

**Fong, Gilbert C.F., Kenneth K.L. Au (eds) (2009). *Dubbing and Subtitling in a World Context*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, pp. 320. USD 35.00. ISBN: 978 962 996 356 9.**

**T**his volume is a collection of selected papers presented at the *International Conference on Dubbing and Subtitling in a World Context* organised by the Department of Translation of the Chinese University of Hong Kong back in 2001, which was the first and the most important conference on audiovisual translation held in East Asia so far. It gathers the views and reflections on dubbing and subtitling of eighteen different contributors, some of them well-known scholars coming mainly from China, Japan and Korea, as well as some European countries, but also of professionals of the field, such as film distributors or experienced subtitlers.

In the introduction, Kenneth Au, one of the editors, highlights the need for academics and professionals in the industry to find a forum to share ideas and insights. For this reason, this book covers a wide range of issues with an emphasis on real practice and its connection with theory, organised in three sections: history of the profession, theoretical issues, and the profession. A final chapter is devoted to summarise the comments participants to the conference made on the state of their profession in their respective countries, which gives a broad and quite realistic picture of the differences and commonalities in each region, including the reputation and social status of audiovisual translators in each part of the globe.

The first section offers a general historical perspective of subtitling and dubbing in four different areas: Europe, China, Japan, and Korea. In the first one Ivarsson mainly traces the development of subtitles from the intertitles of the beginning of the nineteenth century and focuses on the evolution of different techniques used up to now. The other three papers outline the history of screen translation in each country very briefly, but it is enough to identify the differences existing between the three Asian countries.

Theoretical issues are covered in the second section and are all addressed by Chinese-speaking scholars, coming from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Even though they all quote Western scholars and theories, it is interesting to see them applied to the Chinese context and the characteristics of a non-alphabetical language. In doing so, these papers shed light on some of the translation problems that this particular language poses in different areas, with a certain emphasis on Hong Kong.

Among all of them the two papers written by Fong merit especial attention. He discusses the choices subtitle translators can make among the three approaches in cultural transfer: foreignisation, naturalisation,

and neutralisation, which he maintains that coexist in the translation of any film. He also explores the technical constraints of subtitling as well as the linguistic and stylistic features governing such a multimodal translation, as Chuang Ying-ting defines audiovisual translation in the same section. He maintains the applicability of *skopos* theory and the techniques of discourse analysis in subtitling. He illustrates his ideas with examples of vulgarisms and sexually-oriented language subtitled in Hong Kong and reflects on the benefits of using Cantonese and a more local-flavoured approach to the translation of films. This position is also shared by Chen in his critical evaluation of a subtitled film translated into Chinese, which he uses as a case study to exemplify and analyse the technical, textual, linguistic, and extra-linguistic constraints that he believes rule the translation process.

Different aspects of the profession are dealt with in the third and last section, which starts with a few papers that examine the practice of dubbing in different countries, such as China, Italy, and the Philippines. Despite the distance that separates these last two countries, both Patou-Patucchi and Tauro agree in the need to have better trained translators and call for cooperation between the professionals and the industry. These views and the remarks made at roundtable discussions presented at the end of the book bring us back to the beginning of the volume where Au advocated for a better connection between these two parts. In this sense, although referring only to subtitling, Imhauser's paper *Pedagogy of subtitling* gives grounds for optimism; since she demonstrates that it is possible to offer good translation programmes that at the same time create the necessary links between the academia and the practitioners.

At a time when the centre of cinema is moving away from Hollywood and when Asian cinema is booming around the world, it is important to listen to and take into account the views and experience of scholars and professionals in these regions to have a more global understanding of audiovisual translation. In spite of the fact that the papers presented were certainly more innovative at the time of the conference than now that they are published (even though some of them were updated in 2009), they are indeed informative and original, particularly because not much had been published on AVT from an East Asian perspective. The wide scope of the topics treated together with the variety and representativeness of contributors outline the landscape of the profession from a world perspective, which now includes East Asia as well.

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