

iDub – The potential of intralingual dubbing in foreign language learning: How to assess the task

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ABSTRACT

Research on the use of active dubbing activities in foreign language learning is gaining an increasing amount of attention. The most obvious skill to be enhanced in this context is oral production and a few authors have already mentioned the potential benefits of asking students to record their voices in a ‘semi-professional’ manner. The present project attempts to assess the potential of intralingual dubbing (English-English) to develop general oral production skills in adult university students of English B2 level in an online learning environment, and to provide general guidelines of dubbing task assessment for practitioners. To this end, a group of undergraduate pre-intermediate students worked on ten sequenced activities using short videos taken from an American sitcom over a period of two months. The research study included language assessment tests, questionnaires and observation as the basic data gathering tools to make the results as reliable and thorough as possible for this type of educational setting. The conclusions provide a good starting point for the establishment of basic guidelines that may help teachers implement dubbing tasks in the language class.

Keywords: *Audiovisual translation, dubbing, language learning, oral skills, online tasks, assessment rubric*

I. INTRODUCTION

The *iDub – Intralingual Dubbing to Improve Oral Skills* project arose from the need to evaluate the potential didactic efficiency of dubbing as an active task in distance foreign language (henceforth, L2) environments as well as from the lack of assessment materials in this learning context. Such a point of departure led the research team involved in this teacher innovation network sponsored by the UNED (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia) to set up a two-month experience where students would have to record their voices so as to dub ten short clips.

Although some previous studies had already assessed (to a greater or lesser extent, as the theoretical framework will present) the role of dubbing as a didactic resource in L2 education, none had yet focused on distance learning students working in online environments. Besides, since the literature dealing with this area of study is still scarce,

no author has (to date) attempted to suggest a specific assessment procedure that can accompany such a task and so motivate practitioners to carry out this activity on a more frequent basis.

When students synchronise their recorded voices to a video fragment, they can work in two different directions according to the guidelines provided by the teacher: L1-L2 or L2-L2 (since L1-L1 would not imply any L2 learning whatsoever and L2-L1 is a very unlikely combination for L2 learning). Since most existing studies have focused on the L1-L2 combination, iDub has attempted to make a contribution to assess the power of intralingual dubbing (L2-L2) as a task. Whatever the combination, the task is the same: students need to substitute the actors' voices trying to get as close as possible to a real dubbing process, adapting their words and sentences to the characters' mouth movements. This type of didactic approach to the use of authentic video forces students to work on listening comprehension first (to make out the script if the teacher does not provide them with it), then on writing production (at least in terms of spelling, since they copy the original down and do not produce new text) when they have to write the script that they will use to record their voices, and finally on oral production. Oral production is enhanced here in terms of pronunciation, naturalness of speech, speed and fluency. Hence, dubbing constitutes a very comprehensive task that can produce a series of interesting L2 learning benefits.

The main aims of this paper are to provide an introduction to the field of dubbing as an active task in L2 environments, to describe a research experience (iDub) where dubbing was used in an online distance learning context, to analyse the main conclusions derived from it and to provide general guidelines that can help practitioners in the assessment of this type of didactic task.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The field of translation studies and the increasingly specialised subject of audiovisual translation (AVT) have attempted to tackle dubbing from multiple perspectives, which range from the interdisciplinary to the sociocultural, critical and linguistic. Dubbing, taken as a modality of translation, involves the transference of meaning from one language to another and, given the particularities of this audiovisual technique, the aural

and visual channels interact with one another bringing forward additional constraints, such as synchrony between the text and the image and the need for cohesion and coherence at both the linguistic and the visual levels. In fact, one of the aims of dubbing is to make viewers believe that what they are actually being shown is not only realistic, but also familiar to them (Díaz Cintas and Orero 2010).

Leaving aside classical references which inquired into the cinematographic qualities of revoicing techniques and those in which aesthetics and philosophical disquisitions are the main focus of attention, eight separate categories of classification could be drawn from the diverse pool of resources available: (a) dubbing as a subdiscipline within AVT; (b) compendia of particular examples or corpus-based descriptive studies; (c) the nature of dubbese, understood as the language of dubbing, separate from both the source language (SL) and the target language (TL); (d) considerations on voice and vocal qualities applied to dubbing either as a theoretical or as a practical endeavour; (e) dubbing as a cultural phenomenon from a contemporary perspective; (f) orality and its relationship with dubbese; (g) dubbing as a tool to build bridges between the humanities and the exact sciences and, finally, central to this paper; (h) the potential pedagogical applications of dubbing in language learning. All of these categories have been influential when it comes to designing an assessment rubric that could respond to the needs of diverse students in as wide a variety of learning contexts and environments as possible.

a) Dubbing and AVT

Contemporary commentators tend to believe that the feud between the proponents of dubbing and subtitling as ideal solutions to the AVT conundrum is fruitless and should instead be confronted from the point of view of compatibility rather than competitiveness and pre-eminence (Díaz Cintas 1999). In their seminal research synthesis, Koolstra et al. (2002) conclude that, in the light of the experimental data gathered via longitudinal studies in several European countries, it would be adventurous to state that either of the modalities under study – subtitling and dubbing – could be favoured or disfavoured according to their potential benefits or drawbacks. This would help explain why, in spite of local shifts and minor changes in the European audiovisual panorama, subtitling, dubbing and voice-over continue to coexist, to shape a global

communications and entertainment industry, as well as to open new pathways for academic debate, and to generate new resources for translators and translator trainers (Bartrina and Espasa 2005, Chaume 2013, Siegel et al. 2013).

b) Descriptive studies

Humour, taboo, censorship, the behaviour of speech communities and national accounts of dubbing practices from the origins of cinema up to the present age abound in those countries where audiovisual and multimedia translation have recently become the focus of academic attention, but also in mainstream publications where AVT and dubbing have managed to find a niche audience. Perhaps at the cost of originality and the development of a more solidly consolidated theoretical framework, compendia of examples and corpus-based audiovisual research have emerged and continue to emerge from dissertations, theses and doctoral digests of unpublished works, as well as from specialised journals and publications (see Audissino 2012, De Bonis 2014, García Luque 2005, González Iglesias and Toda 2011, Jiménez Carra 2009, Llamas Gutiérrez 2010, Martí Ferriol 2007, Matamala 2010, Zabalbeascoa 2012, and Zanotti 2016 for relevant samples).

c) The nature of dubbese

Dolç and Santamaria's (1998) research could be seen as a pioneering study in which the effects of linguistic policy and final user expectations are identified as principal contributors to the consolidation and fossilisation of a syntax, a lexicon and a grammar that is neither here nor there – neither TL nor SL proper – in Catalan dubbing. Later authors have followed their lead with different language combinations and pay heed to additional constraints such as viewer preferences (Romero Fresco 2006, 2012), cultural specificities (Bonsignori 2015, Naranjo Sánchez 2015, Pavesi 2009, Ranzato 2012) or televisual traditions (Baños 2013). In terms of assessment and evaluation, given that the nature of dubbese is still difficult to pinpoint and reception studies remain scarce, perhaps a more encompassing view of the matter at hand would make it possible to dissolve a few of its incongruities. One such case would be the question of the so-called artificiality of dubbese, which seems to go unnoticed once audiences are exposed to recognisable audiovisual genres and formats. Even if we should expect an exclusively linguistic approach to dubbese to offer an incomplete view of both production and

reception of dubbed products, as far as characterisation and credibility (suspension of disbelief) are concerned, dubbese as an in-between or perhaps even an L3 (Zabalbeascoa 2012) should receive due consideration.

d) Voice and vocal qualities

Together with computing, accessibility and ergonomics, as will be discussed below, the phonetic-phonological, psychological and anatomical features related to the dubbing process have attracted some scholarly attention. Brumme (2012) calls the relation that is established between characters, bodies and voice ‘fictitious voice’ and ‘feigned orality’. These three separate but complementary dimensions are mentioned by various authors, such as Mera (1999) and Whittaker (2012), in their personal evaluations of dubbing as a sensory experience that may transcend the sum of its procedural parts. By leaving an indelible mark on the spectator, these bodies with no voice of their own and these extradiegetic voices, which are made to fit a stranger’s body, ultimately support the intended effect of ensuring viewer immersion into the fictional product that is shown under a given set of conditions.

e) Dubbing and culture

As stated earlier, dubbing, understood as an AVT modality, lends itself well to interdisciplinary approaches by means of which critical methodologies outside the field of linguistics are capable of finding new inroads, thus favouring ideological and terminological reconsiderations. Recent exponents of this trend would be Lashley’s (2012) reading of lip-dubbing in social networks and virtual video broadcasting platforms taken as highly complex cultural reappropriation phenomena whereby ‘producers’ (i.e. producers who also act as users, such as YouTube channel managers) intermix language, traditions, customs and worldviews to create derivative works and interact with other peers. Regardless of the instability of Lashley’s proposals, which are heavily reliant on discursive practices and a cultural materialist view of social exchanges, fan phenomena should be incorporated into the evaluation and assessment phases of a didactic project based on dubbing. The shift from amateurship to professionalism in self-learning environments bears relevant similarities to self-regulated task-based learning supplemented with the instructor’s guidance.

f) Orality and dubbese

Over the course of this bibliographical review we have come across appreciations of dubbing as ‘natural’ or ‘unnatural’, ‘aesthetic’ or ‘anti-aesthetic’, ‘real’ or ‘fictional’. Indeed, the issue of orality in dubbed productions has created significant controversy, with observations which, although seemingly in the tradition of splitting hairs, contribute to the relocation of essential terminological elements. In this regard, Bandia (2011: online) points out that:

[...] The quest for a global reach has given rise to multiple ways of enscribing oral narratives and performances into written form through pseudotranslation or translation-related practices such as transcription, entextualisation, transformation, transcreation, intercultural writing and translation proper.

Therefore, scriptwriting and the illusion of orality, prefabricated as it may be, is yet another contributing factor in the didactic approach to dubbing: intralingual (SL-SL), interlingual (SL-TL) and creative (SL-SL* and SL-TL*) versions of the definitive audio track, on whose paralinguistic elements – such as music and sound effects – practitioners may also intervene by taking on an editorial role, provide abundant opportunities to compare, contrast and eventually perfect either individual or group productions.

g) Building bridges

The application of optimisation principles to language studies has found a productive outlet in computational and corpus linguistics, but this interest has also reached the dubbing process and the possibility of achieving a far more streamlined system of production. Brisaboa et al. (2015) have created an algorithm to determine the optimal distribution of resources (actors, directors, recording studio rooms and sound technicians) to complete as much dubbing work as possible in Galician studios by investing the least amount of money. Although still in the pilot phase, the results of a preliminary implementation of the model have increased efficiency under a given set of conditions. Matousek and Vit (2012) have designed a computer program capable of readjusting automatic dubbing, based on text-to-speech technologies, using subtitle positions as a cue. This software would help make audiovisual products more accessible

to blind or partially-sighted audiences. Despite their complexity, these computer-based models can attest that it would be feasible to train learners' competences in an integrated manner (linguistic, technological, cultural, learning to learn, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, among others) focusing on an AVT modality as apparently simple as dubbing.

h) Pedagogical applications

Several studies have considered the potential pedagogical applications of dubbing in language learning, carrying out short-term experiments with a relatively low number of subjects and different conditions of replicability. Barbe (1996), for instance, advocated the introduction of the dubbing modality of AVT as a useful tool for translator training despite the technical difficulties it might present. Kumai (1996: online), on the other hand, perceived that dubbing could contribute to the development of linguistic and paralinguistic skills in the L2 (especially pronunciation, intonation, awareness of rhythm, fluency, speed and the emulation of body language as utilised by native speakers) even more than tasks centred on oral interpretation, as “[...] the hard work of analysis has been done by the movie actors and the director, so the students can use them as models”.

In Burston (2005), technical difficulties were overcome by encouraging an appropriate division of the task into stages: “video selection, scene cropping and muting, initial class presentation of the target video, group listening comprehension (or scenario creation) activities, individual practice, group rehearsal and, finally, soundtrack dubbing” (79). The author acknowledges that these tasks respond to the principle of being action-oriented, communicative and need not focus solely on oral production, as they involve writing and reading as well. Navarrete (2013) concurs with Burston's view of task design, methodological clarity, active student participation and engagement as fundamental elements geared towards the introduction of AVT-based class modules. Both authors highlight that the selection of very few clips adequate to the participants' level may be made compatible with set materials already in use in face-to-face educational contexts, where the communicative approach is favoured and task-based or project-based learning inform the official curriculum. In fact, Wagener (2006) reports that the existence of institutional learning agreements between the teaching staff and the

students enrolled in formal language learning courses might prove beneficial not exclusively in organisational terms, but also regarding motivational factors. The findings presented in Talaván et al. (2014, 2015) have tried to attest said advantages and will be further analysed in subsequent reviews to outline possible reformulations within the structure of language study programmes in online distance education environments.

As for the available results in didactic research and dubbing, Danan's (2010) is perhaps the experiment least possible to replicate, given that it was put in practice with military personnel enrolled in highly intensive language learning courses (up to 800 class hours in a single year) and the target languages were Dari, Pashto and Farsi. Nevertheless, the data extracted from supervisor evaluations and qualitative questionnaires revealed that dubbing may indeed be considered as an appropriate tool for active language learning with the following caveats: all students should complete all the steps set in the task (from transcript writing to voice recording), instead of dividing the task into smaller subtasks and assigning a specialised role to each participant in the group, and video selection should take into account clip length restrictions as well as student preferences from the outset.

He and Wasuntarasophit (2015) attempted a similar experiment to Danan's with 34 Chinese female student learners of English. The task consisted in dubbing a complete episode of *Friends* in 4 weeks. Students were advised to devote at least one hour a day for the duration of the project and the objective was to improve comprehensibility, fluency and accentedness while transferring audiovisual content from Chinese into English. Two different pre-tests and post-tests, similar to semi-structured interviews, were employed as a measure of the student's progress. In terms of pronunciation, the qualitative data indicate that the groups not only became aware of their production errors, but were also incentivised by the task design to continue practising on their own. The authors recognise that clip selection could have responded better to the students' individual needs and that motivation should have been considered as a variable to be more closely controlled.

Also in the Chinese primary and secondary school setting, Wakefield (2014) believes that dubbing is comparable if not superior in some respects to textual dramatisation in terms of language learning applicability. Even though task design seems to indicate that

the author has very young learners in mind, he suggests – almost as an afterthought – that creative dubbings might also be beneficial. In other words, he was proposing that students creating their own version of the script should be added to the modality as a language-learning activity which requires the activation of higher-order thinking skills (Krathwohl 2002).

In university contexts, Chiu's (2012) experiment proved inconclusive after using dubbing as a supplementary tool to teach pronunciation (intonation and effusiveness) to Chinese students. After completing a single task, which consisted in dubbing a 10-minute clip live in front of the whole class (the voices were not recorded but read out loud in front of a projecting screen with the video muted), the author observes that “[...] the nature of the focus-on-form tasks embedded in synchronous film dubbing is not entirely in accordance with the principles of communicative language teaching because learners produce utterances through internalisation” (E26). This type of experimental design, therefore, would require several adaptations prior to implementing a second iteration: the clips should last between one and two minutes, the topics should be student-selected and actual recordings ought to take place for the task to be classified as dubbing.

Finally, it is interesting to note how recent studies, such as Jüngst (2013) and Ghia and Pavesi (2016), insist on the potential of audiovisual translation and, more particularly, dubbing as a task which may be employed to train several language skills at once (production, reception, interaction and mediation), thereby inviting other scholars to concentrate their research efforts on this modality to unveil its true potential in second language acquisition.

III. THE iDUB PROJECT

The iDub project arose as a continuation of iCap, a teacher innovation network carried out a year before so as to assess the potential benefits of intralingual captioning to improve written production and vocabulary skills. Within iCap, the research team created ten ClipFlair activities¹ using ten videos taken from the American sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* (Bays and Thomas 2005–2014) and had students working on their intralingual subtitling for two months, with very positive feedback and learning

outcomes, especially in terms of writing skills enhancement (Talaván et al. 2016). Thus, the idea behind iDub rested upon replicating these ten activities but changing the instructions, so that students were asked to record their voices in a dubbing-like manner, as will be explained in the description of the tasks below, instead of creating subtitles. The participants differed, since they came from various courses and years, but they were all students of the same degree in English Studies at the UNED. The iDub project took place from February to June 2014 and students were involved in the learning tasks from mid-March to mid-May. The main research goals were to analyse the level of oral production skills improvement that students could achieve, as well as to assess their degree of motivation working with dubbing as an active didactic task and to analyse the potential usefulness of the creation of an ad-hoc rubric to assess the students' dubbing productions. In order to reach the corresponding conclusions, the research design made use of language assessment tests, questionnaires and observation. By triangulating data gathering tools, the research team attempted to provide reliable results that could be consistent enough to offer possibilities of replication and partial generalisation of the conclusions derived therein.

III.1. Participants

iDub was presented as an extracurricular activity for first-year undergraduates enrolled in the subject Inglés Instrumental II, which runs through the second semester of the degree in English Studies at the UNED. Students were offered the opportunity to participate in a two-month experience where they could promote their oral skills and earn an extra mark in their final course grade. 25 students volunteered for the task, out of which only 15 worked on the activities and 10 completed all the final tests and questionnaires. It must be noted that the dropout rate in distance learning education is usually high (Lassibille and Navarro Gómez 2008, MEC 2016) and that the activity was quite challenging and demanded many hours of work on the part of the participants involved (two or three hours per task on average plus forum interventions).

The subjects' ages ranged from 18 to 52 (with an average of 34) and all the students who completed the project were native speakers of Spanish. Their level of proficiency in English (according to their own perception) ranged from intermediate to advanced

with almost half of the participants considering their level as upper-intermediate, which is understandable since they were supposed to be taking a course to consolidate B2 level (CEFR, Council of Europe 2001) at the time, and because at least 50% had also lived in an English-speaking country for half a year or longer. However, their proficiency level in terms of skills was irregular, as shown in Figure 1.

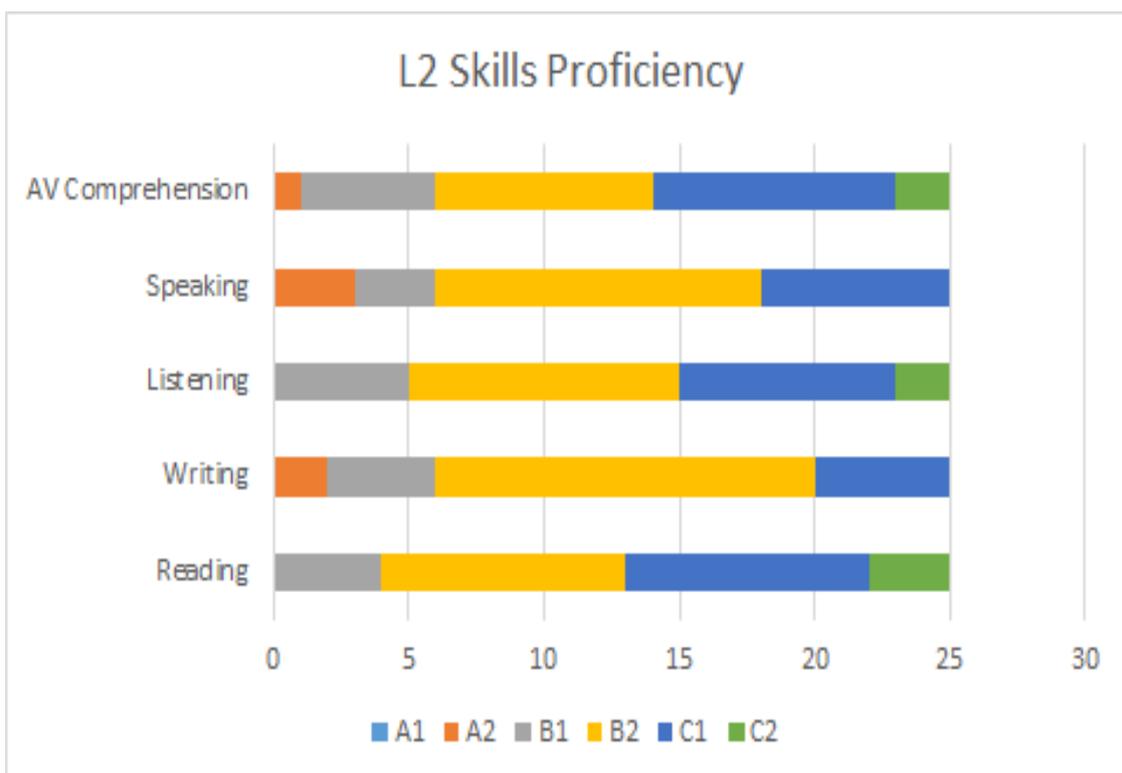


Figure 1. Participants' self-perception of their L2 level of departure.

Hence, as expected, most participants considered themselves more proficient in reception than in production skills and speaking was one of the skills at which they felt less competent.

Finally, it should be noted that all subjects were familiar with the use of audiovisual materials in the language class and almost 80% made frequent use of them (either in their original version or with subtitles) outside the class. All but one (who claimed to be a fandubber, that is to say, a person who dubs online videos voluntarily and because they are usually fans of the corresponding movie or series) had no previous experience in the active use of dubbing tasks and their expectations when they got involved in the

project were centred mainly on the improvement of oral skills: listening and, more intensively, speaking.

III.2. Resources: The clips, the tests and the questionnaires

As stated above, the clips were taken from a previous research project (iCap), where they had been pre-selected according to a series of relevant criteria (Talaván 2013): they were all extracted from the same season (season 9, the last one) of *How I Met Your Mother* and they were short (1–2 minutes long), interesting, humorous, self-contained, included a specific communicative function, and presented a maximum of three characters each (most of them only two). The idea behind this selection was to allow students to understand the clip (even if they did not know the show at all) and make the tasks as motivating as possible to facilitate the recording process, where each student had to do all the voices in every single video.

In order to test the level of proficiency in oral production with which participants started and check their improvement after two months working on the dubbing tasks, two types of speaking test were designed: one focused on pronunciation, the other on fluency. The former instructed subjects to record themselves reading a specific script, trying to sound as natural as possible emulating the original, which was taken from a humorous video (a permanent link to the video was provided to present students with a reference model). The remaining tests, which focused on assessing fluency, included detailed instructions that the students should follow to record themselves for 2–3 minutes performing a specific task with no script involved.

As far as the pre- and the post-questionnaires are concerned, the former was designed to gather information that would describe the sample and provide a clear point of departure to help analyse the results (pre-questionnaire: <https://goo.gl/T5j0gz>). The latter, on the other hand, was aimed at gathering relevant feedback on the potential didactic benefits of this experience, as well as to complement the data derived from the language assessment tests and observation (post-questionnaire: <https://goo.gl/6JA2QK>).

III.3. Procedures: The tasks

The students who volunteered for iDub were registered as members of an online community based on the UNED virtual campus (called aLF). The virtual space devoted to the project contained all the instructions participants were to follow, the tasks themselves, and forums where they could receive the teachers’ assistance at any time.

The dubbing tasks, which were uploaded to the ClipFlair platform (<http://www.clipflair.net/>), all contained similar instructions and had the first two interventions recorded as a sample to help students understand the activity better. Table 1 provides the list of activities, their corresponding links and a reproduction of the general instructions provided.

Table 1. ClipFlair dubbing activities and instructions.

ClipFlair activities	General instructions for dubbing
1- Check-in: https://goo.gl/dRM2wO 2- Advice: https://goo.gl/IH3kp8 3- Phone call - job offer: https://goo.gl/8hZfVb 4- Narrating 1: https://goo.gl/VnQVUm 5- Announcements: https://goo.gl/DZTfaY 6- Complaining: https://goo.gl/pxXgio 7- Requests 1: https://goo.gl/AK7nHH 8- Narrating 2: https://goo.gl/dYJqv4 9- Justifying: https://goo.gl/9iYVRB 10- Requests 2: https://goo.gl/ZntLqH	Dub this scene as naturally as possible (do the voices for the different characters if you can). To dub: – Create ‘captions’ to record the voices, one caption per intervention (just as you can see in the first four examples). You can write the script for the captions in the ‘script box’. Check this video (from minute 1.46) to see how you can create ‘captions’: http://vimeo.com/70557366 – Once you have the ‘caption’ created, you can click on the red button and record your voice for every part (you can erase the first two sample recordings by clicking on the [rec] button). – When you finish, you can save all the audio segments as a single audio file (to merge it with the video elsewhere) by clicking on the [folder] button at the top right of the ‘revoicing’ box. NOTES: – When you dub, try to use a natural pronunciation in English (mimicking works very well). – Try to be as fluent as possible in your interventions. – Exaggerate difficult English sounds so that they ‘sound’ like English (it’s fun!). For Your Information • Do not forget to save your work by clicking the [save] button at the bottom of the activity window. • Feel free to play around, move components by dragging their title bar, close components, etc. If you get lost, refresh your browser (F5) or close and open it again. • For more information, have a look at our website http://clipflair.net • Need help? Go to our forum at http://social.clipflair.net and ask.

As can be derived from the table, all tasks were similar in structure (with different videos and language content) and the main goal was for students to record their voices as naturally as possible trying to respect synchrony as far as they could. Participants were asked to complete the ten activities in the course of the two-month period they devoted to the project and to share their activities with their fellow students in the forums right after completing each of them. In this way, they were able to start a peer-to-peer review process in which their teachers also intervened to provide the necessary feedback.

Once the two-month period was over, a final video conference was held, where students provided feedback on the project and exchanged views on the experience as a whole. Moreover, in a final stage, the students' dubbing tasks were assessed following the specific rubric designed for this project.

III.4. The assessment of the dubbing tasks: A proposal

From the previous overview of dubbing as an AVT modality, as an accessibility technique and as a tool for active language learning, it may be advanced that the potential didactic applications of its integration in formal learning has undoubtedly been hinted at, but by no means fully revealed yet. Sample populations are limited (always below 40 participants), task objectives are loosely delineated, the variables to be controlled are difficult to compute, the evaluation process is influenced by whether or not the task is a course requirement or a voluntary endeavour, content and topic heterogeneous, the length of the projects is frequently short and the data gathered from questionnaires, pre-tests and post-tests (when data triangulation is advisable) are frequently not available in full.

Hence, the following assessment rubric was designed keeping in mind the fundamental purpose of quantifying task results. A total of five fields were established: (a) accuracy, (b) synchrony; (c) pronunciation; (d) intonation, and (e) performance/dramatisation. These are elements which should feature in the final product of an AVT dubbing assignment and, therefore, the rubric may be used to judge the quality of a student's production when working on dubbing tasks. The rubric does not assess any of the stages prior to the final result, as would be the case of group discussions and class debates,

script or transcript writing, revision, translation or, for that matter, technical expertise in manipulating sound and image using computer software. Those considerations should remain separate since they are dissimilar linguistic skills or entirely different competences, which, perhaps, the task was not designed to enhance and, in consequence, measure conveniently. Rather, these aspects should be part of the continuous assessment, during which feedback may be provided by the instructor or other students, depending on the approach taken to evaluate the way participants accomplish a series of goals. Table 2 reproduces this assessment proposal.

Table 2. Proposal for a dubbing assessment rubric.

Assessment	0 – 2.0
1. Accuracy	
2. Synchrony	
3. Pronunciation	
4. Intonation	
5. Performance/dramatisation	
Final mark	
1 – No evidence	0.0–2.5 points
2 – Some evidence	2.6–5.0 points
3 – Good	5.1–7.5 points
4 – Excellent	7.6–10 points
1. Accuracy: The voice recordings are grammatically correct.	
2. Synchrony: There is synchrony between the duration of each voice recording and the duration of the original actor’s corresponding utterances.	
3. Pronunciation: The voice recordings are pronounced correctly.	
4. Intonation: Intonation is natural.	
5. Performance and dramatisation of the dialogues: Performance resembles the original utterances.	

The polyvalent character of this rubric lies in the fact that the five fields of assessment do not distinguish between language combinations, direction of the translation (intralingual, interlingual, direct or reverse), whether the assignment involves mimicking the original version or creating a new one, or the participant’s defining characteristics, thus offering a blueprint for the achievement of a clearer, more encompassing instrument of evaluation. Each of these fields, however, will require further validation through piloting and, to that end, a variety of different implementations which do offer the possibility of being replicated are urgently called

for. Those instances of live dubbing where the final product is ephemeral because of its predominantly performative qualities (as in He and Wasuntarasophit 2015) do not allow for intersubjective or inter-experimental comparisons. Ideally, participants' synchronised voices should be recorded, added to the visual track, edited, assessed and classified in accordance with some type of measurable result. In addition, at least one hour on average should be set aside for every minute of video to be dubbed as part of a project, which does not include the transcript and editing phases, also essential to the procedure although assessed differently. In consequence, Danan's (2010) and Chiu's (2012) use of complete episodes of television series is discouraged, both on didactic and copyright grounds, if dubbing tasks are also to be introduced successfully at other study levels, such as primary and secondary education.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected for this project were analysed from a triple perspective, using three different data gathering tools: language assessment tests, questionnaires and observation.

As far as oral proficiency enhancement is concerned, Table 3 shows the average marks and the standard deviation obtained after assessing the oral pre- and post-tests submitted by the students who completed the project.

Table 3. Language assessment tests data summary.

	Oral pre-test 1	Oral post-test 1	Oral pre-test 2	Oral post-test 2
Average mark	7.375	7.775	7.060	8.250
Standard deviation	0.866	1.387	1.630	1.724

It must be remembered that the first pre-test only asked subjects to record their voices reading a script, aiming at evaluating pronunciation, while the second one looked at fluency through a speaking task where they were asked to improvise following some

pre-established guidelines. The four tests were assessed by two observers following a specific oral production rubric. Table 3 shows how the standard deviation is quite low in all four cases, as expected, provided the group was supposed to have a rather similar level of departure. It is slightly higher in the two post-tests, and this can be interpreted as the sample becoming less homogenous after the variable of dubbing as a didactic task is applied, given that learners typically benefit from each resource differently, according to their level of commitment and, being online distance students, depending on the time they have available to do the tasks. As regards oral skills improvement, a slight change seems to occur in terms of pronunciation when the marks in pre-test and post-test 1 are compared. How relevant this fact may be in terms of the real enhancement derived from the dubbing tasks is to be contrasted with information obtained through the two remaining data gathering tools: questionnaires and observation. However, considering the activity was carried out over just two months, dubbing could potentially be identified as an aid in the students' pronunciation advancement. The difference between pre-test and post-test 2 shows how the amelioration in terms of fluency seems to be more noticeable. We could derive that this enhancement is brought about by the type of work involved in the dubbing tasks, where different skills (especially listening, writing and speaking) interact, and where students can learn about fluency through mimicking native speakers' speech characteristics. However, bearing in mind the small size of the sample and the subjectivity involved in measuring oral skills improvement through a rubric (even if two observers are involved), these data are contrasted and complemented below.

Observation was performed by various researchers involved in iDub and took place during the whole project, specifically through the students' participation in the forums, the assessment of the dubbing tasks using the rubric described in the previous section, and the feedback obtained from the final videoconference.

Apart from the messages of the general forum and an additional one created to address technical issues, students had one virtual space dedicated to each dubbing task. There, they were expected to share the links to their dubbed activities once finished and to provide peer-to-peer feedback. In relation to this, Table 4 compares two subjects' views on the didactic use of dubbing in L2 taken from the forums devoted to the first and the tenth activity to analyse their evolution.

Table 4. Students' forum interactions on their L2 improvement.

Forum task 1	Forum task 10
<p>S2: I'm satisfied but I think I could improve my pronunciation a little bit more. Nevertheless, it's a bit difficult when you try to adapt the sentences to the timing. About S4's clip, you've done a good work [sic], but for the next one, try to be more natural. Imagine that you are in that situation. It's much more funny! And try to pay attention to some consonants that I'm sure you can do better, for example "r" and "sh". Good work and cheer up!</p>	<p>S2: S1 as usual has an awesome accent, she sounds like a native, on the other hand some of the dubs are cut at the end. S4 is so natural. Besides, your dub is probably one of the most accurate relating to the time. And finally, S3, it is brehtaking the way you improve your dub from the first one to the last task, even with quick chunks that are very difficult to achieve.</p>
<p>S3: I think you have done a good work [sic]. I find that S1's pronunciation is very "English", but on the other hand, S2's intonation is more natural (it sounds more like original actors do). Maybe you both can try to improve these aspects for the next clip.</p>	<p>S3: Hi S4! As always, your intonation is good, and you've made an effort in order to improve your pronunciation. I think you have succeed [sic]! Even though this is your last clip, keep in your mind [sic] all the tips you received and try to improve a little bit every time. I'll do my best in order to do that too. It's been a real pleasure to watch and comment your work.</p>

As the previous examples show, most students were especially concerned with improving their pronunciation. Hence, the slightly less evident pronunciation enhancement that was shown in Table 3 is counterbalanced by the students' reflections. The encouragement students provided one another with from the outset should also be noted, as well as how motivated all of them felt both in the individual dubbing work and in the collaborative peer-to-peer assessment stage.

Moving on now to the assessment of the students' dubbing tasks, the average total score obtained in all activities was good, considering it was the first time learners faced dubbing activities of this sort: they obtained an average of 6.7 (out of 10), using the rubric described before. The best results were recorded in the field of pronunciation (with an average score of 1.6 out of 2) and especially intonation (1.9 out of 2). This can be interpreted in terms of the students' eagerness for imitation, trying to sound as natural as possible, just as was suggested in the task instructions. The worst results were seen in terms of synchrony (1.1 out of 2) and performance/dramatisation (1.2 out of 2). This fact was somehow expected given the novelty of the task, the challenge involved in synchronisation (adjusting the voices to the characters' mouths) and the fact that subjects were not supposed to have any drama skills. Hence, a clear advance in terms of

pronunciation and intonation (that also intervene when it comes to improving fluency) is also confirmed at this stage of observation, on the basis of the assessment rubric.

The final videoconference researchers organised once the project had come to an end provided relevant feedback to complement previously discussed data. One subject's opinions are presented here as a sample of the type of commentary that was provided: (S5) “[dubbing] is extremely useful, very interesting, very stressful also because of the timing [...] But it was very good and I am looking forward to repeating it. [...] it was extremely fun. I think it was perfectly organised, perfectly scheduled”. As regards suggestions for improvement, the videoconference provided an important hint that may be considered for further research in the field: the possible reduction in the number of activities was put forward by several participants, since ten dubbing tasks in the space of two months, on top of everything else, had implied too many hours' work and might have been one of the reasons behind the dropout rate.

Turning now to the analysis of the answers gathered from the post-questionnaire, it should be noted that the students' perception of their own improvement in the main L2 communicative skills thanks to the dubbing tasks is significant, as shown in Figure 2.

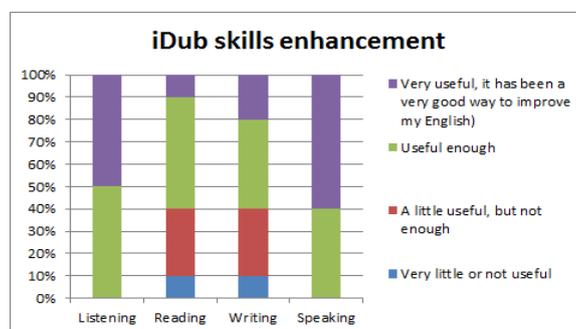


Figure 2. Students' perceptions of L2 improvement.

Subjects felt oral skills to have been promoted the most, coinciding with the results obtained in their oral post-tests. The marked feeling of advancement in terms of listening skills may have been an important aid in the development of fluency, since by constantly being faced with authentic oral language, learners can understand and so produce more fluent utterances. It is noticeable how participants also considered the other skills at work when performing the dubbing task, although to a lesser degree.

After all, they had to write the script in order to record their voices and they also read hundreds of comments in the forums during the course of the project. If we put this together with their positive perceptions in terms of vocabulary enhancement and the development of communication strategies, the dubbing tasks could be said to present didactic potential as L2 activities that contribute to develop communicative skills in an integrated manner. Participants also considered the project had aided them to gain self-confidence in the use of English, to reflect on their own language learning and to develop both their creative and their ICT skills. Most learners judged the selected clips to be enjoyable and motivating and they perceived the ClipFlair platform to be a bit hard in technical terms. The researchers had to admit that the recording component of ClipFlair was not working as perfectly as expected at the time and agreed on the possibility of trying other alternatives in the future. However, one comment by S3 in the videoconference somehow minimises this perception: “[ClipFlair] is a great platform. I know many language teachers and I have recommended it to them all”.

In the same line as the opinions gathered from observation, the questionnaire revealed that 77.8% of the subjects would like to dub again, even if half of the students considered it a rather difficult task. Within their suggestions for future tasks, 100% would opt for TV series again, 71.4% for movies or documentaries, 57.1% for news programmes, and 28.6% for commercials. When asked about the possibility of trying other types of dubbing, 55.6% would like to try interlingual reversed (L1 to L2), while a lower proportion (33.3%) would rather stay in the intralingual (L2-L2) combination.

The data presented in this section have helped to reveal intralingual dubbing in L2 as a motivating, challenging, and highly engaging task, albeit a very demanding one, but also clearly rewarding. In terms of oral skills improvement, the three different data gathering tools have clearly pointed towards a relevant enhancement in terms of both pronunciation and fluency, although the small size of the sample demands further and more systematic related studies.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has endeavoured to make the needs of research in AVT modalities more explicit by putting forward some of the issues that affect the available corpus of experimental approaches to dubbing tasks as an active tool for language learning.

The lessons to be gathered from the iDub project, in which the ClipFlair platform and other key technological resources, such as the digital infrastructure of an online distance university, favoured the successful accomplishment of an innovative didactic initiative, are indeed relevant. The presentation of AVT-related tasks as voluntary and extracurricular activities does affect sample population behaviour in a variety of ways: student commitment tends to shift between two undesirable extremes: completion of all tasks in an extremely short time span, which has an impact on the quality of the final products and impedes continuous assessment from taking place, or premature abandonment of the project (dropout). The inclusion of AVT tasks in the official curriculum, even in the case of pilot experiences, would allow for longitudinal studies to be carried out and for an increased level of reliability in the results obtained from experimental and control groups. To this end, perhaps the establishment of modular programmes in secondary and primary school levels might help researchers to find coherent counterarguments for the statements that, quite often, are weighed against the didactic potential of dubbing (and other AVT modalities) in educational environments. To boot, in spite of the popularity of the field and the attention that is being paid to it by academia, no hard evidence and convincing long-term, statistically-relevant findings have yet been shared with the scientific community.

To overcome these misgivings, a more tactical standpoint should be tried. Although it would be relevant to highlight that other AVT modalities, such as voice-over, may be tried to offer practitioners new ideas to be put to the test; perhaps it would be even more convenient to agree on the most feasible way to produce a common framework of reference to advance in the application of AVT in a classroom where, so far, the audiovisual continues to be regarded as a complement (and therefore facultative) which rarely, if ever, features in standardised testing at any level. Replication of similar experiments under very similar conditions does not detract from the overall value of a piece of research; on the contrary, it may fundamentally contribute to the confirmation

of relevant findings or the refutation of unsubstantiated claims. This, however, is hardly possible when the language combinations selected, the modality under study, the time devoted to observation and data gathering, as well as the characteristics of the participants cannot be paralleled with what little has been published.

NOTES

¹. **ClipFlair** is an online platform specially designed to use audiovisual translation modalities as a didactic resource in L2 education (Baños and Sokoli 2015).

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Received: 20 December 2016

Accepted: 19 February 2017

Cite this article as:

Talaván, Noa and Castol, Tomás. 2017. “iDub – The Potential of Intralingual Dubbing in Foreign Language Learning: How to Assess the Task”. *Language Value* 9 (1), 62-88. Jaume I University ePress: Castelló, Spain. <http://www.e-revistas.uji.es/languagevalue>.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/LanguageV.2017.9.4>

ISSN 1989-7103

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