From exhibitions to the screen: the challenges of subtitling art from English into Italian

The aim of the paper is to explore the characteristics of English for Art Purposes, also referred to as International Art English (Rule and Levine 2012), and to focus on the translation strategies used in the Italian subtitles of this type of content-related discourse in the art documentary Goya: visions of flesh and blood (2016).

Through the leitmotif of the art exhibition, here the narration is presented through a variety of voices, from those of art curators and critics to the voice of the artist himself, producing a successful attempt to make art available in an informative but also entertaining manner, thanks to the use of a refined yet accessible and enjoyable language. Despite its technical constraints, does subtitling manage to retain such features? And in what ways does it transfer the aesthetic quality and interpersonal tone of the source text? The translation strategies used to manipulate and adapt the multi-layered nuances of this rich language will be identified through a qualitative approach, with specific reference to lexical and syntactical choices, the use of figurative language and register alteration. It will be argued that the communicative purpose expressed through the register, in the interpretations produced by art critics, is altered in translation which shows greater concern for the descriptive and compositional components.