LTA – Carlo Eugeni interview

Francesca Raffi (FR): Francesca Raffi for Fred Film Radio. Today we are going deeper into the Live Text Access project and real-time subtitles, which enable live access to audiovisual content in situations where support for communication is required. To know more about this, but also to talk about media accessibility, we have virtually with us today Carlo Eugeni, lecturer in conference interpreting at the Advanced School for Interpreters and Translators in Pisa, and trainer of respeakers. Carlo, it's a great pleasure to have you here with us today.

Carlo Eugeni (CE): My pleasure, Francesca.

FR: As I said, you train respeakers, but you are also a respeaker yourself, so I'm sure you're the best one to tell us what respeaking is, Carlo. I also would like to know why you decided to focus your research, but also your professional activity, on media accessibility and in particular respeaking.

CE: Well, I started working on media accessibility in general and particularly on respeaking in 2004. At the time, BBC had started using respeaking, but nobody had really researched about it.

FR: So, it was something pretty new.

CE: I've done one big thing I'm particularly proud of, which is the live subtitling of Pope Francis canonization...

FR: Wow, that's great.

CE: Yeah, he celebrated the canonization of John Paul II in 2013, so it was an international event.

FR: Yeah, a huge event. I understand also from your personal experience that bridging somehow research and practice is key to improving the profession, right? And this is basically what the Live Text Access project, what LTA wants to do by designing a curriculum for real-time live subtitlers. First of all, are respeaker and real-time live subtitler synonyms, or are they different somehow?

CE: Well, there is a lot of terminology flaws in the field, because the field is very new. In 10 years, let's say, many people have investigated on it, and talked on it. Sometimes, people have invented terminology.

FR: New terms.

CE: Respeaking per se is the name of a technique by which the respeaker listens to the speaker and repeats what he says, or reformulates what he says, or even translates what he says. The respeaker talks into a microphone, which sends the input to a

speech-to-text recognition software, which basically translates what it hears by the respeaker and translates the voice input into written words. It is quite complex, but it is similar to the job of a simultaneous interpreter. The simultaneous interpreter listens and repeats. Here the software transcribes what the respeaker says into written words. This means that you can produce through respeaking texts for many contexts. You can produce live subtitles for TV programs; you can produce live reports for parliamentary assemblies; you can produce transcriptions of meetings at which you have deaf people attending, so deaf people are able to follow the speech, such as in conferences or job meetings. Live subtitling is something else. It is a context where respeaking can be used.

FR: OK.

CE: Respeaking is only a technique. We also have velotype. Velotype is a typing technique. Basically the job of the velotypist is to produce texts live by listening to a speaker and typing.

FR: So, different professional profiles, let's say.

CE: Yes.

FR: The LTA project aims at designing an effective and certified curriculum for both real-time intralingual respeakers and velotypists, right? So, the project tries to achieve these two main aims, we can say.

CE: Yes.

FR: To design this certified curriculum the project has five Intellectual Outputs, is it correct?

CE: Yes, it's correct. I'm in charge of Intellectual Output number two, which is the designing of the curriculum for the real-time intralingual subtitler, as we call it. We know, for example, that American people call it live captioner. So, here again there are terminology issues to solve. This IO is the designing of the curriculum for the real-time intralingual subtitler. It is based on the literature in the field, of course, because in 15 years many researchers have worked on training. Plus, it is based on the skills that have already been identified and organised in two macro areas. Every single area has quantified credits, plus...

FR: Credits? What do you mean?

CE: It means that internationally, both in the vocational field and in the academic field, students or trainees acquire credits for their profession, or for their curriculum if they are students. The curriculum needs to provide credits to tell to the professional and the academic worlds how much they have learned. It is a sort of index for telling the world what they have learned. The curriculum will have two peculiarities. It will

be modular and it will be accessible. Modular means that trainees don't need to go through the whole process to become a professional, but they can opt for one specific work situation, or for one specific application or technique. For example, if you are already a court reporter and want to become a TV subtitler you need to develop given skills, because you already possess some. So, you can simple opt for one or two. Accessible means that we will produce materials that can be used by all.

FR: Also by students with some kind of disabilities, for example?

CE: Yes, correct. For example, blind people and partially sighted people should be able to access the materials we are going to produce.

FR: OK, that's interesting. OK Carlo, very clear. Thank you very much. We are getting more and more familiar with the Live Text Access project. Carlo Eugeni is one of the partners of the project. Thank you very much for being with us today, Carlo.

CE: Thank you.

FR: And thank you very much to all of you. Don't miss our next interviews on Fred Film Radio to know more about the LTA project. This is Francesca Raffi and this is Fred Film Radio, the festival insider.

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