance, but the likelihood that anybody in the audience felt genuinely deprived by the experience is far reduced. Where language could not be fully followed, music contributed to understanding; where parts of the performance could not be visually perceived or interpreted, the audio description filled some gaps. All media and modes jointly contributed to the overall experience.

While this context renders the performance exceptional and unique, there are nevertheless abundant parallels to other contexts in which experience is translated from one medium to another. Consider, for instance, the tension between fidelity and creativity explored briefly in Section 1. Aiming at fidelity or equivalence would pose a substantial challenge to any media-transcending translation. For instance, no audio description can ever be a fully complete and true translation of the visual information; it is not even clear what this might mean. Not everything we see can be equally verbalised, and the relation between visualisation and verbalisation remains a matter of extensive research interest (e.g., Henderson and Ferreira 2013; Holsanova 2008). Therefore, each audio description will inevitably be a matter of choice: what to verbalise, which aspects to focus on, and how to put them into words. Consequently, in an overview article Braun (2008) noted considerable variety – and a high level of creativity – in how audio descriptions meet the various challenges of intermodal translation.

For instance, audio descriptions may differ substantially with respect to the degree of involvement of the speaker, or emotive language. They can aim to be objective, or involve a more subjective evaluation of the visual elements – with different effects on the audience (Walczak and Fryer 2017). Perego (2018) further noted that audio descriptions must be kept short, and significant choices need to be made with respect to what is described and how, as well as to whom. The results of a corpus study conducted by

Perego (2018) revealed that these requirements are typically met by frequent use of descriptive adjectives along with high lexical density, i.e., using a broad range of different words to render the descriptions interesting and varied while avoiding lengthy descriptions.

For very similar reasons to those reported by Perego (2018) in a museum context, crucial linguistic choices characterised the audio description in "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017) – such as creative language use, reminiscent of Roald Dahl's writing. The feature of creative, descriptive, diverse language thus appears to parallel other areas of art. However, we also noted in Section 4 that linguistic styles differed across different parts of the description – something which cannot be captured through corpus analysis as in Perego (2018). Descriptive adjectives feature in "Omnibus" primarily in the introductory parts describing the scenery and characters, rather than during the actual performance description where adjectives become rather sparse, and descriptive variety is primarily achieved through creative verb choices such as 'twists', 'springs', 'swings', 'lowers', 'rises', 'turns', 'hangs', 'lunges', 'descends', 'sinks' and so on.

Creative solutions, such as artistic linguistic choices, are clearly at the heart of any attempt to translate between different media. As known from literary contexts (Boase-Beier and Holman 1999; Hardwick 2004), translation will involve creativity to a greater or lesser degree. Creativity may be required to translate, or adapt, from the source in a way that (arguably, or ideally, as a target) amounts to equivalence on a deeper level of meaning. When watching a film that is based on a book, one may feel that the atmosphere of the book and its main message may have been captured extremely well in the film, even though some of the storyline was fundamentally altered. The need for creativity clearly needs to be embraced to be successful, particularly with the increased challenges of multi-media translation. The more the media involved differ, the more conceptual effort may be required to arrive at an adequate transfer between them.

The creative process of translation from the visual to the verbal, in particular, involves a balance between descriptive and interpretative elements (Margolies 2015; Cavallo 2015; Carter 2018). Here, the degree to which meaningful extensions of the purely visual (e.g., evaluative terms like 'graceful', metaphors such as "she swings like a pendulum," or even descriptions of a character's thoughts) are achieved successfully is naturally a matter of skill and expertise along with the freedom of individual preferences.

In our case study the need for multi-layered adaptation created a range of challenges beyond those traditionally discussed in the context of language-to-language translations (Olohan 2017). This was supported by the multiple (and, to some extent, unidentifiable) authorship that characterised the ensuing piece of art – invoking Foucault's (1979) deconstruction of the term

'authorship' itself. A text may be transferred into another language by one person or even a machine, but a multiple-step translatory process across diverse media requires a far wider set of skills and procedures, almost inevitably calling for a diversity of creators. This opens up the possibility for a new type of research in which the co-creators of a multi-dimensional translation experience participate actively, as suggested by Neves (2016). Inevitably, these co-creative procedures are deeply intertwined with the context of culture in which the translatory process takes place. In the joint creation of "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017), the extensively shared cultural knowledge of Roald Dahl's writings was just as decisive as the bilingual nature of the environment in which the performance was produced – including the peculiarity of the probable absence of any listeners who entirely depended on the Welsh version. While the contextual and cultural embeddedness of any kind of translation has long been recognised (e.g., Wolf and Fukari 2007), the addition of further layers of transfer may well enhance the effects of those aspects beyond language that are relevant to translation – in effect multiplying them by the additional elements involved.

6. Conclusion

By examining "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017) in retrospect, it was possible to achieve a deeper understanding of what it means to transfer a piece of art between media, languages, and sensory channels. Our experience appears to reinforce the tension between notions of 'translation' and 'adaptation' found in the literature: there was no clear distinction between the processes involved. Considerations concerning the balance between fidelity and creativity, contextual and cultural aspects, and accessibility apply in this context just as much as they apply in standard language-to-language translation (or, indeed, even more so as further media were added to the challenge). The complex task of identifying, translating, and adapting abstract aspects into different media was spread across co-creators and interpreters who approached the task in diverse ways, yet collaborated to create a multi-layered performance that unmistakably paid homage to its source.

The creative process of making "Omnibus" (Vertical Dance Kate Lawrence 2017) employed different types of translation and adaptation: the children distilled their knowledge of a Dahl character into a drawing and four descriptive words; the dance interpreted these drawings and created a new story as an adaptation of the Dahl characters and stories; the audio describer creatively translated/adapted the movement into text that was creatively translated into Welsh; the composer transferred the new story line from text into music and the costume designer translated Blake's drawings of specific characters into costumes. While some elements or features of the original will always be lost in translation even in the standard cases, this will inevitably increase with increased levels of translatory

challenges. What is gained instead is substantially increased accessibility and enhanced experience for all spectators, independent of their (dis)abilities – and new potentials for artists to convey meaning creatively across different media.

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[1] Vertical dance is a new hybrid form of dance that uses the equipment of rock climbing for working at height to suspend dancers off the ground, typically, but not always, against a wall or other type of surface that they use as a vertical dance floor (Lawrence 2010).