



Workshop Audio Description

Summer School
Forli



Screen Translation
25 May 2007

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Audiodescription Internet Sources

- **British site listing films with AD:** <http://www.yourlocalcinema.com/ad.html>
(you can click here on "Audio described movie samples in mp3 format" for some samples).

Association of Science - Technology Centers (ASTC) on AD:
<http://www.astc.org/resource/access/medad.htm> (good?)

AD in Australia: <http://www.astc.org/resource/access/medad.htm>

AD in USA Station WGBS (similar to BR in Deutschland?):
<http://main.wgbh.org/wgbh/pages/mag/services/description/>

Sony Films AD previews:
<http://www.ims-media.com/sonycinema/docs/comingsoon.htm>

AD of paintings, sculpture and architecture:
<http://www.artbeyondsight.org/handbook/acs-verbalsamples.shtml>

1. What is Audio Description? – Background & Facts

Audio Description = verbal description of pictures and visual material to help vision-impaired and blind recipients understand and share information that would otherwise not be accessible to them.

Audio Description

- has to fit into the dialog pauses or other space not taken up by verbalized information (i.e. it must give a short & condensed description)
- must contain additional (relevant) spoken information of what is going on which cannot be seen, incl. e.g atmosphere, feelings, emotional states (i.e. it must be detailed enough to do this, and language must reflect the emotions not seen, i.e. must not be too abstract)
 - ‡ Trade-off between providing additional relevant information within (time) constraints (danger of overlapping with dialogs)

AUDIO DESCRIPTION DILEMMA (audio describe more than is being said in limited time) raises most important questions as to what and how to audio describe).

Background & Facts (continued)

- Radio and television are the most important source of information for blind and vision-impaired persons
- 94 % of all vision impaired watch television regularly
- Most popular are news (20,3 %) and television films (16,5 %)
- 90 % of the blind and vision-impaired would like to have more audio-described information, esp. news and documentaries, but also films and entertainment.
- Audio description is today regularly provided e.g. by ARTE (www.arte.de) and the Bavarian Broadcasting Company (www.br-online.de/br-intern/integration/index_blinde.shtml)

Background & Facts (continued)

- First introduced in the 70s and 80s in San Francisco, USA
- Development of Audio Description in Europe in the nineties. Forerunners ARTE, in Germany Bavarian Broadcasting (Bernd Benecke)
- Other Television stations soon followed suit: ZDF, MDR, NDR, WDR and 3sat play films with audio description
- 2000: first audio descriptions on DVDs
- 2001: Foundation of the German Hörfilm GmbH (DHG)
 - ‡ Larger offer of audio-described films
 - ‡ Creation of an information service
 - ‡ Expansion of audio description to other everyday life areas
- 2003: EU legislation and national governments pass laws that guarantee the 'barrier-free' access to communication for all persons with an impairment.
- Since that time great progress in audio description production, interchange and research. Audio description has, for example, been a continuous topic at all MuTra Euroconferences (www.euroconferences.info) cf. program and abstracts

2. The Process of Audio Description

2.1 General concerns & objectives

- To maintain the 'atmosphere' of a film
- To make the plot understandable without pictures, i.e. to describe what you see rather than 'interpret' what you see (e.g. she wore a tight mini skirt rather than a pretty outfit),
- To make emotions 'transparent' instead of 'interpreting' them (e.g. 'he has a wrinkled face' rather than 'he is ugly',
- To avoid abstract language (this is good, bad, ugly, pretty
- To position the additional information in 'empty' spaces and/or between dialogs
- To introduce the acting persons as early and re-identifiable as possible
- To avoid an overlap with dialogs or important film music/noise
- To be aware of film music as a potentially essential element of style
- To adapt the Audio Description text to the film genre and style
- To use short, simple sentences
- To vary the syntactical constructions to avoid monotony
- To avoid frequent word repetitions

2. The Process of Audio Description

2.2 What information is audio described (and when)?

Important principles include:

- Events should not be ‘reduced’ or ‘interpreted’
- Information should not be audio described before it becomes available to everyone
- These principles generally conflict with the time and space available (= audio description dilemma)
- Only what is actually seen is audio described

2.2 What information is audio described and when? (continued)

This is still an unresolved research question on a general level:

1. For instance the “What und “When“ relates to questions of information sequencing and coherence.
2. The question of “How” relates to information packaging in terms of what language means are to be used, e.g.
 - lexical means Principle of using concrete linguistic forms
 - syntactic means Principle of simplicity
 - information-related one utterance = one information
3. Concrete instances of what is audio-described include the actors, time, place, atmosphere, feelings etc.

2.2 What information is audio described and when? (continued)

Place of action

- Tendency towards more general description of places
- The impression of the place where the action takes place is most important

Time of action

- Logical flow of events must be recognizable without looking at the pictures

People

- Problem of when names are introduced
- Anticipation of names or time-consuming simultaneous introduction with appearance of people?
- Problem of describing people to recognize them again later without seeing them

Describing film noises

- No description should run over important noises
- Explanation of noises that cannot be clearly distinguished

2.2 What information is audio described and when? (continued)

Picture-related information

- **Elements of how the camera is turned and positioned and how the pictures are arranged in a sequence of scenes, the recognition of a possible 'leitmotiv' is important**
- **It is difficult to accommodate flash-backs, dreams or visions – these will require additional information explaining these states**
- **It is difficult to describe colors for people who have never seen 'red' or 'yellow'**
- **Favored linguistic means are**
 - ‡ **the present tense**
 - ‡ **clear and simple syntax**
 - ‡ **adaptation of the language to the tone of the film.**
 - ‡ **variation of expressions**

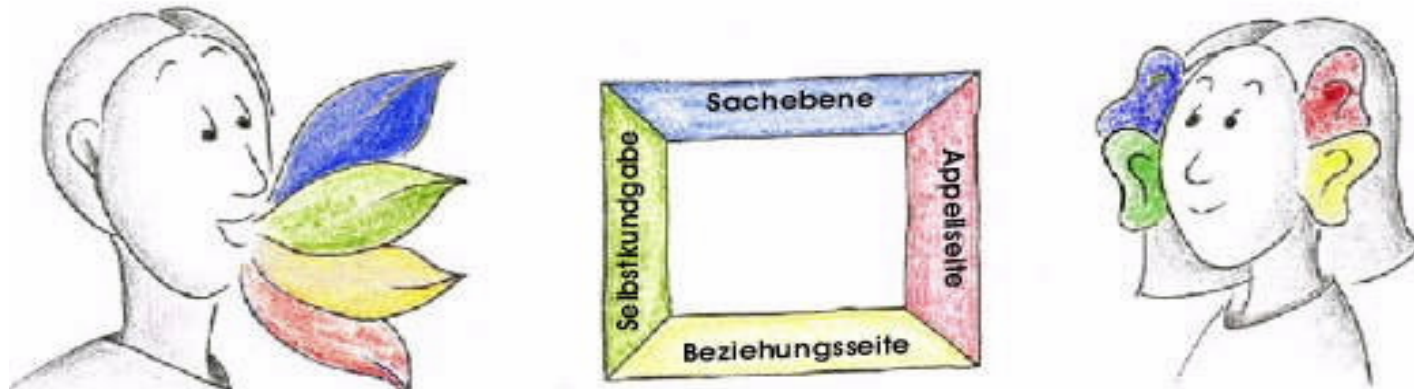
Making an Audio Description

Principles, Time & Costs

- Teamwork is a good basis for Audiodescription
- Team of three at Bavarian Broadcasting (two audiodescribers, one vision-impaired person)
- Function of Team: People with normal vision to complement and control each other's descriptions, 'objectivize' impressions and remedy possible inaccuracies Vision-impaired person to identify information gaps
- Time necessary to produce an audiodescription (90 min. film): 5-6 working days
- Technical equipment: TV, Videorecorder, Computer, Film
- Costs ca. 5.000 – 7.000 EUR

The Communication Square

<http://www.schulz-von-thun.de/mod-komquad.html>



Whenever we communicate, four dimensions and their interplay are activated. Anything we say – whether we realize it or not – simultaneously contains four types of messages:

- A factual message (i.e. that what is spoken about) - **blue**
- A self-indicative message about the speaker (i.e. what is revealed about the personality of the speaker) - **green**,
- A relationship message (i.e. how the speaker relates to the hearer, what the speaker thinks of the hearer) - **yellow**,
- An appellative message (what the speaker wants the hearer to do for him/her) – **red**.

3. Some Research Questions

- ß **Information selection : Which information needs to be audio-deascribed?**
- ß **Relevance, condensation and coherence**
- ß **Topics and Topic Continuity**
- ß **Levels of Audiodescription: Holistic and Atomistic**
- ß **Information sequencing: In which sequence is the information audiodescribed ?**
- ß **Information Packaging: In which form is information audio-described?**
- ß **Linguistic and narrative aspects?**
- ß **Cultural Specifics How are cultural specifics audiodescribed?**

And many more....

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Thank you !

