

AVT and Agency: Revoicing to Give a Voice to Minoritized Language Communities

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Abstract

AVT scholars have tackled the meagre representation of minoritized languages (including sign language) in audiovisual media on streaming platforms. Global streaming platforms tend to adopt a “one size fits all” approach in limiting their language settings to a minimum. While the users of minoritized languages often are proficient in the dominant language of their region, it is crucial that content is available in their smaller — and often endangered — languages as well. Some streaming platforms of local public service broadcasters try to accommodate this need. Still, the questions remain: to what extent do minoritized language users, as well as speakers of the majority languages, encounter these minoritized languages in audiovisual content? How linguistically diverse and inclusive is this content? And what role can audiovisual translation play in this? This article discusses audiovisual translation in and out of minoritized languages, with a special focus on revoicing. The children’s content broadcast by the Swedish public service broadcaster in the national minority languages and sign language is used as a case study, but also the agency of grassroots initiatives is discussed.

Key words: AVT for children, revoicing, minoritized languages, linguistic diversity, sign language.

Introduction

The important role translators can play in society was already addressed by Maria Tymoczko (2007, p. 200) who stated they “can be effective activists and empowered agents of social change”. She made a distinction between two modes of activism: *resistance*, which is typically reactive against something, and *engagement*, which endeavours to be proactive (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 209ff). Resistant translation can, for instance, challenge or even subvert dominant Western ideologies and linguistic norms. A thought-provoking example of translators challenging linguistic norms is what Luise von Flotow (1997, p. 24) referred to as the “overt interventionist feminist translation” of Canadian translators in the 1970s and 1980s. By way of example, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood (quoted in von Flotow, 1997) deliberately tampered with the English spelling to make a linguistic statement by for instance spelling “author” as “auther”.

Similarly, subtitlers can leave their signature on audiovisual translation. Abé Mark Nornes (2000, p. 32) famously called for a subversion of traditional subtitling norms, which he termed *corrupt*, in putting forward what he coined “abusive” subtitles. Nornes used fan subtitling practises of the Japanese animation genre anime as an example of skilfully mediating viewers’ audiovisual experience with foreign content. These subtitles tend to copy Japanese terms from the soundtrack, but also footnotes can be added to clarify certain culture-specific aspects. All such translation strategies would typically be avoided because of the time and space constraints and because subtitles are not supposed to draw attention to themselves (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2021, p. 93).

With *engagement*, Tymoczko referred to translators joining forces and actively participating in movements such as the Gaelic Revival movement in support of the Irish culture and language in Ireland at the end of the 19th Century. In AVT today, we see a similar engagement with, for instance, activist subtitlers “maximizing the visibility of non-hegemonic voices within mainstream-oriented audiovisual cultures” (Pérez-González, 2016, p. 118). Luis Pérez-González (2014, p. 70) differentiates between “aesthetic” and “political activism” when discussing such networks of engaged amateur subtitlers. An example of the former is the aforementioned “fan subbing” of Japanese anime, challenging traditional subtitling norms. By the same token, “fan dubbers” can dub programmes into minority languages, but sign language users have also been developing browser extensions to offer sign language interpreting.

Against the backdrop of globalisation, some majority languages have gained a very strong position to the detriment of middle-sized, smaller and minority languages in audiovisual media. As Michael Cronin pointed out, because of the dynamic nature of languages and their position vis-a-vis other languages “‘Minority’ is the expression of a relation not an essence” (Cronin, 1995, p. 86). Gaeilge (Irish) is a case in point, as it was once the majority language of Ireland but is now an endangered minority language. Any language can become a minority language, and as Cronin ascertained at the end of the 20th century “in the case of the Internet, most languages have been minoritized” (Cronin, 1998, p. 151). That is why, the term *minoritized* languages is often preferred and also used here.

Indeed, Tymoczko emphasised the importance of the translator's agency, not in the least to empower minoritized voices, especially in the light of globalisation. Back in 2007, she concluded:

We are at a critical point in time because of the rapid networking of the world and current struggles for global power. There are two possible directions these forces can take us – toward a homogenized world in which the local is subsumed in a generalized and banalized dominant culture, or toward a world in which there is a meeting of difference and a validation of the local (cf. Cronin, 2006, p. 127, 129, and sources cited). Both visions of the future are possible and in both scenarios translation will play a central role. (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 323)

So, where are we today? Focusing on audiovisual media, we see an ongoing struggle between globalisation, glocalisation and this “validation of the local” in global Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD) platforms, the streaming platforms of local public service broadcasters, and freely accessible platforms, such as YouTube which are also used by non-professional content providers. Audiovisual translation is often available on these platforms. Subtitles can be either activated or uploaded, yet there are large differences in terms of the options available on the different platforms – if at all. In the following section, we take a closer look at some of these platforms and also at what language activists have done to compensate for the lack of content in their respective minoritized languages.

1. Activism and Minoritized Voices

1.1. SVOD and the Disruption of the Media Landscape in Minoritized Language Areas

A fear of cultural homogenisation by globalisation has been around for a while, and with international streaming platforms entering the European market, it has boosted smaller local content providers. Public service broadcasters, like SVT in Sweden, try to compete with popular international streaming platforms and provide what appears to be an endless supply of content. At the end of January 2024, more than 3,500 programmes, both old and new, could be streamed from the SVT Play streaming platform and 1,720 from UR Play. In Dutch-speaking Belgium, significantly less content is available from the public service broadcaster's platform, but special attention is paid to local content in the local Dutch variety. Moreover, the quota for local (Dutch-language) content broadcast in primetime since 2012 has been increased from 50% to 65%. Also, a so-called “Flemish Netflix”, Streamz, was established in 2020 focusing on local content. In Austria and Switzerland, similar streaming platforms were established with special attention to offering local productions. There are also initiatives from minority language activists, such as the SVOD platform My culture+ (2024), from which only minority language content can be streamed.

Interestingly, compared to other global streaming platforms, such as Disney+, Netflix actually offer more international content. It is known to adopt a long tail strategy, in that it not only relies on mainstream titles but also taps into niche content to attract and retain a large and diverse audience; this also implies content from smaller regions in smaller languages (Neira et al., 2023). As a result,

Netflix invests in non-English content produced outside of the United States and offers titles in approximately 60 languages, such as Hindi, Spanish, Japanese, Mandarin, Korean, Arabic, French, but also – be it to a lesser extent – smaller languages such as Czech, Wolof and Yiddish (Moore, 2020). Audiovisual translation, mainly subtitles and dubbed versions, is available in around 40 languages (Neira et al., 2023, p. 10). However, these audiovisual translations are not consistently offered in all regions and for all titles. One could say content providers seem to have constructed “imagined audiences” when offering a selection of language settings (see O’Sullivan (2018) who introduced the term “imagined spectators”). More specifically, audiovisual translation is available in smaller languages like Croatian, Czech, Danish, Finnish, Hungarian, Icelandic, Norwegian, including the minority languages Basque, Catalan and Galician (Moore, 2022). The latter is the result of a Spanish law imposing quotas on streaming platforms (De Ridder, forthcoming). Nonetheless, it is important to note that audiovisual translation is not available in every European language, amongst others, Baltic languages are not represented, let alone other minority languages protected by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Nor is Sign language interpreting systematically offered, let alone in all sign languages, moreover, according to Ethnologue (2024), there are at present 159 different sign languages.

As far as pluricentric languages with different dominant and non-dominant national varieties are concerned (De Ridder, 2020), we notice that French audiovisual translations are available in both French and Canadian French, but this is not the case for all pluricentric languages. What is more, not all different AVT modes are available in these languages and language varieties. For instance, some animation is available in both a Netherlandic Dutch and a Belgian Dutch dubbed version. However, subtitles are only available in one Dutch version. Thus, the “validation of the local languages” is not always a given when watching (translated) content offered by international streaming platforms. To compensate for this lack of representation of minorized languages, grassroots initiatives have used platforms like YouTube, which resonate well with younger audiences, to upload their own dubbed versions, for instance. Fan translation (Dwyer, 2018) has been around for some time, typically to provide audiovisual translation for niche content cherishing the particularities of this content. Nevertheless, language activism can also drive the motivation behind these “amateur” translations. Notably, individuals have taken it upon themselves to dub a handful of children's animation episodes into their minority or regional languages and share these versions on video-sharing platforms (De Ridder, forthcoming), but also other initiatives (e.g. Pérez Pereiro & Soliña Barreiro González, 2023). Crowdsourcing can also serve as a means to fund projects involving audiovisual translation in minority languages, encompassing not only “fan subbing” and “dubbing”, but also media accessibility, such as sign language interpreting for the deaf and hard of hearing with the help of browser extensions. Similarly, different subtitled versions into minoritized languages can be made available for download on subtitle platforms. Also, speech-to-text technology and machine translation have been deployed to provide more AVT (e.g. live subtitles) with varying degrees of success, not to mention the elephant in the room: artificial intelligence and deepfake dubbing.

1.2. The Early Days of Audiovisual Media and Minoritized Language Representation

Before the advent of international streaming platforms, audiovisual fiction was distributed mainly through local cinemas and local television. Public service broadcasters, in particular, have played an important role in providing content in minoritized languages, both local and imported content dubbed into the minoritized languages. The latter has been studied by AVT scholars with a special interest in minoritized languages such as Barambones Zubiria (2012) and O’Connell (2003). By the same token, sign language interpreting is gaining more interest from a specific AVT perspective (e.g. Tamayo, 2022).

Unlike written fiction, the target audience of audiovisual translations was not the entire language area that can cross several national borders. Television programmes broadcast by the public service broadcasters primarily aimed at local viewers, and imported content was then translated into the local language (variety). In the case of Belgium, the Flemish public broadcaster provided its own subtitles for the programmes it broadcasts since the 1970s. Films shown in cinemas are also subtitled separately for the Belgian market since bilingual subtitles are used in both French and Dutch. Dubbing is also available for the younger target audience. In the early days of dubbing, only one version of animated content was distributed for the entire Dutch language area. This version was usually recorded in the Netherlands. When Disney films were released in two separate Dutch versions in the 1990s, this changed, and for each market, a separate dubbed version was recorded.

In the case of Dutch-speaking Belgium, there is a good balance between local and imported content, amongst others because of the quota imposed on the public service broadcaster in their licence agreement with the local Flemish government. In terms of linguistic diversity, locally produced content tends to better reflect this diversity by not only offering productions in which several languages are used, but also different varieties of languages including non-native accents (De Ridder, 2022). The use of other languages and accents, however, is usually neutralised in the audiovisual translation into one language (variety) (De Bonis, 2015; Voellmer & Zabalbeascoa, 2014). Particularly, dubbed programmes tend to be entirely monolingual. In subtitled programmes, the original soundtrack is still audible, but typically the subtitles are monolingual, with the exception of the aforementioned bilingual subtitles.

Today, we also notice that local – often public service broadcasters – streaming platforms have made important improvements when it comes to making audiovisual media more accessible to media consumers with visual and auditory impairments. In this regard, they really set an example for the global streaming platforms. While subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing has been around for some time, nowadays some content is available with sign language interpreting or even “in” sign language, but also audio description is offered for the blind and visually impaired. This fosters more inclusive content provision for both older and, to a lesser extent, younger audiences. The next section discusses this representation of minoritized voices in children’s content in Sweden.

2. Minoritized Languages in Sweden and Their Representation in Audiovisual Media

Under its Language Act, *Språklag* (2009:600) (Sveriges riksdag, 2009), Sweden recognises five official minority languages: Sámi, Finnish, Meänkieli, Yiddish and Romani Čhib. The first three languages are so-called “autochthonous languages” (Rindler Schjerve, 2006, p. 107) and also territorially linked, while Yiddish and Romani Čhib are so-called “allochthonous” minority languages (Rindler Schjerve, 2006, p. 107) that came to the country more recently through immigration and are not linked to the Swedish territory. The Language Act states that all of these languages have to be protected and promoted alongside Swedish Sign Language. The country also signed and ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to protect and promote the use of these languages. The European Council regularly evaluates the implementation of such measures to protect and promote regional or minority languages. According to the most recent Evaluation report (European Council, 2022), Sweden was lagging behind in fully implementing the Charter, for instance, when it comes to media representation:

Although the number and percentage of new productions in minority languages has slightly increased in public radio and television for Finnish and Sami, there was no progress in respect of Meänkieli, Romani and especially Yiddish, making the latter two largely invisible in the media. (2022, p. 3)

Focusing on audiovisual media in general, the Swedish public service broadcaster offers content in all five minority languages. This broadcaster consists of Sveriges Television (SVT), Sveriges Radio (SR), and Sveriges Utbildningsradio (UR). The latter focuses on educational radio and television content working in close collaboration with the Swedish National Agency for Education. While there are no clear quotas, the Swedish public service broadcaster’s license agreement states that efforts need to be made to represent these languages in its audiovisual content. Remarkably, there is also mention of providing content in other languages, that have no official status in Sweden, as well.

The latest license agreement (2020–2025) with Sveriges Television and Utbildningsradio specified that the amount of (new) content provided in all five national minority languages and sign language has to increase compared to 2019, which boasted the highest figures (Sveriges Utbildningsradio, 2022, p. 76ff). This, arguably, is not very ambitious in light of the stronger measures that are needed to improve media representation in these languages. In 2022, all minority language content broadcast by both channels did exceed the 2019 data (Sveriges Utbildningsradio, 2022, p. 76ff). Yet, with the exception of Yiddish content, which more than doubled, overall only small increases could be recorded (Sveriges Utbildningsradio, 2022, p. 76ff). In the following study, audiovisual content aimed specifically at pre-schoolers and primary and secondary school children, available through these platforms, is analysed. In this content, for instance, Yiddish is significantly less present compared to the other national minority languages.

Both SVT and UR have their own separate streaming platforms, and both offer audiovisual children’s content. UR’s contains predominantly educational content, which is mostly locally produced. Yet it has to be said that UR’s content is mainly used in schools and not that often watched at home. The

latest viewing ratings also revealed significant differences, with SVT having a daily reach of 19.7% compared to UR's daily reach of only 0.3% (MMS, 2023, p. 21). Only a few UR programmes are also available on SVT Play. Vice versa, SVT also has educational content, yet these programmes are not available on UR. For instance, the programme *Storyn Bakom* [The story behind] (Sveriges Television, 2022–2023), which intends to make children more aware of the dangers of the internet and social media, is only available on SVT in Swedish and in 3 minority languages. Both organisations, hence, operate separately and there is hardly any collaboration. SVT Play's children's content is also more wide-ranging and also contains imported commercial animations, e.g. *Paw Patrol* (Sveriges Television, 2017–2019). Such programmes are not available on UR, as they are not in line with its specific public service assignment. SVT's programming consists of fiction (both live-action and animation), entertainment shows, vlogs, documentaries, children's news etc. In order to accommodate this need for more content in the minority languages, audiovisual translation has mainly been adopted, as only a few programmes were actually produced in the minority languages. Furthermore, most programmes are fairly new, especially UR's content.

An overview of minority language dubbing for children (De Ridder, forthcoming) showed that some European public service broadcasters especially invest in locally produced content in their minority languages, often with the help of local children's book authors, while others focus on translating imported content. Some endeavour to offer new content in the minority languages through audiovisual translation, while others mostly have reruns of older translated content. The latter does not seem to be the case in Sweden, as most of their children's content is quite new. Ideally, there is a balance between locally produced content created by the minority community in the minority language and audiovisual translations of imported programmes. When programmes are imported and translated into minoritized languages, they rarely include hugely popular commercial programmes like *Paw Patrol* (Spin Master Entertainment, 2013–present) that are also very visible in children's merchandising. While these programmes are broadcast by SVT, they are only available in Swedish. No dubbed version is available in the national minority languages.

In the following sections, the audiovisual children's content available through SVT's and UR's platforms is analysed, and the use of AVT with regard to the national minority languages and sign language is studied. To that end, all children's content available on both SVT and UR's streaming platforms on 31 January 2024 was analysed to establish how linguistically diverse it was and to what extent AVT contributed to the representation of minoritized languages in this content. The focus was programmes in the official minority languages and sign language. Both platforms listed content in all five minority languages, sometimes even additional versions in different varieties of Romani and different Sámi languages. Comparing SVT's children's content with UR's content revealed that there are some interesting differences, which are discussed in the following sections.

2.1. AVT in and out of Swedish and the National Minority Languages

On UR Play, 628 audiovisual children's programmes could be streamed on 31 January 2024. It has to be said, however, that the platform lists and counts different language versions of the same programme separately, which explains this high number. For instance, the Swedish animation *Pinos dagbok* [Pino's diary] (Sveriges Utbildningsradio, 2020) is not only available in Swedish but also in 35 other audio languages. As a result, it is listed 36 times in total. Of these 628 programmes, only around 270 are unique programmes. In 112 unique programmes, a national minority language could be heard. These figures are recorded in Table 1. In the remaining programmes, Swedish and a wide range of other audio languages that have no official status in Sweden were used (e.g. Arabic, Dari, Russian, Turkish). On SVT Play, hardly any children's content was available in languages that have no official status in Sweden. About 360 unique children's programmes, mainly fiction and entertainment, could be streamed, and the vast majority were in spoken Swedish. In 39 programmes, a national minority language could be heard. Remarkably, only 3 children's programmes were available in Yiddish on SVT Play. UR offered 12 programmes in Yiddish, still significantly fewer compared to the programmes available in the other minority languages. This was also addressed in the aforementioned evaluation report, although the report did not focus on children's content specifically. To sum up, UR Play contains the highest volume of children's content in the minoritized languages: 112 programmes. See Table 1. below. It is significantly more linguistically diverse, especially because of the additional content in the aforementioned non-official languages.

Table 1

Minority-Language Content for Children Available on Both Streaming Platforms on 31-01-2024

audio languages	SVT Play (n=360)	UR Play (n=±270)
content in/with Finnish	7	27
content in/with Meänkieli	11	27
content in/with Romani	8	22
content in/with Sámi	10	24
content in/with Yiddish	3	12
total children's content in/with the national minority languages	39 (10.8%)	112 (±41.5%)

The programmes that are available in the national minority languages can be divided into three groups, firstly, local productions in the minority language. The Swedish public service broadcaster does not offer that many programmes that were actually produced in the minority language. Most

of these programmes are, moreover, bilingual, meaning that the minority language is used in combination with the majority language, Swedish. Only a few programmes are entirely in the minority language, like the puppet show for pre-schoolers *Binnabánnas* [Binnabánnas] (Sveriges Television, 2018), which is available in North, South and Lule Sámi. Secondly, some of the programmes produced in one minority language, like the crafts programme *Pyssligt* [Crafty] (Sveriges Television, 2022), were then recreated in other minority languages based on the same concept: in this case, children and an accompanying adult doing crafts together. In this way, there is a version with speakers of Finnish and Romani. Thirdly, there are programmes that were originally produced in Swedish — rarely in another language — that were then revoiced (Chaume, 2012, p. 4) in the minority language. Different modes of revoicing are used, namely lip-sync dubbing, in which an attempt is made to match the translated words to the mouth movements, partial dubbing of only one or two characters, and off-screen narration conveying the words of an invisible narrator. The latter is comparable to voice-over that is typically used in documentaries or news broadcasts, only voice-over tends to include a fraction of the original spoken words at first, which are then muted and replaced by a recording of the translation. Such traces of the original source text were not found in the revoiced versions under scrutiny.

Nevertheless, in all of these programmes, including the local productions in the minority language, AVT is used. Programmes with audio in the minority language are made accessible with subtitles to Swedish speakers who do not master the minority languages. Similarly, all content in sign language comes with a track in spoken Swedish and often also an option to include same-language subtitling. However, there is an important difference between UR Play and SVT Play, when it comes to making minority language content accessible to the speakers of the majority language. Almost all minority language content on UR Play comes with closed subtitles in both the minority language and Swedish. This allows viewers to watch the programmes with or without the subtitles of their choice. By contrast, this is usually not the case on SVT Play. Here, only subtitles in Swedish can be activated; what is more, most programmes even come with open subtitles in Swedish that cannot be turned off. Such open subtitles in the majority languages have been problematised in the past (e.g. De Ridder & O’Connell, 2018, p. 402). UR’s decision to offer both the minority language and the majority language in the closed subtitles, therefore, is more beneficial for two reasons. On the one hand, the viewer can choose to turn on Swedish subtitles if they need them or simply do without them if they do not need them. On the other hand, the viewer can also choose to watch the content with same-language subtitles in the minority language. In doing so, viewers read what they hear, and because of the bi-modal input, the same language subtitles in the minority language contribute to children’s minority language development (see f.i. Kothari, 2008). The impact of the different subtitle versions is actually something UR could also add to the pedagogical material accompanying all of its content on its platform. This would enable co-viewing adults to make informed decisions on how to access this content in the most beneficial way for minority language users.

The programmes that were produced in the minority language often reveal code-switching and translanguaging (García, 2009) from the minority language to the majority language and back. These programmes are usually set in Sweden, and particularly the children in these programmes easily

switch to Swedish when presented with a Swedish speaker who does not (sufficiently) speak their minoritized language, for instance. Yet, spontaneous translanguaging (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017) also occurs when they unconsciously introduce Swedish in their speech, even when they are communicating with a fellow minority language speaker. While accompanying adults tend to deliberately use the minority language consistently, the younger minority language speakers may – often unconsciously – respond to them in Swedish. This is a phenomenon that is typical for children growing up bilingually. When the majority language is used in their minority language programmes, however, it is usually not subtitled into the minority language with open subtitles by the Swedish public service broadcaster.

As a result, programmes that are categorised as programmes in one of the national minority languages, in reality, often are bilingual programmes. By way of example, the Meänkieli entertainment productions *Bäst i Sverige* [The best in Sweden] (Sveriges Television, 2022) and *Så mycket mer!* [So much more!] (Sveriges Television, 2022) – which in fact have Swedish and not Meänkieli titles – on SVT Play feature Aaron Bong, a young Meänkieli speaker, who uses Swedish mostly in the programmes as he communicates with Swedish speakers. However, his side-kick, the puppet Paras, uses Meänkieli throughout the programme. These lines in Meänkieli were added in postproduction. SVT Play rarely offers partial subtitles in the minority language for the lines uttered in Swedish. Such partial subtitles, for instance, occur in the Meänkieli programme *Möte med barn* [Meeting with children] (Sveriges Television, 2023) if the subtitles are activated. The Romani programme, *Elvira's vlog* [Elvira's vlog] (Sveriges Television, 2022), featuring a teenage girl speaking Romani but frequently translanguaging or code-switching to Swedish as well, comes with open subtitles. All that is said in Romani is translated to Swedish in the subtitles in italics, but vice versa the lines uttered in Swedish are subtitled into Romani without italics.

Local productions in the minority languages are important, as they provide what is considered a more “authentic” representation of the minority language culture to prevent cultural misrepresentation (Cormack & Hourigan, 2007, p. 142). The Meänkieli and Sámi programmes, for instance, are typically set in the region where the languages are spoken, and the programmes feature speakers of the language, in the case of Sámi, sometimes wearing traditional dress. Most of the time, they use their language in a normal day-to-day setting. However, none of the programmes in Yiddish on both SVT Play and UR Play were produced in Yiddish dealing with Yiddish culture. All of them were revoiced programmes, mostly Swedish, dealing with Swedish culture. One exception is the animated series on the holocaust *Historien om Bodri* [The Story of Bodri] (Sveriges Utbildningsradio, 2022), which nonetheless is based on a Swedish children's book and revoiced entirely in all five minority languages on UR Play.

Revoicing was used most of the time to supplement the content in the minority languages. The Swedish programme, *Ricki Ripa möter* [Ricki ripa meets...] (Sveriges Television, 2022–2023), which is a nature programme and comes with off-screen narration, for instance, is entirely revoiced in all five minority languages on SVT Play. Another programme that is available in all minority languages is the Swedish live-action programme *Robi Robot* [Robi the robot] (Sveriges Television, 2022–2023),

featuring a Swedish-speaking woman and a robot. The robot's lines are recorded post-production and the dubbing studio does not have to take into consideration lip synchronisation, as its lips do not move. This programme is also available in all five minority languages on SVT Play, that is to say, as a bilingual programme, since only the lines of the robot were revoiced in the minority languages. There is no lip-sync dubbing of the lines of the Swedish-speaking actress. Another interesting example of partial revoicing in the minority language is the *Jassabarnen* [The Jassa children] (Sveriges Television, 2021; Sveriges Television, 2022) animated series on SVT targeting older children which revolves around Sámi mythology. This series was produced in a combination of Swedish and different Sámi languages. In fact, all characters in this animation speak Swedish and only the lines of the off-screen narrator are conveyed in the Sámi languages. Here again, partial audiovisual translation made this programme available in different Sámi languages. This programme cannot be watched in Swedish entirely, as no other version is available with a narrator speaking Swedish. This is a deliberate choice, as this series is also about Sámi culture. It has to be said that whenever Sámi is used, it is subtitled with open Swedish subtitles in italics. Nonetheless, it introduces some Sámi and, by doing so, exposes Swedish-speaking children to this national minority language and can contribute to the linguistic normalisation of this minority language.

As previously explained, SVT offers a lot of imported foreign productions for children, while on UR Play, by contrast, only one foreign production, the BBC Learning animation *Tales from around the World* (MoMo Studios & Mosaic Films, 2015), was available. This programme is revoiced into Swedish *Folksagor i världen* [Folk Tales of the World] (Sveriges Utbildningsradio, 2017), available with sign language interpreting, but also in all five national minority languages. The original version in English is also available and, additionally, revoiced versions in 10 other languages that have no official status in Sweden. In all of these revoiced versions, closed subtitles are available in Swedish and the audio language. The analysis of the children's content revealed that most revoicing is done through off-screen narration rather than lip-sync dubbing. *Folksagor i världen* [Folk Tales of the World] (Sveriges Utbildningsradio, 2017) is no exception. Lip-sync dubbing in the minority languages occurs rarely at the Swedish public service broadcaster. An example of a programme that was dubbed in this way is the Swedish local production *Berätta för mig* [Tell me] (Sveriges Utbildningsradio, 2016), a live-action fiction series about bullying. This programme was also dubbed in all of the five national minority languages on UR Play. Since it is live-action, it is a more complex and, hence, more expensive revoicing method. As a result, it comes as no surprise that most minority language revoicing is done through off-screen narration that only has to overcome time constraints and does not have to take into consideration mouth movements and kinetic action. The educational programme, *Berätta för mig* [Tell me] (Sveriges Utbildningsradio, 2016), was also made accessible for viewers with visual impairments with audio description and for the deaf and hard of hearing with sign language interpreting. The next section zooms in on content in this specific minoritized language.

2.2. Sign Language's Visibility at the Swedish Public Service Broadcaster

Traditionally, audiovisual content was made accessible for the deaf and hard of hearing through same-language subtitles or captions. Such intralingual subtitles were, in its early days, offered via teletext. At first, only a handful of programmes, typically news broadcasts, were available in this way and hardly any content for younger viewers. Nowadays, substantially more – if not all – content is available with such subtitles that can be activated in the language settings, including content for younger audiences. Even content for pre-schoolers, such as *Pinos Dagbok* [Pino's diary] (Sveriges Utbildningsradio, 2020), comes with closed subtitles in Swedish for co-viewing adults or older children, as pre-schoolers are not expected to be able to read yet. Additionally, some programmes are also available with sign language interpreting, *Pinos dagbok – teckenspråkstolkat* [Pino's Diary sign language interpreted] (Sveriges Utbildningsradio, 2020) is a case in point. In this programme, the sign language interpreter is integrated into the images and not standing in front of a screen displaying the animation. Since the animation is about a mouse, she is wearing mouse ears to blend in with the programme.

However, mostly news broadcasts come with sign language interpreting. Hardly any other content, let alone children's content, is offered with sign language interpreting. Still, especially for smaller children who have not learnt how to read yet, sign language interpreting is an important way of making children's content accessible to the youngest deaf and hard of hearing viewers. Some individual efforts have tried to provide for these younger viewers since, particularly, the international content providers fail to do so. By way of example, Mariella Satow (Forbes, 2024) created a browser plugin for SignUp for Netflix & Disney+ programmes that allows viewers to watch Disney films with American Sign Language (ASL), British Sign Language (BSL) and Indian Sign Language (ISL) interpreting.

The Swedish public service broadcaster sets a great example in offering more children's content not only *with* sign language interpreting, but also *in* Swedish Sign Language featuring both adults and children signing throughout the programme. These are also categorised separately: "*på svenskt teckenspråk*" [*in Swedish Sign Language*] or "*med teckenspråkstolkning*" [*with Swedish Sign Language interpreting*]. The figures in Table 2 show that UR invests significantly more in children's content with sign language interpreting. They offered 63 programmes with sign language interpreting, but also 18 programmes in sign language. On SVT Play, only 35 programmes were available, of which most programmes were in sign language rather than with a sign language interpreter: 22 versus 13 respectively. By contrast, the Flemish public service broadcaster only offered 5 of its 215 children's programmes with Flemish Sign Language interpreting on the same day this analysis was conducted. These were the children's news, an educational programme and three entertainment shows. However, not a single programme was actually produced in Flemish Sign Language.

By way of comparison, the daily children's news in Sweden, *Lilla Aktuellt* [Little Current (affairs)] (Sveriges Utbildningsradio, 1993), for instance, is not interpreted by a sign language interpreter, but

a separate weekly news broadcast *Lilla Aktuellt Teckenspråk* [Little Current (affairs) sign language] (Sveriges Utbildningsradio, 2010) is produced entirely in sign language. In this news broadcast, some footage of the *Lilla Aktuellt* (hearing) children's news is integrated, yet everything is signed by the host of the programme. What is more, other news items relevant to deaf and hard of hearing children are often included. There seems to be an agreement between UR and SVT that allows SVT also to make this UR programme available on their platform SVT Play. When sign language interpreters are used for programmes that were originally produced for hearing children, they typically stand in front of a screen displaying the original programme and sign all that is said in the soundtrack. In some programmes, they try to blend in better and entertain particularly smaller children by wearing funny make-up or funny accessories like hats.

Table 2

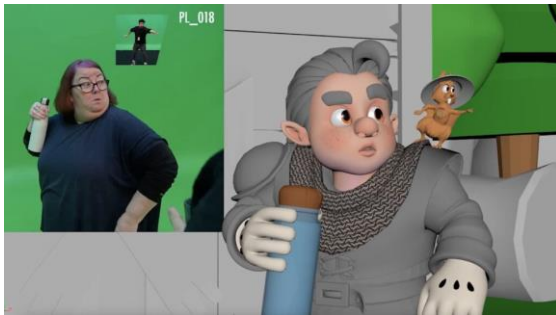
Sign-Language Content for Children Available on Both Streaming Platforms on 31-01-2024

	SVT Play (<i>n</i> =360)	UR Play (<i>n</i> = ±270)
content in sign language	22	18
content with sign language interpreting	13	63
content in/with sign language	35 (9.7%)	81 (±30%)

Ideally, not only the news but also children's fiction and entertainment programmes are available in sign language. Preferably not only for deaf and hard of hearing children but also for hearing children, as it promotes the linguistic normalisation of sign language. SVT's clever use of audiovisual translation modes to make live-action programmes in sign language also accessible to hearing viewers with the help of revoicing and closed subtitles has previously been discussed (De Ridder, 2022). Animated fiction is traditionally more popular with children than live-action programmes and animated programmes too can be made accessible through sign-language interpreting. Although it is more challenging, it is even possible to create animation in sign language. The accessibility section of UR experimented with this and joined forces with an animation studio that was able to turn footage of actors signing into animation (see Figure 2). By harnessing technology, they were able to create *Matteväktarna* [The Guards of Maths] (Sveriges Utbildningsradio, 2023) (Figure 3). This educational 3D animation about maths was produced entirely in Swedish sign language for UR.

Figure 2

Figure 3



Note. ©Gustav Rangsjö/Máquina Visual



Note. ©Máquina Visual

Just like it is important to offer local content in minoritized languages with minority language speakers, it is also important to offer content that was created with the help of members of the deaf and hard of hearing community and other sign language users, not only because of the “authenticity,” but also because it creates job prospects for them and as a result, it stimulates minoritized language communities (Cormack, 2004; Cormack & Hourigan, 2007). Offering children’s content in sign language with off-screen narration to hearing children, too, is important as it makes sign language more visible to them and contributes to the linguistic normalisation of sign language.

3. Conclusion

Minoritized language communities are still underrepresented in audiovisual media today, particularly in children’s content and especially in the content of the global streaming platforms. Grassroots initiatives are trying to compensate for this. New streaming platforms have been established and individuals have become active agents in providing audiovisual translation in minoritized languages. Public service broadcasters tend to better make these communities visible in their content. Here too, we see initiatives of individual sign language interpreting teams, who, in close collaboration with the deaf and hard of hearing community, experiment with new ways of creating content in their respective languages. Still, there are great differences between countries. This begs the question of whether media provision in the minoritized languages in Europe could be regulated better at the EU level.

Focusing on the Swedish public service broadcaster, they have two separate platforms — albeit with similar interfaces. One of them, the educational broadcaster UR, has significantly more content in the minority languages and sign language, but also makes efficient use of its language settings, in offering closed subtitles in both the majority and the minority language. Yet, there is hardly any collaboration between SVT and UR, although they could benefit greatly from joining forces (expertise and budgets) in providing more minoritized language content and making it accessible in an efficient way. Similar collaboration is also absent between the neighbouring countries, Finland and Norway, although the Nordics do collaborate in other areas. While Sámi is also spoken in Norway and Finland and, of course, Finland produces a lot of content in Finnish, there is hardly any collaboration between the broadcasters, and the circulation of audiovisual works in these languages between the countries

is also rather limited. Geoblocking is also limiting access to the content of their different national streaming platforms.

Minority language speakers in Sweden know where to find content in their respective languages and will probably watch more UR content than the majority language speakers. However, the latter – who usually do not access UR content outside of a school setting – too would benefit from watching minority language content. For this reason, where and how minoritized language programmes are listed on the different platforms is also important. There are advantages to having a separate section in which, for instance, only the content in sign language or with sign language interpreting is displayed, as deaf and hard of hearing viewers will know where to find content relevant to them. Yet, the disadvantage is that hearing children may not access this section, although all of this content is made accessible to hearing viewers who do not know sign language through revoicing. In this regard, it is good that UR adds a notification to Swedish language programmes that they are also available with AD or sign language interpreting “Finns även som Syntolkat · Teckenspråkstolkat” [Also available with audio description · sign language interpreting]. Since all minority language content is made accessible to Swedish speakers, they, too, could watch this content. Yet, UR lists all different language versions of its programmes separately in different sections, rather than simply adding all different language options in the programme’s language settings. In this way, viewers could experiment with different settings. SVT Play used to offer its content in this way, but when viewers now go to the programme page of *Jassabarnen och norrskenets hämnd* [The Jassa children and the revenge of the northern lights] (Sveriges Television, 2022), for instance, they can scroll down the page and find different language versions (Lulesamiska, Nordsamiska and Sydsamiska). Nonetheless, these are not listed in the language settings of the programme itself but are at least available on the same page.

The importance of media representation has been highlighted by Mike Cormack (2004, p. 4). Firstly, they play an important symbolic role for the minority language community in showcasing it as part of modern society, “rather than being simply part of an outdated heritage” (Cormack, 2004, p. 4). Secondly, they provide appealing job opportunities for young people, who could, for instance, become actors or producers of audiovisual media, but also audiovisual translators, voice talents and interpreters. Such career prospects can be an additional motivation for young minoritized language users to continue to actively use and improve their language proficiency. Thirdly, Cormack (2004, p. 4) explained it is important for the development of a public sphere from within the community, which allows the minority language community to shape its own news. In this regard, separate news broadcasts created by minoritized language users, including sign language users, are valuable as well. Lastly, he pointed out that these communities representing themselves within the community, but also to the majority language community is very important. Indeed, role models and influencers are important, not in the least for the youngest minoritized language users. Being able to see themselves represented in children’s content is very important, but it is also important for the majority language speakers, as it contributes to the linguistic normalisation of these minoritized languages. In this regard, the fact that most programmes in the official minority languages in Sweden are, in fact, bilingual programmes, in which the majority language, Swedish, is also used, can also attract Swedish speakers and help normalise the use of these languages. Audiovisual translations are an easy way to

supplement content in minoritized languages, nonetheless, it is important to produce content in and for the minoritized languages communities as well. In any case, in the light of diversity and inclusion, it is important that minoritized communities become more visible not only for their own sake, but also for the sake of the majority language users as it fosters language diversity and the linguistic normalisation of minoritized languages.

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Appendix

Analysed Programmes

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- Sveriges Television. (2022). *Robi Robot* [Robi the robot]. SVT Play. <https://www.svtplay.se/robby-robot>
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