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**Eliana Franco, Anna Matamala and Pirar Orero,
Voice-over Translation: An Overview.
2010, Bern; Berlin; Bruxelles:
Peter Lang, pp. 248**

Having reviewed several translation-related volumes, I don't recall being so pleasantly surprised and satisfied with a publication as I am with this book, a book so complete, timely and informative. Dealing with voice-over, a long neglected subfield of audiovisual translation, Eliana Franco, Anna Matamala and Pirar Orero decided to discuss a truly wide array of topics, which is an unquestionable asset of their publication. Almost everything that I would be glad to read about on the subject of voice-over has been included in this volume – a historical overview of the notion, its nuanced definitions and juxtapositions with other translation modes, theoretical analyses as well as a practitioner's perspective, implications for translator training, an extensive commented bibliography on voice-over, exercises at the end of each chapter inviting the reader to further reflect on a particular topic, as well as the discussion of a global survey conducted

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among voice-over specialists from around the world. Referring to this study as all-encompassing would be an exaggeration, but it is close to that.

Why did it take so long for this book to be written? The authors themselves provide several explanations. One possible reason behind the scarce presence of voice-over in the translation literature in general might be the difficulty related to defining this elusive concept, which is sometimes employed in different senses in different professional contexts. Second of all, while Translation Studies itself is a relatively young discipline, the subfield of audiovisual translation is an even more recent newcomer to academia, which is why the full potential of this subdiscipline has not yet been fully explored with regard to the different modes of audiovisual translation. This leads us to the third reason, which is closely related to the second and which is especially relevant to the Western world, i.e. audiovisual translation scholars' preoccupation with more prestigious fictional works (e.g. feature films), typically dubbed or subtitled, rather than with non-fiction (e.g. documentaries), traditionally associated with voice-over in the West.

Due to the above reasons, dubbing and subtitling have generally received more attention from translation researchers, whereas voice-over has long remained in the shadow, frequently ignored as a potential area of research (Tomaszkiewicz 2006: 116). For example, this mode is neither dealt with in greater detail in the first edition of Mona Baker's *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (1998: 75), which contains two separate entries devoted to dubbing and subtitling, nor in its second edition (2009: 16), where it is similarly mentioned in passing, this time in the entry 'Audiovisual translation'. However, as Franco *et al.* suggest, in recent years the literature on voice-over has nevertheless been steadily growing. The researchers concerned with the field of audiovisual translation, which now seems relatively well established, have more recently decided to investigate its 'peripheries', dealing with such topics as the increasingly popular audio-description, subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing as well as the subject of voice-over.

The authors of *Voice-over Translation* begin the volume with an overview of the historical development of the term voice-over which had originated in Film Studies and was subsequently incorporated into Translation Studies along with a number of associations it had accumulated in the former context. They also introduce several important distinctions such as the one between the status of voice-over in the Western world, where it is reserved for factual genres such as news or documentaries, and its status in Eastern European countries, where voice-over has for decades been a dominant mode on television not only in the case of documentaries but also feature films. The authors also observe that because of the common employment of voice-over in factual genres and due to the coexistence of two languages in this mode, it

is often associated with authenticity, credibility and fidelity, which is not necessarily the case with dubbing, the mode where the original voices are erased and which is primarily employed in fictional works. Another important distinction the authors discuss in some detail is the one between voice-over for postproduction and voice-over for production, which require very different translation methods. Whereas in postproduction voice-over a translation is produced from the already edited final text, in the case of production voice-over a translation is created on the basis of unedited material with no script available to the translator who thus has to translate from the screen.

Considerable space in the volume is devoted to the discussion of the working conditions of a professional translator and the process of creating voice-over. The authors present a large number of real-life scenarios in which voice-over translators may have to operate, describe how a voice-over translation is commissioned, the tasks a translator may be asked to perform, different formats s/he may be required to work on, and some concrete obstacles they might encounter. The latter may involve deciphering slang or marked local accents while working from the screen, solving problems related to poor sound quality, or translating poorly prepared, inaccurate scripts or transcripts. As the authors observe, at times a voice-over translator needs to be a bit of an interpreter and a journalist who may even be required to do something closer to creative writing than translating. The publication also contains a wide range of real-life examples of original transcripts to be voiced-over. The inclusion of such authentic materials and real-life scenarios described from a practitioner's perspective definitely deserves credit and the book may thus turn out a valuable source of information for students of translation, would-be voice-over translators as well as translator trainers.

What trainers may find particularly useful is the discussion of the postgraduate voice-over translation course the authors have been running for some time. The course is described as learner-centred and market-oriented and Chapter Five explains how it was designed and launched, what practical problems were encountered, how they were solved, and how the course evolved conceptually and technologically (from VHS tapes to DVDs). This discussion may turn out especially useful for trainers planning to teach voice-over as it describes in practical terms such aspects as the materials employed in teaching, the issue of copyright on audiovisual materials, the specificity of teaching voice-over online, as well as the very course structure, progressing from theoretical sessions through voice-over for postproduction to exercises in translating for production.

At the same time, it may be noted that some of the observations related to translator training seem slightly confusing and are not convincingly supported by relevant training literature. For instance, the authors observe

that “[s]ince we are dealing with the realm of humanities and very much detached from the pure sciences, objective assessment is a remote possibility” (156), which may seem surprising in light of a large body of training literature on different assessment methods. To provide another example, it is claimed that “[...] quality assessment in audiovisual translation essentially differs from assessment in the field of Translation Studies because of the importance that Translation Studies allocates to the process of translation as opposed to the quality of the product” (157). What the authors had in mind here was probably the field of translator training, and not the discipline of Translation Studies, which is broad enough to encompass audiovisual translation and voice-over research, and, secondly, the claim about translation researchers being primarily being preoccupied with the process rather than the quality of the product may not sound entirely convincing, as the focus on the process does not preclude being interested in the quality of the product.

Furthermore, the book also contains a number linguistic and typing errors which sometimes do not allow to fully appreciate this otherwise insightful work. Examples of such errors include ‘film technique were’ (17), ‘a mistake which have arisen’ (64), ‘the translation offered tot he audience’ instead of ‘to the audience’ (115), ‘tot the text’ instead of ‘to the text’ (119) and on page 90 a list starts with point ‘c)’ instead of ‘a)’. The style may also at times appear slightly too informal and I have never been an enthusiast of quoting from an anonymous source such as Wikipedia, which is cited several times in the publication.

Finally, looking at voice-over from the perspective of Poland, ‘the voice-over land’, I’d naturally be interested in finding out more about voice-over in the context of feature films, which are mentioned in the book but are not dealt with in detail. This is understandable considering the audiovisual realities the authors are familiar with in their own cultures, that is Catalonia and Brazil. Though not concerned with fictional products in the first place, this volume may nevertheless have a positive role to play in Poland and Eastern Europe and potentially give a boost to research on voice-over, an unjustifiably underrepresented and overlooked mode in the countries where it has such a central status on television.

In the introduction to their volume, Eliana Franco, Anna Matamala and Pirar Orero state that “[t]his book is aimed at providing comprehensive and practical information about an audiovisual translation mode which has not attracted the attention of many studies up to now” and that it is “an attempt to strike a balance between theory and practice”, also adding that the volume was intended “as a useful manual to students, but also a point of departure for further research”. It would appear that the authors did manage to achieve their aims.

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