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Eliana Franco, Anna Matamala and Pilar Orero, (2010). *Voice-over Translation. An Overview*, New York/ Oxford/ Wien: Peter Lang, 248 pp. ISBN 978-3-0343-0393-4 pb. Price: 45.50 €.

Research on audiovisual translation has been thriving recently, becoming, especially during the last decade, one of the most dynamic academic fields of Translation Studies. The number of publications has grown at a speedy rate and AVT studies have expanded their range of interests significantly, going beyond their original focus on dubbing and subtitling issues, and opening to new challenges and topics, especially those related to technological developments and accessibility to media. It comes as a kind of surprise, then, that the "monumental lack of professional and academic interest" in voice-over translation, complained by Grigaraviciute & Gottlieb (1999: 45) which seems still to be very much the case more than ten years later. Although works dealing with voice-over issues did increase lately, it must be stressed that they come mainly from a restricted number of scholars and they do not necessarily reflect an awakening of a general curiosity towards this translation mode or its better understanding. Nor have they been able, so far, to contrast efficiently a widespread opinion that voice-over translation is a simple, non problematic process that offers little material for an in-depth analysis.

The fact that *The Voice Over Translation. An Overview*, is the very first volume ever dedicated entirely to this translation mode has been determinative to the book's objective, which is, as the authors state in the *Introduction*, to provide "comprehensive theoretical and practical information on audiovisual translation mode which has not attracted the attention of many studies up to now" (13). While the authors do mention several interesting points that can serve as a starting point for further research in the field of voice-over translation, their main goal is to create a handy and useful manual, able to give clear and meticulous introduction to the topic, both from a theoretical and practical point of view. Given that all three scholars have a large experience as practitioners, trainers and researchers in this transfer mode, they were probably the most suitable people for accomplishing this task and indeed they succeeded in their intent remarkably well.

The volume is divided into seven distinct and clearly defined chapters. The first one, *Voice-Over from Film Studies to Translation Studies* gives a thorough overview of the terminological problems related to voice-over and tries to clarify lingering theoretical misconceptions about this technique. This is a very much needed elucidation, given that voice-over, a term borrowed from Film Studies, has proved to be an elusive transfer mode, particularly difficult to define univocally. Authors' systematical approach to all the terminological proposals existing so far allow to

untangle several contradictions present in the theoretical studies on voice-over.

The following chapters adopt a bottom-up approach, taking as a starting point an extensive practical experience in the field of all the authors, which lead them to make a fundamental distinction between voice-over for post production, that is, for a product that has been already edited, and voice-over done for rough, non edited footage. Consequently, the second and the third chapters deal with voice-over for postproduction which is the predominant practice in the field, while the fourth chapter describes salient characteristics of voice over for production.

The second chapter describes general working conditions of the translators for voice-over and the typology of texts they are confronted with. The authors distinguish between the translation of fictional and non-fictional audiovisual products, however, since they have not a first-hand experience of the voice-over translation for feature films, which is a practice limited almost exclusively to the Eastern Europe countries, they are able to give only a short account of its characteristics. Based on other scholars' remarks, this section is necessarily rather generic and not always completely precise; nevertheless, it is by far the most objective and accurate report on this topic to be found in Western AVT studies up to date. Chapter's main focus remains, logically, voice-over translation for non-fictional products, and the analysis is carried on the authentic material taken from the authors' professional practice. The presentation of the typology of scripts the translators may be confronted with, addresses two issues: the layout and the quality of transcripts on the one hand and various possible script structures on the other. While the problem of transcripts' quality is important in order to understand technical and sometimes very down-to-earth problems that must be often faced by the translators, the question of script's structure appears to be far more complex and demanding. It encompasses, in fact, a wide spectrum of theoretical and practical topics that authors signal in a concise way, but do not develop further, due to the restrictions imposed by book's general format.

The third chapter deals the specific technical voice-over translation issues, such as isochrony, accents, literal, kinetic and action synchrony. The analysed material consists mainly of excerpts of interviews and spontaneous speech, individuated by the authors as the most demanding feature of voice-over translation. The examples given consider translations into different European languages which allows a broader perspective. Even more interesting appears the following section of the chapter, where such translation problems as terminology, cultural transfer, proper nouns, written captures and quality of the original text are discussed. Although these problems occur also in other transfer modes, it is illuminating to see them related to this particular translation technique. The last section of

the chapter gives an overview of translation layouts used in different professional contexts, and is accompanied by a conspicuous number of carefully chosen authentic samples.

Since voice-over for production, talked about in the fourth chapter, shares many characteristics with postproduction voice-over, the authors do not reiterate problems discussed in the precedent part of the book, focusing instead on specific challenges the translators have to cope with in such circumstances. An ample range of examples taken from authors' personal translation practice provides an excellent coverage of different aspects of working conditions for production and allows the reader to gain a better understanding of everyday difficulties the translators stumble upon in their practice. The most fascinating part of this chapter, however, is the section that deals with the issue of the presumed faithfulness as well as the feeling of authenticity produced by voice-over translation and the ensuing risks of script's manipulation. The authors discuss this problem shortly but convincingly, by analyzing the case of Bin Laden videotaped messages.

The following chapter, *Training in voice-over*, shifts the topic from the voice-over itself to practical issues of translation training: basically, it gives a detailed description of the history and the outcome of two MA in voice-over translation, first launched at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in 2001/2002. The courses were organized in two formats: one face-to-face, the other on-line. A clear and precise presentation of the methodology, organizational issues, technical requirements, typology of material used, lessons' formats, exercises carried on and assessment problems provides a invaluable material of reference for anyone who should venture into setting up a similar educative training, but will be also of great interest for those who already work in the field and are interested in perfecting their skills.

The seventh chapter, *Giving voice to practitioners and academics: a global survey on voice-over*, presents opinions about voice-over translation gathered from an international questionnaire. The authors, well aware that, in spite of their thorough studies, had not been able to access all data and aspects of voice-over translation in various countries, tried to compensate this gap by preparing a set of relevant questions, sent then to several academics and professionals abroad. Unfortunately, of more than one hundred people contacted, only 43 furnished relevant answers, a number decidedly insufficient to obtain a systematic international overview, therefore this section of the volume is rather more eclectic than previous chapters. Still, it does provide much interesting information about otherwise scarcely known voice-over contexts.

The final chapter of the volume consists of a "first commented monographic bibliography on voice-over" (189). The authors went to great

lengths in order to collect all contributions to this transfer mode, taking in consideration not only works that deal specifically with voice-over, but also texts that mention it in passing. Unavoidably, since the texts in languages other than English, Spanish, French and Italian have not been considered, the list is not fully representative¹. Nonetheless, the result is impressive: the bibliography includes over seventy meticulously reviewed entries and may be considered fairly complete as far as Western European research on voice-over is concerned. As such, it is an invaluable reference and a starting point for every bibliographical enquiry regarding this transfer mode.

Overall, Franc, Matamala and Orero's book represents a crucial contribution to AVT studies, a long overdue entry about an important, yet so much neglected issue of voice-over translation. It is rather unfortunate, then, that *Voice-over Translation. An Overview*, newly released, is listed as "currently unavailable" on Amazon web site. One can only hope this pioneering book will gain the recognition it merits and that it will become a turning point in the further research on voice-over translation.

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¹ In some cases it can be even a bit misleading; for example, of Polish entries on voice-over, Michał Garcarz's short article is listed, while the same author's entire volume (based on his P.h.D. thesis) on voice-over translation (Garcarz 2007) has not been included. Similarly, there is no mention of Teresa Tomasziewicz's (2006) ample monography on AVT techniques used in Poland, while Łukasz Bogucki's book (2004) is reviewed, although it devotes only two pages to voice-over translation.