

ZABALBEASCOA, PATRICK. AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION. LONDON & NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, 2025, 227 PP., ISBN 978-032-56025-0.

After a dearth of didactic publications on audiovisual translation (AVT), early 2025 saw the publication of two textbooks on the topic: *Introducing Audiovisual Translation* by Agnieszka Szarkowska and Anna Jankowska, and the very succinctly titled *Audiovisual Translation* by Patrick Zabalbeascoa. It is the latter that will be reviewed here. While it is true that there have been textbooks for specific modes of AVT, perhaps most notably those on subtitling by Jorge Díaz Cintas and Aline Remael (2007; 2021), and dubbing by Frederic Chaume Varela (2012), those of us running university survey courses on AVT and media accessibility have long awaited a textbook that deals with the whole field. Before 2025, the closest thing was *Audiovisual Translation: Theories, Methods and Issues* by Luis Pérez González (2014). While that is an excellent book in many ways, it is somewhat dated now and is also on a rather advanced level, so we are now very fortunate to have two very current textbooks to choose from.

This new textbook by Patrick Zabalbeascoa (with co-authoring contributions from Lydia Hayes) takes a holistic view on AVT. Instead of breaking down the chapters according to audiovisual mode, for instance, having a chapter for dubbing and one for subtitling, the book assumes that the reader already has some basic knowledge of the field. After an introductory chapter entitled “What is Audiovisual Translation?”, the chapters are structured thematically. It is not until Chapter 4 that the different kinds of AVT (and media accessibility, but that distinction is not made) are charted. The book distinguishes between revoicing and captioning as superordinate concepts, compares and contrasts them, and examines hybrid forms. Generally, the book takes the perspective of multimodal communication and audiovisual texts and emphasises the importance of orality in revoicing and captioning. Orality is viewed from many vantage points: in speech, both scripted and unscripted, as well as in writing, as the book discusses dubbese, prefabricated orality, and more. The book problematises the concept of the translation unit, which is arguably a more problematic issue in AVT than in traditional monosemiotic translation. It finally settles on “conversation” as an appropriate unit.

From Chapter 5 onwards, the chapter themes change focus from those arguably associated with the source texts to themes that have to do with translation and target texts. The book charts priorities and restrictions, which are influenced by the source texts, the context, and more, and which set the

conditions for the target text. Chapters 6 and 8 deal with translation strategies and problem-solving. Between these chapters, the book discusses continuity and consistency and the importance of creating a coherent narrative, both within texts and between them. The book ends with three chapters that examine three types of translation problems: language variation, character portrayal, and humour in translation.

As the book is a textbook, it contains exercises (called activities), lists of further reading, and examples, some of the latter being very illustrative and thought-provoking, such as the quote normally attributed to Bertrand Russell: "War does not determine who is right. Only who is left." (2025, p. 4). The reader is then invited to ponder how to translate this while keeping all the humorous ambiguities and the philosophical aspects.

The term *audiovisual translation* is often widely used synonymously with the older term *screen translation*, but this book shows that the two concepts are not the same. The author considers many kinds of texts and translations, even when no screen is involved, as long as they exist in an audio and/or visual setting. This means that the reader receives examples from diverse modes such as VR glasses, social media memes, audio guides, and more.

A very pedagogical trait of the book is that chapters tend to start with a simple definition on the theme of the chapter, which is then problematised, nuanced and relativised, sometimes very much so. The book is quite semiotically philosophical, and contains many conceptualisations, flow charts, lists and catalogues of concepts and features. Speaking of lists, I found that a list of abbreviations would have been useful, particularly for the author's own creations, for example TSc and Trechs. The book reconceptualises many of the traditional concepts, such as source text and target text, in new and more nuanced ways, such as T0 for untranslated texts, T1 for source text 1, and T2 for target text 2, which gives great flexibility to think about various text versions, but which may not be too intuitive. The same goes for the aforementioned Trechs, which is short for "translation technique", which is what many other authors would call "translation strategy", and these are not based primarily on semantics, but on forms of rewording.

It soon becomes clear that the author(s) have a great penchant for categorizing concepts and entities, and the one feature that really stands out in the book is the very many lists. Many of these are based on the author's own way of conceptualizing the world, with trechs, texts, languages etc. being referred to in a numerical fashion, rather than with traditional labels. For instance, Trech0 refers to literal translation, which he sees as the default strategy, and at the same time, not a strategy at all, hence the zero.

Another pedagogical trait of the book is the frequent use of examples from films and other audiovisual texts. These make the text more readable, enjoyable, and easier to relate to, as long as the reader shares the same audiovisual background as the author. For those of a younger generation, it would perhaps be helpful if the author had contextualised and explained the quotes used. Overall, some more contextualisation and discussion of the more obscure references would be helpful across the board. There are concepts and entities, such as the HispaTAV, that would have been more accessible to the reader with more assistance from the author. However, the possibility of searching for items online is always available, and the author respects and expects that the readers can manage on their own.

It is not entirely clear who this expected self-reliant reader is, however. The blurb on the back says it is intended for a broad readership, but it is clearly a theoretical book, dealing more with theory and analysis than with the practicalities of carrying out AVT. He does address the reader as a translator once (p. 91), but I would still say that at the end of the day, it is not for teaching how to do AVT, but rather to teach AVT concepts and ideas. The activities (exercises) are also mainly about analysis and theory, not about translation.

The main strengths of the book is in the areas which the author has researched himself in his long and distinguished career. Areas such as multilingual translation, language variation, characterisation and the translation of humour are given a great deal of space, and it is clearly here that the book comes into its own. Therefore, if you are teaching (or taking) an advanced theoretical AVT course focusing on these issues, this book would probably be very useful for you.

In conclusion, I would recommend this text book for advanced learners (and for advanced teaching) of AVT, particularly for more philosophical discussions, and for users who are not afraid to go beyond the book to find more details and clarifications. For learners on a more basic level, there are other text books that are better suited to their needs.

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