

Desilla, L. (2015). Media and Translation, an Interdisciplinary Approach (2014). *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 24, 265-268. <https://doi.org/10.26034/cm.jostrans.2015.336>

This article is publish under a *Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International* (CC BY):
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>



© Louisa Desilla, 2015

Abend-David Dror (ed.) (2014). *Media and Translation: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. London/New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, pp. 365, £65.00. ISBN: 9781623566463 (hardback).

The synergies between Media Studies, Film Studies and (Audiovisual) Translation Studies had been largely unexplored before the first decade of the 21st century. Nornes (2007), Schäffner and Bassnett (2011), O’Sullivan (2011), and Pérez-González (2014) are some of the first systematic attempts to occupy this niche. Dror’s *Media and Translation* follows this new trend, bringing into sharp relief the importance of studying the relationship between media and translation. The full title of this edited volume prepares the reader for a demanding albeit fascinating journey across media, disciplines and cultures. Indeed, the book is remarkably unique, at least within AVT scholarship, in celebrating multidisciplinary by combining experts, theoretical frameworks and methodologies from an impressively wide variety of academic fields, such as Translation, Linguistics, Literary Theory, Film Studies, Cultural Studies, New Media, Communication Studies, Marketing and Advertising, to mention but a few. Bringing together so many different aspects of the translation-media interface is a commendable achievement. However, this multidisciplinary approach does not come without problems and the editor, to his credit, highlights some of the challenges that could jeopardise “intellectual unity” in this volume (xii-xiii). While there are certain weaknesses regarding structure and formatting which suggest that the integration of these different perspectives could have been done in a smoother and more consistent fashion, I strongly believe that heterogeneity of content is a strength rather than a weakness; in my opinion, this is largely where the originality of this book resides.

The present volume consists of seven parts which include fourteen papers in total. Although the introductory note by the editor in the beginning of each part overall nicely summarises and contextualises the contributions that follow, it sometimes fails to convincingly justify why the latter have been grouped together under the given title. This brings us to another shortcoming that pertains to title choice for each part: some titles come across as too broad/vague (e.g., Part 5: *Translation, Communication, Globalisation*) while others seem to be rather detailed and/or specific (e.g., Part: 7 *Promotions, Commercials, Tweets and Minisodes*). It seems that a better balance could have been achieved in this respect and that the contributions could have been organised more effectively in fewer parts, as this would give the editor greater flexibility and help avoid this fragmentation effect and any overlaps. Moreover, some formatting inconsistencies have been observed which, albeit minor, should have been amended during the editing process; whereas the majority of chapters follow numbered sectioning/sub-sectioning, Chapters 3, 7, 8 and 10, rely

only on headings/subheadings, while Chapter 5 has no sections whatsoever. On the whole, there is a sense that such lack of uniformity could have surely been avoided without posing a threat to the individuality of each paper, which is one of the editor's self-confessed concerns (xiii). On the plus side, the Glossary section at the end of each chapter is an excellent, reader-friendly addition.

Part 1 is devoted to the treatment of multilingualism and language variation in audiovisual translation. Heiss (Chapter 1) gives the reader a flavour of the particularities of dubbing multilingual films in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. She points out that the handling of code-mixing and code-switching can affect the illusion of proximity and distance both between the on-screen characters as well as between the filmmakers and the audience. Zabalbeascoa and Voellmer (Chapter 2) approach multilingual films from a more descriptive perspective, debunking Jakobson's concept of 'interlingual translation proper,' which is based on the premise that there is only one SL in any ST. They propose a fairly sophisticated typology of transfer options which can be used in future studies. Importantly, their approach systematically takes into account that language(s) in films work(s) in tandem with non-verbal cinematic signifiers to create meaning. Their case-study of *Inglourious Basterds* (Tarantino, 2009) perfectly illustrates different transfer options and pertinent challenges. In Chapter 3, Zoë Pettit explores code-switching and language variation in the South African gangster film genre. The narrative functions of linguistic choices in character construal are aptly teased out and compensatory strategies are touched upon, as well.

The choice of *Subtitling and Dubbing* as the title for **Part 2** is rather infelicitous as the focus in both chapters is evidently on dubbing. The rationale underlying this choice remains unclear, as the editor's introductory note is not elucidating in this respect. Nevertheless, the two contributions nicely complement each other with Baños (Chapter 4) offering an in-depth discussion of the nature and complexities of prefabricated orality and Audissino (Chapter 5) demonstrating how dubbing can interfere with the film's form, with particular emphasis on sound homogeneity, characterisation and dialogue adaptation.

Part 3 (*Media and Computer Translation*) comprises a single contribution (Chapter 6), which evidences the afore-mentioned imbalance in chapter organisation. In one of the best-written pieces of academic work included in this edited volume, Remael, van Waes and Leijten offer two robust experimental designs for investigating live subtitling with respeaking, very useful for those who wish to embark upon research in error production and the visual attention of respeakers. Their comparison of live subtitling and simultaneous interpreting (127-129) is also insightful.

In **Part 4** (*Between Literary and Media Translation*), the authors of the two chapters reflect on the relationship between literature, film and translation. Raine (Chapter 7) treats film subtitling “as an adaptive practice” which changes but, unlike literary translation, does not replace the original. In Chapter 8, Heller explores the translation/adaptation of contemporary fantasy (such as C.S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia*) and argues that, by considering the latter a transmedia genre, “the fantastic referents become much more realistic and the translator’s work of decoding the fantastic denotation changes, as the fantastic becomes abundant and visible, detailed and concrete” (175).

In **Part 5**, the reader is exposed to some of the challenges and rewards of looking at audience reception of audiovisual texts, which is thankfully now a fast-growing trend in AVT. Chiaro (Chapter 9) stresses the importance of conducting studies with actual audiences (cf. Desilla 2014) and describes the Forlì Screen Translation Research Design used for investigating the reactions of viewers to instances of verbal humour in American programmes dubbed into Italian. Although the Forlì corpus is indeed an invaluable resource capable of generating an enormous amount of data, it seems that the research design *per se* could have been explained in more detail; for instance, methodological aspects such participant selection and, crucially, the criteria for assessing participant responses are not directly addressed. In Chapter 10, Patterson and Chyutin shift the focus onto teaching the *Waltz with Bashir* (Folman 2008) documentary to American students. Although an attempt is made on the part of the editor to justify the pairing of these two chapters (196), there is a feeling that they do not fit very well alongside each other; perhaps the only common feature is that they both deal with audience reception to a greater or a lesser extent. Still, this is not sufficiently clear in the editor’s note, let alone in the potentially misleading title of Part 5 (i.e., *Translation, Communication, Globalisation*).

Cohesion is easier to establish in **Part 6**, where both chapters are dedicated to the translation/reception of news programmes. Drawing, *inter alia*, on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Baker’s (2006) narrative theory, Li Pan examines mediation in Chinese news reporting. By applying research methods from Marketing Studies, Samuel-Azran, Lavie-Dinure and Karniel (Chapter 12), on the other hand, report on a very revealing experiment specifically designed to probe the link between ethnic bias and source credibility in the reception of international news reporting.

Last, but definitely not least, **Part 7** is concerned with the translation of promotional material. Bucaria (Chapter 13) sheds light upon the paratexts of TV programmes (e.g., trailers, promos, minisodes, tweets etc.), which have been rather neglected in AVT research. Her interesting case-study of the paratexts for *Glee* (2009-present) and *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013),

shows how they have been adapted (or not) for the needs and expectations of Italian viewers; the use of New Media terminology such as *appropriation* and *transmedia storytelling* could not have been more pertinent here. In Chapter 14, the key concept in Cui and Zhao's study of translated advertisements from English into Chinese is *presupposition*, which is given a wider sense than the one traditionally assigned by Nord (1991/2005). What is apparently missing, though, from their analysis is an appreciation of the important interaction between language and the visuals in this genre.

According to the editor, *Media in Translation* promises "to be heterogeneous and versatile (and in some ways, volatile), incorporating different fields of studies, methodologies and ideological stances" (x). Despite its shortcomings, the book successfully fulfills this promise and, thus, has all the potential of appealing to a vastly diverse academic audience.

Bibliography

- **Baker, Mona** (2006). *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account*. London/ New York: Routledge.
- **Desilla, Louisa** (2014). "Reading between the lines, seeing beyond the images: An empirical study on the comprehension of implicit film dialogue meaning across cultures." *The Translator* 20(2). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2014.967476>
- **Nord, Christiane** (1991/2005). *Text Analysis in Translation: Theory, Methodology and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis*. Amsterdam /Atlanta: Rodopi.
- **Nornes, Abe M.** (2007). *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minesota Press.
- **O'Sullivan, Carol** (2011). *Translating Popular Film*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- **Pérez-González, Luis.** (2014) *Audiovisual Translation: Theories, Methods and Issues*. Oxon: Routledge.
- **Schäffner, Christina and Susan Bassnett** (eds) (2011). *Political Discourse, Media and Translation*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Louisa Desilla
Centre for Translation Studies (CenTras),
University College London
 l.desilla@ucl.ac.uk