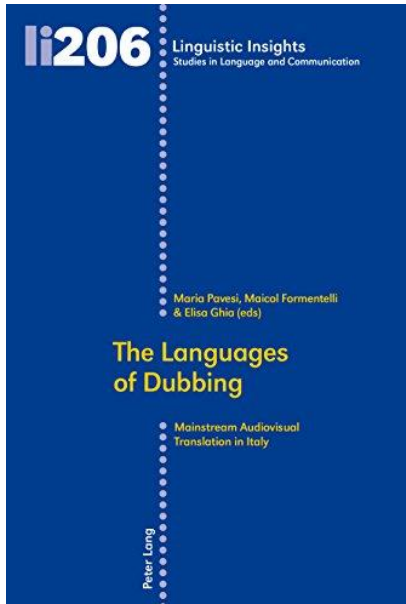




The Languages of Dubbing: Mainstream Audiovisual Translation in Italy

Edited by Maria Pavesi, Maicol Formentelli, Elisa Ghia

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Review by Serena Demichelis*

Dubbing is the most widespread means of audiovisual translation (AVT) in Italy: unlike other strategies like subtitling or voice-over, it aims at recreating a version of the original dialogue in the target language, implying that the final product should be pleasant and credible, with an esthetic and not purely instrumental function.

The Languages of Dubbing. Mainstream Audiovisual Translation in Italy, edited by Maria Pavesi, Maicol Formentelli and Elisa Ghia, is both an overview on the state of the art in audiovisual translation studies and a source offering new perspectives in the field.

Finding itself at the intersection between at least two continua (verbal-nonverbal and source-target), audiovisual translation represents a composite reality in which analyses focusing on various aspects of language can coexist: in the introduction to the volume, the editors clarify the key points of problematization in AVT, among which are the constraints deriving from the complexity of a multimodal product, the fictionality of film dialogue and its status in relation to natural spoken language. The English-into-Italian scenario has been chosen in virtue of the translation policies of the country, which favor dubbing over other solutions, as well as for the fact that most movies (series, videos and so on) come from Anglophone realities. Yet, the methodological and theoretical implications behind these chapters can be applied to other cases as well and open up to other linguistic dimensions.

The book is divided into two parts, one concerning the analysis of film dialogue as a register-specific variety of language and its rendering into Italian, the other dealing with sociolinguistic aspects such as the transposition of cultural peculiarities, of multilingualism and so on.

Section One, "Conversational Phenomena and Fictive Orality," is made up of five chapters, each by one or two scholars. The first chapter, "The Pavia Corpus of Film Dialogue: a Means to Several Ends," by editor Maria Pavesi, illustrates a parallel unidirectional corpus which was "conceived and developed within two different research projects" (30) at the University of Pavia, Italy. While offering an exemplification of analysis on film dialogue, this contribution highlights how methodology coming from the field of Corpus Linguistics can prove helpful for such purposes (as demonstrated by the existence of the dedicated discipline, Corpus-

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based Translation Studies). The other chapters deal with more aspects of conversation analysis in AVT, and some of them retrieve their data from the corpus described in Pavesi (hence PCFD, Pavia Corpus of Film Dialogue): editors Elisa Ghia and Maicol Formentelli, for instance, focus on direct interrogatives and lexical density respectively and work on samples taken from the PCFD. Ghia's study shows how the dubbed Italian versions of most films in her analysis tend to maintain the strongly diegetic function of questions in the original language intact, while at the same time aligning with the target language in terms of naturalness and spontaneity (83). Formentelli is concerned with what changes between source and target language in terms of lexical density and simplification. He offers a critical viewpoint on the use of quantitative studies in this field, by stating how, despite the clear advantage that corpus methods bring to researchers, a qualitative approach is necessary in order not to miss "patterns that may emerge from the analysis of individual words" (161). The remaining two chapters focus on television series and thus do not retrieve their samples from the PCFD (which only contains movies) but are still based on a quantitative methodology. Researchers Veronica Bonsignori, Silvia Bruti, and Serenella Zanotti have compiled their own small, specialized corpora for their specific purposes (investigation of greetings and general extenders respectively).

The four chapters of the second section focus on sociolinguistic factors and encompass a variety of subtopics for the rendering of cultural- and socio-specific features of dialogue, from slang to multilingualism. The main issue when transferring a culturally and socially marked product into another language is that things can get "lost in translation." An adaptation will thus necessarily result more or less close to the original according to how much of the initial version has been preserved. Strategies adopted by translators are various and they influence the audience's experience in the target culture; in their contribution to this section, for instance, editor Maicol Formentelli and Silvia Monti identify three main options to transfer slanguage (equivalence, downtoning and omission [176-188]) and find equivalence, i.e. the translation of a word with another word which "point[s] at the same *denotatum* [...] and at the same time encode[s] the same expressive meanings" (177), to be the preferred choice. Whereas slang marks language in identifying speakers as belonging to a given social group (one could call it a "diastratic marker") or has an expressive function signaling a particular emotional state, film dialogue often has to be adapted to the specific culture and time period in which the story is set: cultural specific references as identified by Irene Ranzato have such a role in shows like *Mad Men* and *Life on Mars*, which construct much of their appeal on their historical context. Ranzato identifies translation strategies as well (228-238) and shows how the two series, in their Italian versions, "behave" very differently: whereas *Life on Mars* has gone through such a degree of manipulation that at times it seems to be "taking place in a sociocultural void" (239), *Mad Men* is rendered in a way which conveys "the flavour of the original dialogues" (239). The remaining two chapters, by Joseph Brincat and Giuseppe De Bonis, deal with morphological and semantic simplification in two very different British productions (Ken Loach's *Ae Fond Kiss...* and the tv series *The Queen*) and with the rendering of multilingualism.

The Languages of Dubbing contributes in more than one way to the literature on AVT in Italy: first of all, it offers methodological indications for those who would like to carry out research on the topic; paramount importance is given to the combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis, especially when linked to the use of corpora. Moreover, the studies are presented in a rigorous way which adds to the educational value of the book. The volume is inserted in a line of specialized publications devoted to this field, among which Pavesi and Freddi's *Analysing Audiovisual Dialogue. Linguistic and Translational Insights* (2009), Pavesi's *La traduzione filmica. Tratti del parlato doppiato dall'inglese all'italiano* (2005) and the recent *Multilingua* special issue *Audiovisual Translation as intercultural mediation* (2019), edited by Guillot, Desilla and Pavesi.

Works cited

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