

Written response – Projection 2 – Unit 3

During the past two years, my main struggle has been adapting to a new way of working, as I came into the course with a fixed and polished approach shaped by my BA background. The idea of standardisation and working within strict rules has often created obstacles for me, but at the same time, it has pushed me to constantly question my practice, both explicitly and implicitly, something that has been present in all of my projects.

My goal in Projection 2 was never to create a universal system or establish meaning but rather to investigate what happens when it starts to untangle. After acknowledging that, my focus shifted towards the potential of subtitling and its standardised nature.

My project explores how subtitles, which are primarily used as a standardised tool for translation, can become instead an artistic medium for interpretation, ambiguity, and emotional connection. What happens when subtitles are not just used to explain the audio but to play with it, contradict it, or even fail?

Subtitles are usually expected to clarify meaning, but I wanted to push them in a new direction: to reveal confusion, gaps and emotional tension. By using voice notes, which are intimate and messy, and combining them with animated subtitles that glitch or contradict them, I'm exploring how language works when it doesn't fully work. It's a way to talk about misunderstanding, cultural friction, bilingual identity, and emotional tone, all through something as simple as explaining how to do laundry or cook pasta. The project draws directly from my personal experience as an Italian living in London. I constantly shift between Italian and English, not just in formal settings, but in everyday life, in texts, voice notes, misunderstandings, and half-translated thoughts. This bilingual friction is part of how I experience the world. It's messy, funny, emotional — and that's exactly what I wanted to bring into the project. By playing with voice and subtitles, I aim to capture the confusion and vulnerability that often come with living between languages. The context is domestic and familiar, but it also becomes a metaphor for navigating in-between spaces and moments of multilingual relationships.

I have been testing how voice and text interact through experimental video work, using real voice recordings as a base and documenting my enquiry through different daily situations. Rather than focusing solely on graphic representation, I worked with animation, audio editing, typography, and translation, exploring how the listening experience shifts depending on how subtitles are used. At times, I treated subtitles as if they had their own identity, mocking the viewer and playing with them through intentional mistranslations, broken subtitles, and bilingual fragmented text.

My practice can be placed within multilingual contexts, especially with those working with language and translation. It can be meaningful to designers, and researchers interested in how language can be disrupted and reinterpreted through visual and sonic forms. It resonates with people who live between languages and cultures and, who in everyday life face what is miscommunication. By challenging conventional approaches to subtitling, this project aims to open up new possibilities for interpretation and empathy in audio-visual communication.

The process was inspired by artists who worked with experimental subtitling, translation and graphic design. One of my key references is Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975),

which uses gestures and performance to critique the roles of women in domestic settings, specifically in the kitchen. Her way of transforming objects and performative actions into tools of resistance was very inspiring for my process and it gave me the courage to use my voice to document my enquiry and experiment in my video. It was very impactful for me how she turned everyday speech into a performance which apparently is very chaotic but effective for what she successfully conveyed.

Christine Sun Kim's *Close Readings* (2005) was very impactful for my work because of her visual approach, which effectively shows different points of view in her work. As a deaf artist, her interpretation made me critically think about my work, and most importantly, it reminded me that sound is not just something to be heard, but also can offer an experience that can be felt, interpreted and translated visually. Her comparison of different interpretations of sound allowed me to go beyond accessibility and imagine different layers of translating audio, without losing creativity, ambiguity and subjectivity.

In her book *Born Translated* (2015), Rebecca L. Walkowitz talks about how, nowadays, works are made with a translation already in mind, so they can circulate quickly across cultures and different languages. This process often sacrifices these works' identities to be spread more globally. Inspired by her work, I decided to include mistakes intentionally. Rather than using neutral, correct and fixed language, I tried to play with the language to create tension and to make the viewer sit with the discomfort of not fully understanding what is been said and to make them reflect on how meaning is "negotiated", not simply delivered.

Last but not least, one of my favourite key references was the conversation between the actors Roberto Benigni and Steven Wright in *Strange to Meet You* (2003). Their dialogue plays with rhythm, cultural misunderstanding, and performative language. This blend of absurdity and sincerity has influenced how I construct and voice my scripts, inspiring me to approach my practice with a real and ironic tone that helps me convey my concept more naturally. My work is less about translating content and more about staging an encounter between sound and text, voice and interpretation.

My practice is located within the fields of video making, sound design, and graphic communication design, which challenge conventional text in screen-based media. Moreover, platforms like cinema, television, and social media use subtitling as a form of translation that has to work quickly to be clear and accessible. It also relates to translation in everyday life situations, where people have to switch between languages all the time. By using Italian and English voice recordings and subtitles, my project engages with hybrid multilingual situations, where translation is spontaneous, emotional, and full of improvisation.

My work combines audio editing, scriptwriting, subtitling, video motion and animation. The process consists of recording voice messages – sometimes improvised, sometimes scripted – and then it shapes around the translation and animation of subtitles. Being a musician, I know how important rhythm is in our performance, and so it was in this project. Timing and pacing are essential for my subtitles to interact with the audience, and to create different routes of listening and reading them.

Theoretically, this project engages with discourses of standardisation, linguistic barriers, accessibility and multicultural experiences. These concepts highlight how language is never

truly fixed or stable. Artists like Christine Sun Kim and Martha Rosler, as I mentioned earlier, inspired my project to challenge the neutrality of subtitles and explore, with ambiguity and irony, different mechanisms to communicate with the viewer.

Reference list:

Rosler, M., *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, video performance, 1975. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuZympOIGC0>

Kim, C.S. (2015) *Close Readings*. Available at: <https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/close-readings-jeffrey-mansfield-ariel-baker-gibbs-alison-odaniel-lauren-ridloff-117969>.

Walkowitz, Rebecca L., *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015)

Benigni, Roberto and Wright, Steven, '*Strange to Meet You*', in *Coffee and Cigarettes*, dir. by Jim Jarmusch, USA: Lakeshore Entertainment, 2003.