

Eugeni, Carlo and Gabriele Mack (eds) (2006). *New Technologies in Real Time Intralingual Subtitling. First international seminar on new technologies in real time intralingual subtitling. Intralinea.* http://www.intralinea.it/specials/respeaking/eng_open.php

The proceedings of the 'First International Seminar on real time intralingual subtitling' are available online on the *Intralinea* website <www.intralinea.it>. The conference in question was held in November 2006 at the Forlì campus of the University of Bologna. Twenty contributors from various parts of the world took part including professionals, researchers, broadcasters, IT experts, software producers, teachers and, last but not least, people with hearing impairments, seen as the principal end-users of the services under discussion. Thus was created major event in the life of this young discipline. Locally, Gabriele Mack and Carlo Eugeni were the prime movers and it is they who begin the proceedings with their papers "*Detto scritto*" and "*Introduzione al rispeaking televisivo*".

Mack, in her overview, stresses the heterogeneous nature of the topic under discussion as exemplified by the wide range of participants listed above, and points out that this seminar marked one of the very few occasions when they could all be brought together. She makes reference to other papers delivered during the conference, and this cross referencing, which is present in many other contributions, points to the evident desire of all to glean something from others. Eugeni speaks of the diverse sectors in which 'respeaking' is used and to what extent various countries put it into practice, also providing a clear introduction to the essential points, all of which are picked up in the series of papers that follow. He also makes the important distinction between intra- and inter-lingual subtitling: while much of the focus of the seminar is on same-language respeaking for the benefit of the hard-of-hearing community, it does not restrict itself to this important aspect alone.

Aliprandi and Verruso discuss the technical side of respeaking, providing a number of interesting examples, while Andrew Lambourne's long experience in the subtitling software field comes across in his paper which underlines Britain's prominent position in the sector. Muzii, whose contribution explores the connection between respeaking and localisation, both relatively new and dynamic areas of research and development, also touches on the similarities between respeaking and simultaneous interpreting, a concept discussed in several of the papers. Muzii, however, gets down to brass tacks with his observation that "the language market is evolving and conference interpreting is shrinking" – the conclusions for real time subtitlers should be clear. Ramondelli, taking a more diachronic approach, traces the route to voice recognition technology from the

beginnings of shorthand and stenotyping and their use in government and judiciary circles. This theme is also picked up by others, including Trivulzio, who brings Italy into the equation while talking of results achieved in various parts of the world, though particularly in the USA and Britain. His discussion of international competitions, mentioned also by other participants, is fascinating and shows that great strides have also been made by Italian researchers.

Turning to the rest of the world, a series of interventions from foreign colleagues enable the reader to compare current and future developments between nations. Baaring discusses the training situation in Denmark, which has long had an excellent reputation in the field of film and television subtitling, pointing out that it is these subtitlers who are recruited for respeaking. He, like others at the seminar, asks whether simultaneous interpreters might not be better suited to the challenges involved. Chen, while recognising that real time subtitling is very much in its infancy in Taiwan, not least because of the problems involved in subtitling Chinese characters, nevertheless provides an interesting account of what has been done so far, in particular in relation to the code combinations adopted. De Korte, who has lectured convincingly on his subject at various European venues, describes the Dutch situation and disagrees with Baaring by showing the advantages of using subtitlers rather than interpreters for respeaking. However, his reasons are largely based on availability and cost effectiveness, themes that recur in these proceedings and which clearly reveal, perhaps refreshingly, that not only academics are involved. Similar non-academic considerations, this time related more to editorial decisions, are made by De Serriis in his discussion of the situation in Italy, in particular at the RAI state TV service. Lamenting the fact that Italian television lags behind some other countries in terms of the number of subtitled hours provided for the hearing-impaired, also due to a lack of legal provision, the author is optimistic about future developments. It should also be pointed out that, as elsewhere, other bodies in Italy are currently involved in developing respeaking technology, and this should encourage more rapid growth in the industry as a whole. Finally Pilar Orero, in her illustrated account, reports a similar situation in Spain, again expressing optimism in future developments.

The proceedings also contain a number of transcriptions of talks given at the seminar, some through the means of respeaking, almost to prove that there was a practical outcome to the event. Alison Marsh speaks of the work carried out in voice recognition by the BBC in the United Kingdom, and Chris Higgs of ITFC gives further information regarding the legal situation in Britain, both of them with a view to outlining the services available for the deaf and hard of hearing. Pea and Cannarozzo refer to the respeaking situation in Switzerland and discuss the problem of constantly updating the 'dictionaries' of words required, while Remael and van der Veer, who relate real time subtitling needs in Flemish Belgium,

hark back to Baaring and De Korte (see above), and conclude that “the ideal person for the job is a qualified interpreter and a professional subtitler”.

The final three papers address the very real needs of the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities throughout the world. Agreeing with Lambourne’s previous contribution, Di Silvio asserts that what is most important for the deaf is not so much the quality or quantity of subtitles produced in real or delayed time, but the fact that there are subtitles. Mereghetti, a deaf person himself, claims that in Italy not enough is yet being done for the deaf community and, like many others, exhorts those hearers involved in the field to collaborate with the end-users. Perhaps one fact that emerges very clearly from comments made by contributors and observers is that apart from the highly interesting and useful findings that transpire from reading the articles published online in the proceedings, there is a need to get more to grips with what the end-user really requires. Pirelli, however, though he highlights the plight of university students who need help in following lectures, significantly praises the organisers of the Forli conference for the fact that everything was successfully subtitled to the benefit of all present.

And so, to conclude, Mack and Eugeni are to be complimented, apart from for their own papers, for bringing together such a group of authoritative and interesting contributors from such a wide range of associated fields who, in many cases, probably for the first time came to realise just how ‘associated’ they are. Indeed an ‘end-user’, a person with hearing difficulties quoted in Mack’s paper (cf. Mereghetti), stresses vehemently that the key to providing useful resources for people like himself lies not only in the technology, in highly trained individuals or in constant research achievements, all of which are of course necessary, but in ‘collaboration’.

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