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**Șerban, Adriana, Anna Matamala and Jean-Marc Lavaur (eds) (2011). *Audiovisual Translation in Close-up: Practical and Theoretical Approaches*. Bern/Berlin/Bruxelles/Frankfurt am Main/New York/Oxford/Vienna: Peter Lang, pp. 320, € 52.20, £ 47.00, \$ 80.95 ISBN 978-3-0343-0557-0**

This recently published volume comprises fifteen papers by established or upcoming researchers in Audiovisual Translation (AVT). Most contributions originate from the conference "Audiovisual Translation: Multidisciplinary Approaches / La traduction audiovisuelle: Approches pluridisciplinaires", held in Montpellier in 2008. What is offered here, however, is not simply a compilation of conference papers, but a selection of well-written pieces of advanced and updated research, coming from various parts of the world.

As the editors explain with refreshing honesty, this book does not purport to cover the entire spectrum of research in AVT; it rather constitutes a "stepping stone" (12) towards future research and indicates a "gap" (19) that is to be filled by future publications. The editors also clarify that the main subjects represented in the book are subtitling and audio description. While this may seem a limitation, it soon becomes clear that it is among the strengths of this publication. These two modalities are put under strong focus from various perspectives, including discourse analysis, foreign language acquisition, cognitive science, and reception studies.

The book is divided into five sections: "Audiovisual translation and discourse analysis," "Audiovisual translation and language learning," "Quality in audiovisual translation," "Reception," and "Audio description in close-up." All papers without exception present the results of solid and well-informed research, but in what follows I will concentrate on three of the most innovative ones.

In "The non-translation of swearing in subtitling: Loss of social implicature?," Annjo K. Greenall compares the use of vulgar and taboo language in the Norwegian translation of Roddy Doyle's novel *The Commitments* (1988) and in the Norwegian subtitles of the film adaptation of this novel (1991). Greenall's initial observation is that "the translation of the novel retained far more swearing than the translation of the film dialogue" (53). The paper then examines the possible reasons behind the different strategies followed by the translator and the subtitler. Greenall argues that swearing "belongs to the domain of spoken language," thus "swearing-in-writing will [...] be perceived as an alien object in the context of the written text, one which by virtue of its out-of-placeness creates a discord, disturbing the reading experience" (56). While written swearing in the novel and its translation is not disturbing *per se*, swearing in the subtitles is perceived as disturbing because of the co-presence of the oral

source material (the film). Arguably, then, the non-translation of swearing in film subtitles is not so much a question of semantics (the vulgarity of the language used) as it is one of semiotics (the juxtaposition of the audiovisual code with that of written language). In a fascinating concluding part, Greenall discusses common assumptions by subtitlers and AVT scholars with regard to the audience's possible knowledge of the source language, and asks what the role of subtitling would be in a future culturally neutralised and quasi-monolingual world.

Similar questions, but with regard to subtitlers as professionals and the subtitling industry in a globalised world, are asked in Kristiina Abdallah's paper "Quality problems in AVT production networks: Reconstructing an actor-network in the subtitling industry." Taking the meteoric rise and fall of a Scandinavian translation company as a case study, Abdallah uses actor-network theory to discuss issues concerning translation quality, translator identity and ethics in translators' workplace. Actor-network theory, Abdallah explains, allows for the simultaneous examination of human and non-human elements (for instance, contracts, instructions, companies, clients and, in this case, freelance subtitlers) as actors within a specific production network. Within the constraints of this paper, Abdallah's analysis is perhaps not exhaustive—for instance it is not clear exactly how actor-network theory is superior to other theoretical frameworks when it comes to "opening the black box of an AVT production network" (185). Still the research focuses on a surprisingly understudied topic, translators' workplace research, and yields very interesting results. Abdallah's main finding is that behind this particular actor-network's failure (involving the company's eventual bankruptcy) lied an ill-defined concept of translation quality. Good quality, as understood by "translators as experts and the wider public" had to give way to "a business definition of quality" (179) as "anything will do" (182).

The third paper to be discussed here is on audio description. In "From the describer's mouth: Reflections on creating unconventional audio description for live theatre," John-Patrick Udo and Deborah Fels analyse and interpret interviews by two describers of live events. On the one hand, then, the unconventional character of the experience discussed in the paper has to do with the type of description – live integrated audio description of theatrical productions. On the other hand, it has to do with the fact that each of the two describers "worked with a theatre group which was made up of blind, low-vision and sighted cast, crew and production staff" (261), while one of the describers identified herself as blind. In the interviews, the describers refer to their attitudes and strategies in relation to four 'themes:' Motivation for participating in the events as audio describers, understanding of audio description before and after the experience, self-assessment of their performance, and finally, discussion of their experience of working with others, including the directors and crew. One of the most interesting conclusions coming out of

this paper is that both describers stressed “the need for directorial supervision and for being integrated in the production” (278). The paper is an excellent reference for researchers and describers interested in creative aspects of this inherently creative process. It succeeds in highlighting the value of audio description as a “potentially beneficial narrative and artistic strategy” (259), one which, as one of the describers says, can be “woven into the narrative” as an “added dimension to the play as opposed to putting description on top of the play or as a retrofit” (266).

The variety of subjects, approaches and research interests displayed in this volume reflects the vibrancy and diversity of the current state of research in AVT. The intensity and rigour with which all authors focus on their research topics justifies the main title of the book: *Audiovisual Translation in close-up*.

**Dionysios Kapsaskis, University of Roehampton, London**  
**d.kapsaskis@roehampton.ac.uk**