Special issue:

Beyond Objectivity in Audio Description: New Practices and Perspectives

Deadline for extended abstracts: 15 March 2022

Deadline for full papers: 1 November 2022

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Guest Editors

Nathalie Mälzer
Universität Hildesheim

Eva Schaeffer-Lacroix
Sorbonne Université

Maria Wünsche
University of Hildesheim

In this special issue, we would like to gather contributions that identify, discuss, and go beyond the limits of objectivity in audio description of different cultural products such as film, TV programs, theatre or dance performances, opera, or museum exhibitions. We welcome contributions by both researchers and practitioners.

Objectivity can be defined as "the perception or experience of the external", opposed to subjectivity, understood as "the perception or experience of the internal" (Smith 1999). This feature has for a long time been seen as a norm in audio description for various cultural artefacts (Soler Gallego 2019), and it is mentioned in AD guidelines such as those of the German broadcaster NDR (2019). The strict application of the objectivity rule might, however, lead to factual and quite sober descriptions of visual information. The Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel for France for instance states in its guideline that objectivity is impossible to obtain (CSA 2020). Given these contrasting positions, it is not surprising to see that there are major differences between audio descriptions of the same audiovisual material in different languages.

In various cultural domains, the traditional method of factual description is nowadays seen as too restrictive, both by AD users, audio describers and artists/makers (Greyson 2020; Romero-Fresco and Fryer 2018). As a result, innovative approaches are emerging. Practices such as the Aesthetics of Access (Sealey and Lynch 2012), for instance, go beyond accessibility as a tool and add-on and promote

the integration of the audio description into the creative process, therefore adding artistic value to the AD without adhering too strictly to the concept of objectivity.

There are various aspects that can be discussed in terms of (limits of) objectivity in AD and with regard to emerging alternative approaches. We therefore welcome contributions addressing (but not limited to) the following topics:

- Theoretical approaches: Within the context of AD, how can we define objectivity in contrast to subjectivity? How can we conceptualize AD from an artistic and aesthetic perspective? How can AD be conceptualized within an Aesthetics of Access?
- Contrastive research on objectivity in audio descriptions: In which way do national guidelines influence audio descriptions of one and the same audiovisual material in different languages? What language- and culture-pair-specific differences can be identified in terms of objectivity?
- The production process of audio descriptions and the audio describer's perspective: What shifts occur in terms of objectivity if the audio description is used as an integral part of a cultural artefact instead of as an add-on? What changes can be identified if it is created by or in collaboration with a performer instead of by an intersemiotic translator from the outside?
- The reception of audio descriptions for different artefacts (films, TV programs, theatre, dance performances, opera, or museum exhibitions): What effect do factual descriptions or more subjective interpretations have on the user experience? How do users respond to creative/artistic approaches to AD? Which influence do other aspects than scripting, such as vocal aspects or sound have on AD reception? How do different audiences, e.g. different age groups such as children or adolescents, react to objective or more interpretative ADs?

- Innovative approaches to AD and best practice examples: With this special issue, we would like to gather innovative approaches and best practice examples from various cultural domains that go beyond objectivity. In this regard, we also welcome approaches that have been developed due to the pandemic situation, which, for instance, has brought theatre performances to our screens at home. Consequently, new kinds of AD have emerged: Audio descriptions of live performances became audio descriptions of streamed videos of these performances.
- We also welcome other contribution formats such as practice reports or video interviews and we encourage practitioners to contribute. We particularly welcome perspectives from researchers and practitioners with disabilities or from the Disability Arts sector.

Each abstract should contain both research questions/aims, methodology, and results and conclusions. While the length of the abstracts may vary, they should be between 400 and 600 words, supplied with a bibliography and 10 keywords.

Please email your abstract directly to the editors at maelzers@uni-hildesheim.de, schaeffer-lacroix@orange.fr, or maria_wuensche@posteo.net. Informal enquiries about the special issue are also welcome.

Important dates:

Deadline for submission of abstracts (400-600 words): **15 March 2022**
Notification of provisional acceptance (abstracts): **15 April 2022**
Submission of full papers (7.500 words incl. references): **1 November 2022**
Notification of provisional acceptance: **1-28 February 2023**
Submission of revised articles: **1 April 2023**
Submission of final articles: **15 June 2023**
Language revision, APA revision, final proofs: **July-October 2023**

Guest Editors

Nathalie Mälzer | Nathalie Mälzer is a professor for Transmedial Translation at Universität Hildesheim in Germany, where she developed a master's programme focusing on audiovisual translation: "Medientext und Medienübersetzung". Her research interests are audiovisual translation, accessibility (especially audio description and SDH), and literary translation. She translated more than 40 novels, plays and non-fiction books from French into German. Website: https://www.uni-hildesheim.de/fb3/institute/institut-fuer-uebersetzungswiss-fachkommunikation/mitglieder-des-instituts/maelzer/

Eva Schaeffer-Lacroix | Eva Schaeffer-Lacroix is a senior lecturer habilitated to conduct research. She teaches applied linguistics and ICT (Information and Communications Technology) at the Teacher Training Department of Sorbonne Université (Paris, France). She is a member of the computer linguistics section of the research group STIH (Sens Texte Informatique Histoire). Her main research interests are corpus linguistics, writing in a foreign language, audio description, and translation. Website: http://didaktik.hautetfort.com/

Maria Wünsche | Maria Wünsche is a research associate at the University of Hildesheim. Her research focuses mainly on media accessibility and audiovisual translation as well as on interdisciplinary approaches to the field of Translation Studies. Website: https://www.uni-hildesheim.de/fr/fb3/institute/institut-fuer-uebersetzungswiss-fachkommunikation/mitglieder-des-instituts/wuensche-maria/

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