

Introduction to the volume

This volume is a collection of articles on audiovisual translation, from different angles, on different topics, and it covers aspects of the main types of AVT, namely dubbing, subtitling and accessibility. It can be enjoyed by readers with no prior knowledge of AVT, but also has much to offer to experienced translators and researchers. While it covers, therefore, a lot of ground, it is far from a fragmented series of isolated papers with nothing else in common but the main topic. One of the most remarkable common threads that bind this collection is the inclusion, in each one of them, of either innovative concepts and their corresponding terms, or original angles and insights on more familiar ones, like multilingualism in audiovisual fiction, humor, realism, entertainment, how non-verbal items are part and parcel of the audiovisual text and character portrayal – all of this in relation to dubbing, subtitling, and accessibility.

Ranzato and Zabalbeascoa delve into the problems posed by including real-life people in feature films and TV series and how these problems can be dealt with in AVT. They focus on the case of historical figures like British kings, queens, and prime ministers dubbed from English into Italian. Especially in view of the fact that a great effort has been put into reflecting the linguistic and paralinguistic features of their speech in original English versions, it is interesting to see how all this work aimed at achieving high quality not only in historical accuracy but also in entertainment value survives typical standardization processes of translation and traditional dubbing practices regarding voice acting and casting.

Two complementary articles that need to be read together are devoted to the complexity of scripted multilingualism in the mini-series *Unorthodox* (2020) and how it is dubbed and subtitled into Spanish. Adapted as it is from a bestselling memoir, the protagonist and her story are based

on real people and events, but, unlike kings and queens, the characters of this show are based on anonymous real-life people that the audience discovers through the show, rather than confirms or disconfirms what they (thought they) already knew about historical figures or celebrities. And although Ranzato and Zabalbeascoa do not deal with multilingualism explicitly they do touch on the importance of idiolects, which falls within the theory of L3 [Corrius and Zabalbeascoa 2011] for multilingualism, i.e., addressing the issue of how to translate scripted language variation for dubbing and subtitling. With respect to *Unorthodox* multilingualism and AVT, Corrius and Espasa focus, in their article, specifically on two important issues: one is the audiovisual and semiotic importance of music and song, and the other is an exploration of the connections between the gendered roles of the main characters. Pujol and Santamaria pick up from there to analyze how the narrative is also furthered by the secondary characters and examine the importance of their portrayal, including their language profile, code-switching, and how and why each language is selected and used. This enables Pujol and Santamaria to reach insightful conclusions regarding dubbing and subtitling practices for the case of L3, i.e., language(s) included in the script or its translated version other than the main language.

Two articles, by Sala and by Macrea and Arias-Badia, respectively, deal with accessibility in AVT, both from the angle of subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, as a public service and a human right. There is, therefore, a double-layered sensitivity: first and foremost, a sensitivity towards not leaving anyone out of the audiovisual entertainment sector, and the other, basic requirement in all AVT of audiovisual semiotic sensitivity, which involves being conscious of the non-verbal semiotic textual constituents and the many ways they combine with the words that can be heard or read from the screen. To some extent, this point is insisted upon by all the authors of this volume. Entertainment is a key concept, highlighted in these two articles and alluded to in all the others as a necessary component of AVT. There is an extra challenge in attempting to audio describe and provide accessible (inclusive) subtitles of comedy and humor for audiences with special needs in terms of age, hearing, and eyesight. These authors insist on the idea that entertainment must be accessible to all, and, to that end, Sala proposes the concept of “creativity,” a portmanteau from ‘creativity’ and ‘active,’ to be actively creative in providing tailor-made subtitles for deaf children. Marcea and

Arias-Badia explore ways to make the most of collaborative work, as researchers but also through first-hand experience, in providing subtitles for a particularly challenging scenario: the fast-speaking oral performances that characterize slam poetry contests, and to make them entertaining and accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing.

Leksawat touches on the thorny issue of professionalism in AVT and dares to ask whether there really is a clear-cut distinction between professional subtitles and those produced by amateurs, often referred to as fan-subbing. The concepts of creativity and entertainment are also dealt with from this perspective (e.g., are creative fansubbers less deserving of praise than creativity in professional work?). Just as other articles deal with non-verbal AV textual elements, Leksawat includes in her analysis paralinguistic elements of subtitles and captioning, such as orthotypographical features, abbreviations, and additional explanations. Her contention is that the line that theoretically separates professional from non-professional subtitlers is quite considerably “blurred” by text-based evidence, whereby both communities can benefit from learning from each other.

Humour – and its related translation strategies – is a common theme in most articles. Just as Sala claims that entertainment should be accessible and Leksawat focuses on fansubbers (often referred to as funsubbers, too) who subtitle for the dual purpose of producing funny subtitles while having fun in the process, Raffa’s article is devoted to stand-up comedy, which combines one-line jokes with more elaborate comic narratives. Raffa’s insistence on the importance of the narrative factor in AVT, connects to the same finding in Pujol and Santamaria’s study of secondary characters. Raffa asks about the limits and the very nature of AVT, by looking into stand-up comedy, which for many years was recorded as audio only and enjoyed on the radio, on records or tapes. Now that it is booming on video-on-demand, it begs the question as to whether it is suited for the audiovisual medium and what changes may have come about because of this migration. He also touches on the distinction between what is real, or at least realistic, and what is artfully scripted or “prefabricated” [Baños-Piñero and Chaume 2009]. Finally, he introduces three concepts for better analyzing and understanding jokes in this genre for AVT: “transitioning,” “chaining” and “hooking.”

All in all, this volume can serve as a general introduction to some of the challenges posed by AVT in the early 21st century, while also highlighting

a handful of specific fascinating issues. I believe that researchers, translators, and trainees as well as members of various audiences may benefit by either reading individual articles on their own, or the book as a whole and thereby gain from a holistic overview of present-day progress – and pending challenges – in this lively field.

Partick Zabalbeascoa

REFERENCES

- Baños-Piñero, R., Chaume, F. (2009), “Prefabricated Orality: A Challenge in Audiovisual Translation”, *Intralinea. Special Issue: The Translation of Dialects in Multimedia*, [online] http://www.intralinea.org/specials/article/Prefabricated_Orality, visited 20 December 2021.
- Corrius, M., Zabalbeascoa, P. (2011), “Language Variation in Source Texts and Their Translations”, *Target*. 23(1): 113-130, <https://doi.org/10.1075/target.23.1.07zab>.
- Karolinski, A., Winger, A., Schrader, M. (2020), *Unorthodox* (Spanish subtitles by Emma Carballal Haire), Germany.