

THE ADLAB PROJECT: and some ideas on audio description  
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## ARSAD 2013

## ADLAB. Audio Description – Lifelong access for the blind

European Erasmus Multilateral Lifelong  
Learning project  
2011-2014

## Partners

- University of Trieste
- Autonomous University of Barcelona
- Polytechnic University of Leiria
- Artesis, Antwerp University
- University of Poznan (UAM)
- BayerischeRundfunk
- Vlaamse Radio en Televisie (VRT)
- Senza Barriere

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND VISION

Audio description and audio subtitling

Create authoritative guidelines and/or proposals for the AD profession/industry in all Europe;  
Develop curricula for universities in Europe: both for entertainment and for instruction;  
Training of audio describers and audio describer trainers;  
Sensitise and influence *decision-makers at a local, national and European level*;  
Create useful connections with the industry and with the service providers;

Social Inclusion:  
Improve the lives of the blind and visually impaired population;  
(but also that of immigrants, those with learning difficulties, language learners, etc.)

## WORK PACKAGES

- WP 1 User Needs Analysis
- WP 2 Text Analysis and Development
- WP 3 Testing
- WP 4 Guidelines

## Work Package 1 USER NEEDS

Executive Summary

The issue addressed in the ADLAB WP1 report on user needs is the current situation in Europe regarding the accessibility to audiovisual products on the part of the blind and visually impaired population. The aim was to achieve a 'photograph' of the situation in Europe – particularly regarding the project member states – in order to better focus efforts in the succeeding stages of the project.

How many blind and visually impaired people?

What laws are there?

How much audio description? On television, at the theatre, etc.

Role of the national blind associations

ANSWERS IN THE REPORT  
Website <[www.adlabproject.eu](http://www.adlabproject.eu)>

## Five sections

- Basic information: data on the definitions and numbers of blind and visually impaired people and the legal situation concerning them;
- Availability of AD in the different countries;
- AD research and training;
- User reception studies and input from the national and local blind persons' organizations;
- Conclusions and recommendations.

## Basic information

- The survey demonstrates that various government jurisdictions have formulated different and complex definitions of legal blindness and other forms of visual impairment.
- As for the specific laws and regulations pertaining to AD, here too there is much variation:
  - countries that have no regulations;
  - countries where very precise guidelines exist for some sectors (e.g. public television in Flanders);
  - countries that are known to have full legislation (e.g. the UK).

## However...

... in spite of this heterogeneous situation, each country appears to have made AD-specific arrangements at least with national broadcasters, which shows that a minimal degree of awareness of the need for accessible media products already exists.

## Availability of AD

- Results show a somewhat comparable situation in all the countries involved in the research in that public television typically offers AD services to some extent while the private market is less interested in making its audio-visual productions accessible.
- ***Television is the key market!***

## And

- some DVDs including AD tracks exist in all countries under consideration but often very limited cf. 4 or 5 in Italy;
- some organisations cater for the needs of the target group, e.g. Italy (Senza Barriere Onlus) and Spain (cf. O.N.C.E.);
- the situation in museums seems consistently positive, and in expansion;
- theatre, opera and ballet - mostly occasional one-off ADs
- almost no cinemas offer AD on a regular basis. Special screenings with AD, are all linked to single initiatives.

## AD research and training

- Our surveys show that in most countries research and educational training are closely linked, as both are typically carried out in universities even if there are no specific professorships or chairs for AD experts.
- Generally speaking, it is safe to say that AD is only very rarely part of the curriculum at higher education level.
- Sometimes training is offered in seminars taught by professionals, or available in-house within companies.

## Professional training

The guidelines that have been adopted are rarely based on empirical research, in most cases being the result of experience, common sense and personal preferences

What is more, where university classes and training sessions are taught, teaching methods are not uniform across providers, and several practitioners self-teach the skills that are required by their work, especially as far as accessibility services are concerned (Díaz 2007, 2009).

## User reception studies

investigate the position of national and local blind associations regarding audio description, especially in terms of their lobbying power in promoting the practice.

the report includes a list of organizations for each charted country with very varied and detailed answers provided by each.

the trend seems to confirm the great importance ascribed to AD by each and every organization, even though their involvement and lobbying power varies and more cooperation is called for.

## REPORT Conclusions

The general conclusion is that AD is still a media access practice lacking critical mass in terminology, practice, and training. Until there is a solid research background to turn to for data, and results, all activities related to AD should be considered as anecdotal. Raising awareness at all levels is the first recommendation made by the ITU Audiovisual Media Focus Group, and ADLAB will be looking to take forward this recommendation leading to its work on creating guidelines and curricula, and on promoting the practice of audio description whenever and wherever possible.

### ADVISORY GROUP REQUEST

Dear friends, after some considerable time, I now have something for you as advisory group members of ADLAB. We have been working for some time on the user needs report which I enclose in attachment. It is still a little rough round the edges in that it still needs some tweaking in the formatting, and as each day passes it gets less up to date. But the basic purpose was to get a 'photograph' of the current situation to see what has already been done in the audiodescription world and what still needs to be done. We would appreciate it greatly if you could have a look at it, even in its 'work in progress' form, and let us have any comments, suggestions, harsh criticism, etc. Many thanks and best wishes, Chris Taylor

### AND HARSH CRITICISM THERE WAS...

"I think this needs a bit of thought in terms of the order and structure of the report. There appears to be no culling of information, or presentation in easy to read formats such as tables, so the information provided has no sense of hierarchy. It reads a bit like a **"data dump"** at the moment".

"One of the striking issues in chapter 1 is that of access service and user group. The implication is that AD is for "blind and visually impaired subjects..". **AD caters for a wider range of constituents**, including persons with cognitive disabilities, poor readers and the like".

"I also find the first section to be somewhat lacking in structure and accessibility".

## But in the end...

"this is a VAST improvement on the earlier draft".

"a much improved and streamlined document".

"I have learned many interesting things from this and **look forward to citing it** when it is published".

## Work package 2

- Work package 2 is reaching its conclusion as I speak.
- An extensive text analysis has been carried out on the film 'Inglourious Basterds' by all partners, and coordinated by UAB.
- The film was chosen because of its myriad varied features, its connections to other films and genres, its use of several languages and basically because of its extreme difficulty for the audiodescriber.



## Rationale (Orero)

- Most studies on audiovisual translation in general (Perego 2005, Díaz-Cintas & Remael 2007, Franco, Matamala & Orero 2010, Romero-Fresco 2011) were drafted from a top-down approach. While this is the most common and time effective procedure, it tends to yield the information expected from the onset of the experiment and hypothesis drafted.
- We have with the EU project a unique and too interesting opportunity to have several countries and experts in the field. We decided to embark on a new and challenging research approach: bottom up, that is following a user-centric approach, and avoiding a pre-determined outcome. We departed for our research and analysis from one common input: Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* (2009).

## THE MATRIX

- Text on screen
- Music and sounds
- Intertextual relations
- Cultural references
- Secondary elements (content prioritisation)
- Gestures and facial expressions
- Cinema tools/camera techniques
- Spatio-temporal characteristics
- Characters (describing, naming, placing)
- Audio description wording, language, style

## Text-on-screen

- Logos: Universal Pictures  
The Weinstein company
- Opening credits/closing credits/TITLE
- Inserts/Intertitles (e.g. Kapitel Eins)
- Inglourious Basterds inscription on the rifle
- Names captioned and arrowed
- Maps
- Newspaper clippings
- Cinema lettering
- Shoshana's passport
- Cards used in game
- The napkin signed by Bridget
- Subtitles

## Work package 2 – the book

Work package 2 will also spawn a volume written by ADLAB members and covering all the aspects alluded to above concerning the difficulties encountered in audio describing 'Inglourious Basterds' and their relevance to the audio description world in general.

## Book chapters

- Text on screen
- Music and sounds
- Textual Cohesion
- Intertextual relations
- Cultural references
- Secondary elements
- Gestures and facial expressions
- Cinema techniques
- Spatial temporal features
- Characters
- Language

And that ends the plenary-style overview phase ...

...and now I'd like to share a few ideas connected to the project and which will hopefully find their way into the project outcomes.

Today...

"a solid research background to turn to for data"

Research into what?

There are both practical and theoretical considerations...

But today I shall concentrate more on the theoretical, more precisely on linguistic and cultural aspects...

... and translation.

Perennial Questions

- What should be described?
- What should not be described?

Linguistic considerations

Adopting the tenets of SFL (systemic functional linguistics), I'll begin with the question posed years ago by Michael Halliday about

«what was said and what might have been said but wasn't»

referring to the choices speakers make from a potentially enormous paradigm of possibilities

And thus...

- ... the choices describers make (and later how these might be translated).

A further consideration (or hypothesis)

- ... is that audio description is a new and distinct text type, distinguishable from all other genres

## Examples (texts of the same length)

- Audiodescribed version of 'The English Patient'
- A short story by Wilkie Collins 'The Traveller's Story'.

## Linguistic aspects: Language Use, Theme, Mood

- Audiodescription involves a particular use of language – present tense, solely declarative, «clear, vivid and succinct» vocabulary, etc.
- It also displays particular theme choices and theme progression.
- All clauses are declarative, so often the subject is theme, often pronouns, predominantly, if not exclusively, third person.

## Theme reiteration The English Patient

- 01:04:04 A Red Cross troop train.
- A young French-Canadian nurse, Hana, adjusts the belt of her uniform.
- She walks into a carriage where wounded soldiers lie one above the other on bunks.
- (Passing between them) she stops beside a young man.
- 01:04:39 She bends over him.
- 01:04:45 She moves on between the bunks.
- 01:04:58 She joins her colleagues.

## and tight anaphoric reference

- The horribly burned pilot has been found by nomads.
- Gently they cover his blackened flesh.
- He is barely alive.
- They investigate his belongings..

## Marked themes: non-finite clauses – shows the pre-planning typical of written language

- Passing between them,...
- Swathed in blankets,...
- Seated behind the pilot,...
- Standing behind a railing,...
- Forcing open a door,...
- Wearing a simple skirt,...
- Finishing his photography,...

## Dialogue

We do and we are while we speak.

But for the blind, characters in films speak their roles but cannot be seen 'doing' or 'being'.

Non-finite phrases provide that input succinctly.

## Nominal groups (ellipses)

- Bright white letters on a blue background.
- A pale gold background with a textured surface.
- A Red Cross troop train.
- The desert.
- An Army Red Cross camp.
- Italy, October 1946.
- An explosion on the road ahead.
- Morning.
- The Red Cross camp.
- Later.
- The monastery
- Dawn.
- An egg.

## Theme in the AD of 'The English Patient' (7,500 words)

- Nouns and noun groups 302
- Circumstantial
- adjuncts of Time 38
- adjuncts of Manner 26
- adjuncts of Place 62
- Pronouns (3° person) 239
- Non finite clauses 77

## Theme in 'The Traveller's Story' (Wilkie Collins)

- Nouns 152
- Circumstantial
- adjuncts of Time 61
- adjuncts of Manner 20
- adjuncts of Place 14
- Pronouns (1° person) 146
- Pronouns (3° person) 41
- Non finite clauses 6
- Imperatives 27
- Questions 21
- (existentials, minor clauses, interpersonals, vocatives)

## Theme

In AD the theme development is also, of course, contextualised by the dialogue.

But the lack of non-finite clauses, existentials, minor clauses, interpersonals, vocatives, continuatives, exclamatives, etc. is striking.

And the point is to demonstrate that the hypothesis that AD is a particular text type is supported.

## What was said...

In fact the (professional and experienced) English describer has opted for one series of grammatical structures instead of others, suggesting indeed that these choices point to a self-standing genre.

As usual, 'more research is required...'

For example a comparison between a screenplay and AD.

Cf. Lakritz & Salway (2002) «It is possible to identify and extract 80% of the important information from screenplays that should feature in ADs»

... but not necessarily in the same linguistic form, ... and then there's the 20%.

01:02:29 The gentle strokes of the paintbrush merge, to form the simple silhouette of a figure lying on its side with arms stretched up over its head.  
 01:02:42 For a moment the painted figure floats free, then slowly it fades and becomes the shadow of a small aeroplane flying over a desert landscape. Beneath the aircraft the evening sun throws deep shadows amongst the soft rolling sanddunes - the gentle curves and folds resemble golden breasts and sexless naked thighs.  
 01:03:03 The pilot of the open plane is wearing goggles and a leather flying helmet  
 01:03:08 In the front cockpit lies a bushy-haired young woman; her delicate features are defined by the evening sun, her eyes are closed, her face pale and still. Behind her head a white silk scarf flutters in the slipstream of the aircraft.  
 01:03:22 Clearly visible against a cloudless sky, the plane flies on over the rolling sand hills.  
 01:03:27 German gunners spot the aircraft.  
 01:03:40 Bullets tear holes in the fuselage.  
 01:03:47 The plane catches fire.  
 01:03:55 His clothes on fire he struggles desperately to escape from the burning aircraft.  
 01:04:04 A Red Cross troop train. A young French-Canadian nurse, Hana, adjusts the belt of her uniform. She walks into a cartage where wounded soldiers lie one above the other on banks. Passing between them she stops beside a young man.  
 01:04:35 She moves on between the banks.  
 01:04:58 She joins her colleagues.  
 01:05:01 The desert.  
 01:05:05 The horribly burned pilot has been found by nomads.  
 01:05:11 Gently they cover his blackened flesh.  
 01:05:16 He is barely alive.  
 01:05:20 They investigate his belongings, fingering photographs and paintings pushed between the pages of a book.  
 01:05:28 A simple piece of cloth is laid over his face with holes cut for his mouth and eyes. A dried palm leaf covers the cloth.  
 01:05:37 Swallowed in blankets and strapped to a stretcher he is carried across the sand-dunes on the back of a swaying camel. Dimly he sees the outline of his rescuers through the fine mesh of the dried palm leaf which protects his eyes from the glare of the sun.  
 01:05:55 He breathes with difficulty.  
 01:06:00 An army Red Cross camp.  
 01:06:06 The young nurse, Hana, now in army fatigues, is making her way towards a hospital tent. Later she walks between the rows of wounded with her American friend, Jan.  
 01:06:21 A doctor is tending a badly wounded young soldier.  
 01:06:37 The doctor pulls open a curtain.  
 01:07:01 Hana looks concerned.  
 01:07:13 A shell hits the tent.  
 01:07:18 Hana and Jan are rearing. The doctor pushes Hana to the ground.  
 01:07:24 As the shells continue sweeping inconspicuously to fall, she lies face-down in the mud.  
 01:07:48 Dozens of tiny bottles hang from a twisted wooden branch resting upon the shoulders of a desert nomad. He carries his medicines into a cave lit by firelight. Tribesmen surround the pilot, who lies immersed in his neck, in a shallow pool of cloudy water.  
 01:07:58 Seated behind the pilot's head, the nomad chief begins to sing as he gently removes the protective cloth.

## Difference between description and audiodescription

A student in Trieste audiodescribed a short advertisement for Martini.

## martini ad

### Version 1: reading time 60 seconds

- Gwyneth Paltrow è seduta su un letto, di spalle, nuda. Si infila una camicia bianca maschile.
- (*Where are you going?*)
- Si gira verso l'uomo che giace sul letto, e gli lancia uno sguardo complice e un sorriso ammiccante.
- Si affaccia sul corridoio, è in un albergo.
- Percorre il corridoio di soppiatto, con addosso solo la camicia bianca.
- Si trova al bar dell'albergo. Scende tre scalini.
- Scavalca il bancone del bar. Ha ai piedi un paio di sandali neri con il tacco alto.
- Appoggia due bicchieri vuoti sopra il bancone.
- Prende la bottiglia di Martini da dietro la sua spalla.
- I bicchieri sono ora pieni di ghiaccio. Versa il Martini nei bicchieri.
- Aggiunge uno spicchio di limone in ciascun bicchiere.
- Afferra la bottiglia e si volta per rimetterla al suo posto.
- Un uomo e una donna, giovani ed eleganti, si avvicinano al bancone.
- Gwyneth Paltrow si gira verso di loro.
- I due giovani hanno preso i due bicchieri che erano sul banco, si voltano e fanno per andarsene.
- (*Good night!*)
- Gwyneth Paltrow abbassa lo sguardo con un'aria di ironica rassegnazione.
- I due giovani si voltano verso di lei, l'uomo si avvicina di nuovo al bancone. Gwyneth ha un'aria interrogativa.
- Lui porge una banconota.
- Gwyneth Paltrow sorride stupita.
- Bottiglia di Martini in primo piano, logo sovraimpressione. La mano di Gwyneth afferra un bicchiere e lo solleva.
- (*My Martini, please*)
- Sorride, guarda avanti a sé e si avvicina il bicchiere alle labbra. Beve.

### Version 2: reading time 45 seconds

- Gwyneth Paltrow è seduta su un letto, di spalle, nuda. Si infila una camicia bianca.
- (*Where are you going?*)
- Si volta verso l'uomo che giace sul letto, sorride.
- Si affaccia sul corridoio dell'albergo, lo percorre di soppiatto.
- E' al bar dell'albergo, l'arredamento è molto ricercato.
- Scavalca il bancone del bar. Ha ai piedi un paio di sandali neri con il tacco alto.
- Appoggia due bicchieri sul bancone. Si volta e prende una bottiglia di Martini.
- Riempie i bicchieri. Aggiunge una fetta di limone in ciascun bicchiere. Si volta per rimettere a posto la bottiglia.
- Un uomo e una donna, giovani ed eleganti, si avvicinano al bancone e afferrano i due bicchieri. Si voltano per andarsene.
- (*Good night!*)
- Gwyneth ha un'aria di ironica rassegnazione.
- L'uomo torna al bancone, e le porge una banconota.
- Gwyneth sorride stupita.
- Bottiglia in primo piano e logo del Martini. Una mano in secondo piano afferra un bicchiere.
- (*My Martini, please*)
- Gwyneth sorride, e beve.

### Version 3: reading time 35 seconds

- Gwyneth Paltrow è seduta su un letto, di spalle, nuda. Si infila una camicia bianca.
- (*Where are you going?*)
- Si volta verso l'uomo che giace sul letto, sorride.
- Esce di soppiatto dalla stanza.
- E' al bar dell'albergo.
- Scavalca il bancone.
- Appoggia due bicchieri sul bancone. Si volta e prende una bottiglia di Martini.
- Riempie i bicchieri. Si volta per rimettere a posto la bottiglia.
- Un uomo e una donna, giovani ed eleganti, si avvicinano al bancone e afferrano i due bicchieri. Si allontanano.
- (*Good night!*)
- Gwyneth ha un'aria di ironica rassegnazione.
- L'uomo torna al bancone, e le porge una banconota.
- Gwyneth sorride stupita.
- Bottiglia e logo del Martini. Una mano afferra un bicchiere.
- (*My Martini, please*)
- Gwyneth sorride, e beve.

### Version 4: reading time 30 seconds

- (**DEFINITIVE VERSION**)
- Gwyneth Paltrow è seduta su un letto di albergo, di spalle, nuda. Si infila una camicia bianca.
- (*Where are you going?*)
- Sorride complice all'uomo che giace accanto a lei.
- Esce di soppiatto dalla stanza.
- E' al bar.
- Scavalca il bancone.
- Appoggia due bicchieri sul bancone. Prende una bottiglia di Martini e li riempie.
- Si volta per rimettere a posto la bottiglia.
- Una coppia giovane ed elegante si avvicina, afferra i due bicchieri e si allontana.
- (*Good night!*)
- Gwyneth ha un'aria seccata, ma ironica.
- L'uomo torna al bancone, e le porge una banconota.
- Gwyneth sorride stupita.
- Bottiglia e logo del Martini. Una mano afferra un bicchiere.
- (*My Martini, please*)
- Gwyneth sorride, e beve.

So how did she get there?  
How do we describe the visual?

Holšánová (2008) discusses verbal focus and visual focus in describing (cf. Chafe. - active and semi-active focus).

## Description

- Describing something off-line (without seeing it, and from memory) we retell using a certain format.
- "When we make meaning we always simultaneously construct a *presentation* of some state of affairs, *orient* to the presentation and orient to others, and in doing so create an *organised* structure of related elements."

cf. SFL

presentational

orientational

organisational

ideational meaning

interpersonal meaning

textual meaning

## Off-line description

- No time constraints
- Natural expression
- Metacomments
- Judgements
- Summarising
- Possibility of error
- Omissions not dictated by relevance

## On-line description (on seeing)

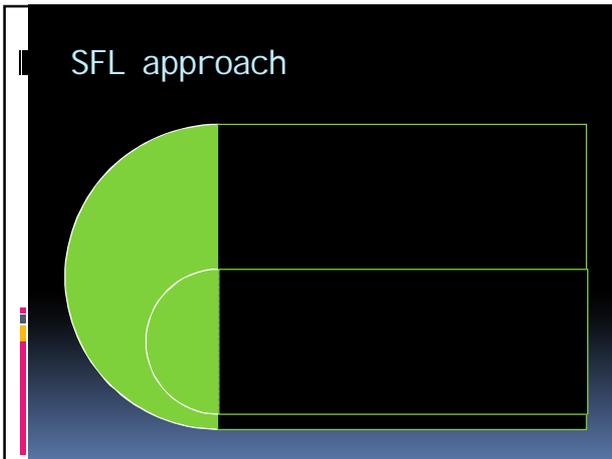
- Natural expression
- Details
- Lists
- Less uncertainty
- Spatially oriented (in the foreground...)

## Audiodescription (dynamic texts)

- Time constraints!
- Not natural expression
- Detailed (up to a point)
- Less uncertain
- Spatial orientation
- (and) Temporal orientation
- Judgements, appraisal??

## Appraisal

On-line describing also entails validity judgements, epistemic expressions, attitudinal meaning, etc. It is difficult to avoid interpreting from our own experience and expertise.



### ATTITUDE (positive and negative)

Affect (emotions)	He is enjoying his dinner. She is sad.
Appreciation (qualities)	He climbs the wall with ease. The problem is getting more complicated.
Judgement (behaviour)	He is behaving impolitely. She neglected to say...

### BUT

This has been frowned upon in audiodescription.

GUIDANCE ON STANDARDS FOR AUDIO DESCRIPTION (ITC)  
 "the best audiodescribers objectively recount the visual aspects of an image. Subjective or qualitative judgements or comment get in the way."  
 but there again...

### SAD (Orero)

"the eyelids droop as the inner corners of the brows rise, the corners of the lips pull down, and the lower lip pushes up in a pout"

### Do we want to reproduce the same experience...

- ... or do we want sometimes to use our better judgement, based on our knowledge of the film and our (and the audience's) knowledge of the world.
- Is it a question of
- "what you see"
- "what we think"
- "what they want"? (NOT to be patronised)

### Iconic vs. indexical, but don't give too much away

- Eg. In the film 'Gran Torino' we see a copy of a hospital admittance form. This becomes important only at the end when the protagonist in effect lets himself be killed knowing that he is going to die anyway.
- anchoring

## TRANSLATION

- Translation of audio description and the use of audio subtitles takes us a step further along the theory trail.

But in AD **translation** what considerations come into play?

- One consideration is not to translate and start from scratch.
- Another is to use the original AD as a template for all other translations.
- Another is to consider that different nationalities/cultures /languages may need different adaptations.

## To translate or not to translate

- The King's Speech
- AND
- Il discorso del Re

## THE KING'S SPEECH

The UK Film Council awarding funds by the National Lottery.

Caption: in 1925 King George V reigns over a quarter of the world's people. He asks his second son, the Duke of York, to give the closing speech at the Empire Exhibition in Wembley, London.

A large grey, oval microphone stands on a desk in an empty wood-pannelled art deco room.

## IL DISCORSO DEL RE

Su fondo nero a centro schermi compare una luce blu che si espande formando la scritta UK Film Council che diventa di colore bianco.

1925 Re Giorgio V regna su un quarto della popolazione mondiale. Ha chiesto al suo secondo figlio, il duca di York, di tenere il discorso di chiusura all'Empire Exhibition a Wembley, Londra.

In primo piano un tecnologico microfono degli anni '20 è poggiato su un tavolo nello studio della BBC Broadcasting House.

## compari son

The UK Film Council awarding funds by the National Lottery.

Caption: in 1925 King George V reigns over a quarter of the world's people. He asks his second son, the Duke of York, to give the closing speech at the Empire Exhibition in Wembley, London.

A large grey, oval microphone stands on a desk in an empty wood-pannelled art deco room.

A blue light appears on a black background in the middle of the screen and expands to form the words UK Film Council which then turns white.

In 1925 King George V reigns over a quarter of the world's people. He asks his second son, the Duke of York, to give the closing speech at the Empire Exhibition in Wembley, London.

In the foreground a 1920s technological microphone stands on a table in a studio at BBC Broadcasting House.

## Analysis

A blue light appears on a black background in the middle of the screen and expands to form the words UK Film Council which then turns white.

(not in the original)

In 1925 King George V reigns over a quarter of the world's people. He asks his second son, the Duke of York, to give the closing speech at the Empire Exhibition in Wembley, London.

(exact translation)

In the foreground a 1920s technological microphone stands on a table in a studio at BBC Broadcasting House.

(different emphases)

## As Mossop says

"The translator becomes the 'motivator' behind the ideas expressed in the translation, but he/she may be either 'loyal' (adding or subtracting in the spirit of the source as they see it) or 'disloyal' (engaging in his/her own writing project).

## (turning to) Cultural Access

The translation of films is also considered to have a cultural role in the presenting of different cultures via linguistic means, thereby giving access to different mores and hopefully narrowing the gaps that exist in intercultural misunderstanding.

## However,

the extent to which cultural values are accessed by viewers through screen translation is a complex question.

Translation specialists point to:

- "lingua-cultural drops in translational voltage" (Antonini & Chiaro, 2005: 39)  
TV series like 'The Simpsons', 'Six Feet Under', 'Friends', etc. seem to be highly culture-bound and extremely difficult to translate.

## ...but how much does it matter?

Quaglio wrote a whole book on the language of 'Friends', showing the inconsistencies, and pointing to the American-centredness of the show.

... but it is extremely popular everywhere.

## ... and in any case, what is culture?

- «an organisation ... it is the form of things that people have in mind, their model of perceiving, relating and otherwise interpreting them» (Goodenough, 1964)
- «cognitive and socio-cultural differences» (House, 2006)

... or, according to Katan ...

... that which is normal

but

what is normal in one culture/context/language  
is not necessarily normal in another.

All translation is affected to a greater or lesser  
extent by this phenomenon.

Coffee example (Katan, 2009)

- From Calvino, 'L'avventura di una moglie' (1993)
- Un **ristretto, doppio, caldissimo**, disse al cameriere.
- A **concentrated, double, very hot**, she said to the barman.

... not good!

«**concentrated, double, very hot**»

None of the words cue coffee for the English-speaking customer.

Also the abrupt directive culturally filters rudeness in the Anglosaxon mind.

... so, a mediating strategy

Frame the request so it sounds polite to the English speaking reader (and perhaps the barman), but leave a hint of the directness as this is culturally valid.

**She asked the barman for an espresso, 'thick, double and really hot'.**

And '**thick, double**' rather than a more natural '**large, strong**' to maintain the look, feel, taste and aroma of an *espresso*.

Final comment on the *espresso*

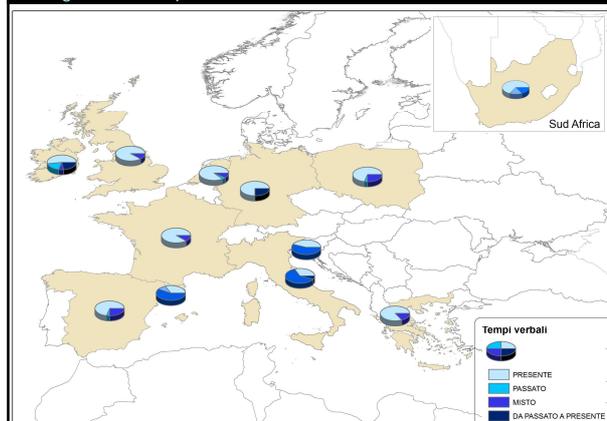
This tiny example reveals the tensions that exist between the localising (large, strong) and foreignising (thick, double) strategies. And this is for a seeing audience.

It can be appreciated that a translation for a non-seeing audience may require greater attention to be focussed on these tensions.

## The Pear Tree Project

- A comparison of (off-line) descriptions of a short film across Europe.
- E.g. tense usage

Cartogramma - Tempo dei verbi



## But in the final analysis ...

... while in Audio Description we are talking about different linguistic approaches, about attitudes to translating AD or about cultural differences in perception, what we are constantly looking at is

«what was said and what might have been said but wasn't»

*That's all Folks!*