

**Bolaños-García-Escribano, Alejandro, Veroz González, M<sup>a</sup> Azahara and Ogea Pozo, María del Mar (eds). (2021). *Media Accessibility in Modern Languages and Translation. e-Expert Seminar Series: Translation and Language Teaching Vol. IV*. UCO Press. Córdoba: Cordoba University Press, pp. 36, vid. 258 min.**

Lydia Hayes

University College London (UCL) & University of Bristol

*Media Accessibility in Modern Languages and Translation* (hereinafter *e-Expert 4*) was the title of the fourth edition of the *e-Expert Seminar Series: Translation and Language Teaching*, a joint editorial venture between University College London (UCL), United Kingdom, and Universidad de Córdoba (UCO), Spain. The book under review, published in March 2021, is the fourth publication from this book series. In quick response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the fourth seminar on which this book draws was migrated entirely online, live streaming presentations on 11 May 2020 from a diversity of locations around Europe and broadcasting globally. Its theme, and hence that of the *e-Expert 4* book, is Media Accessibility (MA) in the university instruction of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) and Translation—a burgeoning research area in Translation Studies (TS), which has been studied since the turn of the century but gathered notable momentum in just the past five years.

MA research to date has materialised in projects (often fully or co-funded by the EU) as well as publications and conferences. Examples of projects include but are not limited to the ADLAB (2011–2014) and ADLAB PRO (2016–2019) projects focusing on audio description for the blind and partially sighted (AD), the EASIT (2018) project on the creation of easy-to-understand text, and the ILSA (2017–2020) project on interlingual live subtitling for access. Some publications of note have been Pablo Romero-Fresco's (2019) seminal book, *Accessible Film-making: Integrating translation and accessibility into the filmmaking process*, and the textbooks written by Soledad Zárata, *Captioning and Subtitling for d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing Audiences* (2021), and Louise Fryer, *An Introduction to Audio Description: A Practical Guide* (2016). The collective books that have followed the *Media for All* conferences in the last decade as well as, later, the *Journal of Audiovisual Translation's* special issue on *Quality in Media Accessibility* (2019) have notably contributed to the growth of MA research in the TS field. In fact, the *Media for All* (2005–) conference series has pioneered the exploration of accessibility in Audiovisual Translation (AVT) for almost two decades and has had accessibility as an explicit and almost exclusive focus since 2015. On the other hand, accessibility

#### Información

Correspondencia:

Lydia Hayes

lydia.hayes.18@ucl.ac.uk

lydia.hayes@bristol.ac.uk

has also manifested in conferences exploring all facets of AVT, such as the multiple panels and individual papers presented on the topic at *Intermedia* (2019) as well as the live subtitles provided via respeaking at the same.

The disruption caused by the pandemic has witnessed the migration of many conferences to online platforms and this shift has acted as a catalyst for making academic settings accessible. One such conference was *e-Expert 4*, which, in order to maximise accessibility, had free entry to the cyberspace and, in the cutting-edge fashion characteristic of these seminars, live subtitles were provided through professional respeaking, thereby facilitating comprehension for people who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing as well as for those facing linguistic barriers. The subtitles also proved helpful to clarify any speech lost due to weak internet connection or poor sound quality. For the e-book, the editors supervised the creation of a new set of subtitles by student teams from UCL (for English subtitles), using cloud-based subtitling tool Ooona Tools, and from UCO (for Spanish subtitles) using freeware programs, thus showcasing the applicability of accessibility in the language classroom—which can be used in both intra- and interlinguistic exercises—as well as the usefulness of cloud subtitling in distance education. Nevertheless, the lack of synchronisation of the live subtitles when exported, which precluded their use in the e-book, does call into question the ecology of live subtitles produced by means of respeaking. It is worth mentioning that the e-book's subtitles are provided in both Spanish and English for texts in Spanish, whereas they are otherwise provided in English only for the remainder of texts, which are in English. This might be considered another effort at accessibility, as English may elucidate the content to those who speak it as *lingua franca* and do not have knowledge of Spanish; however, this is a disputable point and could also be denounced for perpetuating the supremacy of English in publishing<sup>1</sup>.

The book is an e-book is composed of eight video-chapters: an introduction, five conference papers, a roundtable, and a conclusion. Speakers open their chapters by audio describing their physical appearances, in an effort to cater to blind or partially sighted audiences. Nevertheless, web accessibility would be necessary in order for the pathway to the book to be made entirely accessible to the potential users in question. Accessibility is explored throughout the book by speakers approaching the topic from different angles: theoretically conceptualising accessibility; involving end-users in teaching accessibility; course contents and module design for teaching audio description for the blind and partially sighted (AD); and industry practices for creating subtitles for the d/Deaf and hard of hearing (SDH, aka closed captioning) or AD in cinema, puppet theatre and other productions in the performing arts such as plays and operas. In his introduction, co-editor Alejandro Bolaños-García-Escribano (UCL) highlights AD and SDH as the main modes of accessibility currently taught in AVT, with live subtitles through respeaking on the rise. He contributes a fivefold technology-driven approach to Media Accessibility training called TAILS (Technologies, Awareness, Innovation, Legitimacy, and Society) whose pedagogical applications he discusses in a proposal for research-based, foreign-language education. Theoretical and practical insights about MA then follow in the book's chapters, provided by a community of experts formed by industry practitioners and academics, some of whom are a hybrid of both.

---

<sup>1</sup> The same can be said for this review's being written in English; however, the dominant language in any text under review dictates that of the review itself, given that the review aims to draw readers (English-speaking in this case) towards the reviewed text, rather than being merely informative or synoptic.

In terms of accessibility a priori, Gian Maria Greco, from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and Universidade de Vigo, Spain, discusses the pivotal move from the *medical* model to the *social* model of disability and how the latter is, mostly, successful in framing disability, given that what was a particularist account becomes universal instead. For Greco, teaching disability through the lens of a human variation paradigm, instead of pigeonholing it within the confines of a disability paradigm, is key to progress. He also discusses other significant shifts in media accessibility studies: the move from maker- to user-centred approaches and from reactive to proactive models. Agnieszka Szarkowska, from Uniwersytet Warszawski, Poland, develops the reality of user-centred approaches in AD education, illustrating scenarios practised at her university and exploring the institutional complexities surrounding working *for* and/or *with* end-users. The absence of end-users among the contributors to this book in fact emphasises the maker-user gap whose closure, or at least narrowing, is advocated by Szarkowska. Iwona Mazur and Agnieszka Chmiel from Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poland, continue the discussion on AD in the classroom, presenting the outputs of the ADLAB PRO project in which they were involved between 2016 and 2019. The presenters navigate the materials created in the project, which are available online for educators and learners alike, and explain the organisation of tasks according to text type (of which there is great diversity) and the competences developed in different tasks. The speakers also present the results of a questionnaire surveying audio description trainers from both university and industry backgrounds.

Industry insights are then delved into by Olivia Gerber-Morón, of Motion Pictures Solutions, UK, and Gonzalo Iturregui-Gallardo, of Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and Universitat de Barcelona, Spain. These speakers reveal the inner-workings of creating SDH and AD for screen and stage, in terms of conventions, workflow, stakeholders, devices, and the potential for developing a user-centred approach in the performing arts, in particular. Focusing on a more niche performing art, Soledad Zárata, from UCL, gives a detailed account of her work creating captions for puppet theatre on London's Puppet Theatre Barge. She explains how conventions differ depending on the audience's demographics and on the type of puppets used (rod vs. marionettes). She also covers the use of icons and onomatopoeic sounds, instead of the traditional SDH labelling and descriptive captions in brackets, and the software that enable these practices. The roundtable chapter marks the point at which the e-book's content changes from English to Spanish. Carmen Herrero (Manchester Metropolitan University, UK), Marga Navarrete (UCL) Pilar Rodríguez-Arancón (Universidad Nacional de la Educación a Distancia aka UNED, Spain) and Alicia Sánchez-Requena (Sheffield Hallam University, UK) enter into a debate around accessibility in the classroom. Topics discussed include but are not limited to the following: the theory and application of accessibility, design and execution of classroom exercises, syllabus design of competence-oriented exercises, assessment and feedback, and teacher training. Emphasis is given to the advantages of using AD as a pedagogical tool, and to online materials and freeware.

In her conclusion, co-editor Azahara Veroz González (UCO) highlights the twofold nature of accessibility in the language classroom: as a teaching methodology and as a transferable skillset acquired by students. As regards the latter, she embraces the far-reaching benefits of shaping a workforce capable of creating accessible content as well as a society with awareness of accessibility matters. Finally, future avenues of research are mentioned, anticipating

the importance of EU projects, user-centred approaches and the performing arts. These future avenues of research could be incorporated into syllabi, in line with the research-based, foreign-language education advocated for by Alejandro Bolaños-García-Escribano in the introduction to this book. The modest price of the book underlines the generosity of its editors in their intellectual contribution, aiming for accessibility wherever possible. This is a timely reminder that accessibility can be achieved through financial, sensorial, linguistic, and many other means, if one thinks and operates within the human variation paradigm.