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Watching Films through Words: A Comparison of the Italian and English Audio Descriptions of The Silence of the Lambs

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Introduction

Social evolution, regarded as the evolution of social systems and structures, has always been strictly intertwined with technological discoveries and advancements which, once introduced in society, greatly modified people's habits and practices. Their presence is often considered conventional, indispensable and 'natural', although the advent of many technologies regularly used today dates back only few or less centuries.

This is the case of the very recent advent of modern telecommunication, which developed in conjunction with progress in electrical and electromagnetic technologies. Unconceivable until not very long ago, the means now used to communicate have become crucial in the structure of today's society. In fact, development and innovation linked to the field have become extremely fast and as fast has become their usability in the global market for the masses. The advent of modern telecommunication has broadened the horizons of mass communication which now easily reaches every corner of the globe and displays a type of information that is the result of a combination of different format, such as text, audio and images. The consequences of the rapid evolution of communication technologies show in the considerable changes society undergoes. Each new medium introduces the possibility of extending interpersonal communication to distant others, of retaining and transmitting a growing amount of data and information and of broadening access to culture to larger sections of the population. On the large scale such developments affect the social, cultural, political and economic systems. On the small scale the individual benefits from the recent innovations in several ways. For instance, the limited direct experience carried out by a single person is overcome and integrated by the knowledge assimilated indirectly through the media: geographical and sociocultural knowledge is increasingly conveyed through technical means rather than through direct observation, historical shared assumptions or personal biography are now increasingly dependent on technical memorisation rather than on oral transmission, as well as present occurrences and events in which people can participate virtually. Mass media work as multipliers of mobility given that they allow people to access experiences without requiring movement. Moreover, telecommunication offers the chance of broadening the horizons beyond the small

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context into which people live and the restricted group of individuals in which relationships are established. Access to global connections influences the processes of socialisation and construction of the subjective identity because it gives the possibility of comparing oneself to multiple behaviour patterns and countless situations. Mass media communication therefore often replaces socialising means such as family and school, easing a process of autonomous education and understanding of social norms, values and roles (Capecchi, 2012: 29-35).

As shown, the new technological advancements work towards creating a global interconnected society and a global interchange of easily accessible information. Audiovisual translation has developed in conjunction with the advancement of mass media communication and plays a fundamental role in overcoming linguistic and geographical barriers and facilitating the spread of information. In fact, audiovisual translation deals with multimedia products of different nature, from feature films, television series, cartoons, sitcoms, soap operas and documentaries, which are increasingly growing in number and more and more imported from and exported to different countries, to current affairs, such as newscasts, political speeches, interviews and the like, which increasingly involve the population at a global level.

The current decades, reflection of this renewed society in which information and multimedia products are made available to a larger and larger number of people, have seen an expansion of the term 'accessibility' and a growing interest for minority groups of sensory disabled people, such as the deaf and hard-of-hearing and the blind and visually impaired. Due to these fast technological developments, culture, information and art are usually mostly conveyed through audiovisual products which are the result of combined channels. The new modality of information circulation excludes the substantial group of the sensory disabled and for several years full access to audiovisual products has been an issue. Nevertheless, recent developments within the area of Studies in Audiovisual Translation expanded towards incorporating accessibility techniques that now hold an established position within the field. New modes of translation such as subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing and audio description for the blind and visually impaired are being researched and offered to cater for the needs of the sensory disabled. The amount of accessible audiovisual material differs from

country to country. In many countries is still not satisfactory and research on the topic is still in a growing phase, especially for audio description.

The point at issue of this thesis is audio description for the blind and visually impaired. Audio description substitutes images describing orally what is conveyed visually and it is now being applied in theatres, cinemas, television and art expositions, translating any form of visual art and multimedia product. Especially for feature films, the topic on which this study will focus, the purpose of audio description is to insert the description of characters, their actions, and spatio-temporal settings between dialogues and sounds in order to translate a source text composed of visual and oral items into a product that is completely auditory.

After an introduction on audio description as a research topic and an overview of audio description in Italy, the main body of this study will focus on a comparative analysis of the Italian and English audio descriptions of the film *The Silence of the Lambs*. This comparative analysis aims at investigating the different choices made in Italian and English in the creation of an audio description, in particular by analysing how characters, settings and time lapses are described and through which lexical, grammatical and syntactical preferences the audio descriptions were produced. An analysis of the choices related to relevance of information and objectivity in conveying it will follow the first part. The results will then be cross-checked and compared with the European guidelines for audio description (ADLAB) in order to investigate whether the Italian version conforms to or deviates from the standard practice and if it can be subject to improvements. Because it only deals with one example, the results cannot be considered exhaustive but basis for further research. Moreover, the absence of reception studies on the Italian audience makes it difficult to investigate whether the potential differences retrieved can be attributed to the Italian tradition and the audience's tastes the audio describers comply with.

In detail, Chapter one will briefly introduce the area of Studies in Audiovisual Translation, the translation techniques included in the field and the position media accessibility holds within it. Chapter two will report in detail the current state of audio description in Italy, the existing norms and legislation, offer on television, cinema and theatre and the various participants of the development of audio description in the

country. Chapter three will present the research made on audio description for feature films, focusing the attention on the recent interest towards topics such as objective and subjective description and choices of relevant pieces of information. Chapter four will present the comparative analysis of the Italian and English audio descriptions of the same film, while chapter five will recapitulate the results gathered through the analysis of scripts.

1 An Introduction to Audiovisual Translation

1.1 Audiovisual Translation and the Media

In the broader field of Translational Studies, Audiovisual Translation (AVT) is the branch that, in recent years, has experienced the fastest and most exponential changes and developments, gaining autonomy and importance both in the academic and media industry worlds. Its continuous growth and widening is closely related to the constant development of the area it acts on, i.e. multimedia texts, which combine different media content, such as text, audio and images. Audiovisual translation traditionally modifies the original dialogues of an audiovisual product by means of different types of language transfer and aiming at making the product accessible to a wider public. "Although it was first conceived to facilitate the international distribution of films, audiovisual translation is now used to mediate an even more heterogeneous range of screen mediated texts" (Pérez-Gonzáles, 2014: 12), branching out even beyond the traditional screen. The "new dynamic umbrella" that AVT studies have become (Orero, 2004: VII), has in fact been growing and re-shaping itself to adjust to an ever-changing reality.

"Technological developments which have changed paper oriented society towards media oriented society" (Orero, 2004: VIII) have considerably changed the ways information is spread by: increasing the amount of information exchanges between countries and people from all over the globe; facilitating the freedom of speech that became of central value for today's society; and supporting the right to have access to any type of information. The boost of the circulation of information has also become greater thanks to the Internet but also to the synergy of different modes of communication (i.e. written, aural and visual) that, combined, are capable of conveying information efficiently and immediately. In this framework, AVT is fundamental in reducing the boundaries of a diversified world, creeping "into old and new context to make information, knowledge and leisure available to each and everyone of us" (Díaz Cintas, Matamala, Neves, 2010: 14). One of the purposes of AVT is to overcome language barriers as well as hindrances due to age or social disadvantages and physical or sensory disabilities, as "access to information is crucial for participation in the

benefits derived from globalisation and economic as well as cultural growth" (Díaz Cintas, Orero, Remael, 2007: 12).

As shown, the rapid evolution of new technologies go hand in hand with the continuous transformation the field of audiovisual translation is experiencing, resulting in a constant adaptation and development of translation techniques. Firstly, the demand for the translation of audiovisual products has increased notably in recent years: film industries have increased the amount of productions with the consequence of an increase in screenings in cinemas and film festivals. The quantity of audiovisual material produced by single countries and the number of satellite television channels are also constantly rising, as is the exchange of products between different language-speaking countries. Furthermore, less recent technologies like digital terrestrial television and DVD have also reshaped the needs AVT has to fulfil: both devices have the increased capacity to include different types of translation to be chosen according to the user's preferences. For instance, countries that traditionally had chosen one specific translation mode face now the need to translate audiovisual products using different techniques in order to offer a broader range of options to the market.

> Films that in 'dubbing countries' [had] traditionally been dubbed for both cinema and VHS releases as well as television broadcasting are now also being subtitled for distribution on DVD; and classic movies that were only dubbed when first released are nowadays also available in subtitled versions on DVD (Díaz Cintas, Anderman, 2009: 3-4).

Moreover, AVT is expanding beyond its own boundaries thanks to the fast and continuous development of new technologies. It is used in movie theatres, operas and live events, that have now incorporated technological devices such as screened surtitles or electronic librettos, but it also

> mak[es] information and leisure available to everyone in context as diverse as sports events, on public transports, green spaces, funfairs, public functions, museums, and as many places as those in which communication is to take place (Díaz Cintas, Matamala, Neves, 2010: 13).

Finally, the recent developments in media accessibility intended to overcome sensory impairments have seen an expansion in the techniques available and, consequently, the urgent need to bridge the gap between demand and offer has arisen.

> Traditionally ignored in academic exchanges, subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (SDH) and audio description for the blind and the partially sighted (AD) are becoming part of our daily audiovisual landscape and attracting the interest of many scholars and practitioners (Díaz Cintas, Anderman, 2009: 2).

To sum up, audiovisual translation contents are rapidly expanding and as rapidly must develop AVT. Classic and new forms of audiovisual translation have to adapt to the diverse and many changes society, media and technology are experiencing, facing challenges "such as increased multilingualism, greater linguistic variety, more demanding and diversifying audiences and, last but not least, accessibility on new devices" (Remael, Orero, Carroll, 2012: 15).

The continuous evolution AVT has been experiencing and the struggle to become a fully-fledged discipline are also patent from the very denomination of the field. For instance, as reported by Petillo (2012), the terminology used has varied from *film translation*, to *screen translation* and *language transfer*, terms that, even referring to the translation of audiovisual products, focused only on particular aspects of the process. *Film translation* limits the practice to a particular product, i.e. films, *screen translation* only highlights the means of distribution of the product, i.e. the screen, while *language transfer* only stresses verbal aspects. For this reason, new denominations have been coined recently, such as multi-media translation – that has been discarded because of its increased use in information technology – and audiovisual translation, terms that more appropriately define the complex nature of AVT.

> [To sum up,] audiovisual translation is one of several overlapping umbrella terms that include 'media translation', 'multimedia translation', 'multimodal translation' and 'screen translation'. These different terms all set out to cover the inter-lingual transfer of verbal language when it is transmitted and accessed both visually and acoustically, usually, but not necessarily, through some kind of electronic device" (Chiaro, 2009: 141).

Because multi-modal messages convey information simultaneously and through different channels, AVT focuses principally but not exclusively on the linguistic aspects of the product and cannot be limited to a "mere interlingual transfer as pictures, music, sounds and other non-verbal elements are also involved in the process, making it a kind of multi-semiotic transfer" (Petillo, 2012: 16).

1.2 Main Audiovisual Translation techniques

As shown above, AVT is an ever-changing field so that any fixed classification of its techniques and contents can quickly become outdated and new forms and products can be created and investigated. Nevertheless, traditionally "there are two basic approaches to the translation of the spoken language of the original programme: to retain it as spoken or to change it into written text" (Díaz Cintas, Anderman, 2009: 4). In the first instance the original dialogues are partially or completely replaced. This is the case of the more common lip-sync dubbing and its variants voice-over, narration and free commentary. The second approach consists in adding a written translated text to the original product without interfering with it, a technique known as subtitling. Moreover, audiovisual translation plays a major role in the localisation of video games, a branch that has only recently gained importance. Finally, in the field of media accessibility, a branch that received a new impulse in the 2000s, the basic techniques are subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (SDH) and audio description for the blind and visually impaired (AD). Both consist of material, written for the first and oral for the second, to be added to the original product. The following paragraphs will introduce the fundamental techniques of language transfer.

Lip-sync dubbing "is a process which entails the replacement of the original speech by a voice track which attempts to follow as closely as possible the timing, phrasing and lip-movements of the original dialogue" (Chiaro, 2009: 144). It aims at creating a final product that sounds like an original one, that has not been mediated by a translation process, "privileging the semantic trait of 'exact likeness'" (Chiaro, 2009: 147) in order to enhance the user's experience. This technique, extensively used in countries such as Italy, France, UK, Germany, Austria and Spain (Perego, 2005: 20), and mainly for fiction films, TV series and sitcoms, entails several challenges that go beyond the problem of synchronisation with lip-movements and timing of dialogues. The translation often encounters obstacles at the linguistic level: it is the case of culturally-loaded words and expressions, plays on words, humour, vulgar phrases, socio-linguistic variants, and correspondence, for instance in multilingual products, between the original language and the language of translation. Positive traits of lip-sync dubbing show in a

final result able to keep a full filmic illusion. It matches the original images and does not interfere with them, for instance partially covering them with added visual material, so that the user can more easily concentrate on the visual part, it does not manipulate nor reduce the original dialogues as subtitling does and it preserves the aural nature of dialogues. Nevertheless, it is a considerably expensive and time-consuming practice, it hides the original voices of actors and for that its final result can be considered artificial and fake (Chiaro, 2009: 147 / Perego, 2005: 27).

On the other hand, subtitling "consists of incorporating on the screen a written text which is a condensed version in the target text of what can be heard on screen" (Chiaro, 2009: 148). This technique, mostly used in European countries such as Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden (Perego, 2005: 19), consists in the translation of oral dialogues into written text to be added at the bottom of the screen. In order to facilitate reading and avoid covering large portions of the screen, the original dialogues are reduced to a maximum of two lines and are displayed in colours that do not blend with the images on the screen. The advantages of subtitling are: cost and time of production – considerably lower than lip-sync dubbing –, a final product that does not distort the original dialogues and rather offers the audience the possibility to hear the original voices and, to users who are familiar with the original language, also to understand the original product. It can also be useful to deaf users, foreigners and foreign language students. Partially spoiled images that are covered by text on screen reduce the filmic illusion; in addition the audience's attention is scattered among three levels, the visual, the written text and the oral dialogues. Finally, as it involves an intersemiotic translation from spoken into written language, subtitles cannot include elements that "are unacceptable in standard, or even informal written language (e.g. hesitations, false starts, taboo language, etc.) [...] [but, at the same time, they are] unable to conform to 'real' writing by virtue of the fact that they are reflecting speech" (Chiaro, 2009: 151).

Other techniques of audiovisual translation worth reporting are voice-over, narration and free commentary, surtitling and video games localisation.

Voice-over consists in an superimposing the translated dialogues over the original soundtrack, which is kept audible, although at a lowered volume. The added parts do

not completely cover the original ones since the translated voices usually start few seconds before and end few seconds after the original voices. However, compared to lip-sync dubbing, voice-over does not require lip synchronisation but congruity between images and translated words is to be respected, therefore resulting in an enjoyable product that does not lose its authenticity. On the one hand costs are reduced because the whole soundtrack does not have to be reproduced entirely, on the other hand a voice-over actor who inexpressively reads dialogues partially covering the original words certainly spoils the enjoyment of the product. This technique, that simultaneously screens the source and the target text, does not aspire to be a substitute of the original; it is generally used for non-fiction genres such as documentaries, news, interviews and reportages in western Europe, while in countries such as Poland, Russia, Georgia, Ukraine and the Baltic countries it is also widely used for fictional genres such as films (Petillo, 2012: 23).

Narration and free commentary are both referred to as "speech sequences by invisible speakers over programme images" (Petillo, 2012: 24) and entirely replace the original soundtrack. Nevertheless, the features that characterise the two techniques slightly differ. Generally, narration is considered as a form of revoicing used mostly in fictional genres, while free commentary is used in non-fiction genres. When applying the technique of narration the result is a target text that differs from the source text at the levels of content and style. The target text is syntactically more formal and more complex, it is based on the written register of the language, it replaces direct speech with indirect speech and occasionally renders explicit and simplifies obscure content. On the other hand, free commentary is considered more as a free adaptation than a translation of the source text: information is added or omitted when appropriate and language is simplified in order to better meet the expectations and needs of the target audience, especially when cultures differ greatly (Petillo, 2012: 26).

Surtitling refers to a specialised branch of AVT and is considered as an evolution of subtitling. Surtitles consist of captions to be displayed on screens positioned above theatre stages or on small screens positioned on the back of each seat. They aim at facilitating the understanding of the librettos of grand opera and can be used both for the source and the target language. In fact, the language of opera performances is not

standard because it is adapted to the rhythm and music and often it dates back several centuries. The use of surtitles in opera aroused the interest in this form of art widening the public from a restricted elite of connoisseurs to a wider audience now able to follow librettos directly during the performance. Finally, surtitling differs from other forms of subtitling because it deals with live performances, which require more flexibility, and with a polysemiotic and multimedia product, therefore compelled to deal not only with singing and acting but also with music (Petillo, 2012).

Research on video games has only recently been on the increase, involving multiple disciplines among which Studies in Audiovisual Translation have also gained importance. In fact, video games are audiovisual in nature because they incorporate visual elements, such as images and written text, human voices, dialogues, songs and different meaningful sounds that require to be translated when the product is introduced to foreign markets. Unlike other modes of translation, when working on video games the translation process happens already during the production stage, thus being integral and crucial responsibility of game publishers who have to include the localization of the product on foreign markets from the very beginning. In fact, "language translation and software engineering go hand in hand in the localization of these products for individual markets, and [...] translation is considered an integral part of the localization process of each product" (Chiaro, 2009: 153). The subtitling and dubbing process for video games mainly differs from the regular practice because of the greater freedom video game translators have at their disposal. In fact, the final experience of the target user while playing the game is of greater importance than the exact correspondence of the elements translated with the original product. Translators have therefore "given the freedom to make use as much as possible of local features, such as jokes and references to popular culture, so as to enhance the target product" (Chiaro, 2009: 154).

Subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing and audio description for the blind and visually impaired, together with other forms of audiovisual transfer used for the sensory impaired, such as real time subtitling, respeaking and others, will be investigated more thoroughly in the next section as media accessibility is the point at issue of this research work.

In conclusion, what all modes of translation have in common are a set of challenges

that are increased by the very form of the products audiovisual translators act on. As reported by Chiaro,

> the three basic categories of translational hurdles are highly culture-specific references (e.g. place names, references to sports and festivities, famous people, monetary systems, institutions, etc.); language-specific features (terms of address, taboo language, etc.); and areas of overlap between language and culture (songs, rhymes, jokes, etc.) (Chiaro, 2009: 155).

Although these challenges are common for any typology of translation, such as written translation and interpreting, when dealing with audiovisual products they are often doubled. In fact, references are often also shown at the visual level, thus easily accessible for the audience who can match what they see with what they hear or read thus leaving the translator with little room for manoeuvre. The combination of visual, acoustic and written elements compels the translator to pay close attention to elements such as gestures, visuals, music, even though being able to act, in the majority of the cases, only on the linguistic level.

1.3 Media Accessibility

Accessibility is the key word of the new millennium in the field of Studies in Audiovisual Translation. Generally, accessibility is measured on the basis of several parameters: 'acceptability' estimates the degree of conformity of the audiovisual text to the language standards and to stylistic, rhetorical and lexical choices; 'legibility' evaluates the aspect and mode subtitles are displayed in, i.e. font, position and speed; 'readability' evaluates to what degree the user is able to follow the subtitles on the screen, thus studying text complexity, information density, reading time and synchrony between the source and the target text; 'synchronicity' refers to dubbing, voice-over and free commentary and evaluates the degree of congruence of the target text with lip movement and visual elements of the product; 'relevance' measures the exact amount of information needed by the audience in order not to overload the cognitive process, thus working on information alteration, i.e. omission, addition or explication; 'domestication' strategies, finally, refer to changes applied in order to create a final product that is similar enough to the culture of target audience to be accepted and

understood while keeping its foreignness (Petillo, 2012: 27-28).

Nevertheless, the concept of accessibility does not exclusively refer to technical, cognitive or cultural aspects of the audiovisual product, but it also extends its area of interest towards a principle of social and cultural inclusion of disabled minorities who have difficult access to audiovisual products, i.e. deaf and hard-of-hearing and blind and visually impaired people. The recently renewed interest towards any type of minority social groups lies in the new awareness of equal rights and inclusion, cultural awareness that did not fail to reach the audiovisual translation field. Audiovisual translation is responsible for aspects of society that have recently and quickly became crucial in every citizen's life. "Recent developments and studies show that the needs of these groups are increasingly being catered for and this field of expertise now holds an established position within audiovisual translation" (Díaz Cintas, Anderman, 2009: 5).

According to statistics by the World Health Organization[1], as to March 2015, "over 5% of the world's population – 360 million people – has disabling hearing loss (328 million adults and 32 million children)", a percentage that refers to deaf people with profound hearing loss and does not take into consideration people with hearing loss ranging from mild to severe. For what concerns visual impairment, "285 million people are estimated to be visually impaired worldwide: 39 million are blind and 246 have low vision", term under which are grouped moderate and severe visual impairment (as to August 2014). Despite the use of new technologies in the medical field, the number of people in these categories might be on the increase as more people are living into old age. In fact, according to the World Health Organization, approximately one-third of people over 65 years of age are affected by disabling hearing loss and 82% of people living in blindness are aged 50 and above. "These figures clearly call for a more consistent and systematic approach to making it possible for viewers with sensory impairment to gain access to television and other media" (Díaz Cintas, Anderman, 2009: 5), and, in the last decades, different services in continuous development have been offered.

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1   Available at www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs300/en/ for what concerns deafness and hearing loss, and at www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs282/en/ for what concerns visual impairment and blindness (last accessed 31/05/2016).

1.3.1 Subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (SDH)

For what concerns the first group of sensory disabled, the service has been available since the mid 1970s at least in some countries (Díaz Cintas, Anderman, 2009: 5) and involves broadcasting subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (SDH) on television, "by means of an independent signal, activated only by those interested, by accessing pages 888 or 777 of teletext in most European countries" (Díaz Cintas, Anderman, 2009: 5). These specific subtitles differ from regular interlingual subtitles used to render a product accessible to speakers of different languages. In fact, the so called intralingual subtitling refers to the total or partial transcription of the auditory elements of the source text using its same language. SDH include not only a transcription of the dialogues, but also

> paralinguistic information that contributes to the development of the plot or to the creation of atmosphere, which a deaf person cannot access from the soundtrack, e.g. a telephone ringing, laughter, applause, a knock on the door, and the like (Díaz Cintas, Anderman, 2009: 5).

Traditionally only offered on television channels, the use of SDH has now expanded its area of interest by developing new techniques and improving its features. First of all, similarly to the other techniques of translation shown above, the advent of digital television channels and of DVDs on the market has increased the possibility to include SDH in more audiovisual products, thus expanding their use from television to DVDs and screenings in cinemas. Moreover, accessibility for the deaf and hard-of-hearing has developed beyond films, reaching, for instance, live programmes and events, universities and theatres.

Real-time subtitling, also used to offer translated subtitles of live programmes for regular users, favours access to a deaf and hard-of-hearing audience to, for instance, live interviews, live sport events and the television news, but also to conferences and lectures at universities or institutional events.

> Whether inter- or intra-lingual, real-time subtitles are produced with a speaker/interpreter who reads and reduces and, in the case of interlingual subtitles, translates speech flow in the original language while a stenographer creates the subtitles (Chiaro, 2009: 154),

thus offering instantaneous access to all live products. More recent and less expensive

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compared to real-time subtitling is respeaking, a technique on the increase thanks to recent developments in speech recognition technologies, which brought to a reduction in the number of professionals needed in the process. In fact, a speaker/interpreter repeats, rephrases or translates the live source text, thus articulating the text for a speech recognition software that recognises the vocal input and elaborates it into written subtitles.

Research has been conducted also for what concerns theatre performances and opera, and for accessibility to these forms of art for a sensory disabled public. Surtiltling, exposed in the section above, has to include additional information on all auditory elements when intended for a deaf audience, namely which characters are speaking and, if necessary, identify aside speeches. When working on opera accessibility, music is an important element to be taken into consideration. Far from being incompatible with a deaf or hard-of-hearing audience, opera can be accessed thanks to interpreters who, positioned on the side of the stage, translate into sign language the libretto and indicate the rhythm with hands and body movements, almost dancing to the music (Petillo, 2012: 38-39).

When dealing with deaf and hard-of-hearing children the process of translating audiovisual source texts into accessible audiovisual products must deal with important factors connected with the age of the audience and, above all, with the difficulties these particular users might have in reading and understanding written text. Unfortunately, very little research has been conducted in this area and the strategies that are now adopted seem to owe more to intuition than to factual information. Nevertheless, exposing deaf children to SDH has been proven to be effective for vocabulary learning, due to the correspondence of visual and written elements shown to children in a recreational manner. Generally, the strategies adopted include the use of lower reading speed, a major degree of textual editing, such as omissions or rephrasing but also introduction, highlighting and repetition of new vocabulary, and sometimes a preference given to the use of onomatopoeia, hence a phonetic reproduction of the sounds rather than the use of descriptive labels, especially when the onomatopoeia clearly suggests and matches the sound described (Zárate, 2010).

1.3.2 Audio description for the blind and visually impaired (AD)

For what concerns the second group of sensory disabled people, the blind and visually impaired, the technique referred to as audio description for the blind and the partially sighted (AD) has been developed.

> It can be defined as an additional narration that fits in the silences between dialogue and describes action, body language, facial expressions and anything that will help people with visual impairment follow what is happening on screen or on stage (Díaz Cintas, Anderman, 2009: 6).

Its use has recently been expanded beyond the screen and fictional or non-fictional products, offering access also to theatres and museums where visual elements are of crucial importance for the understanding and accessibility of art.

Specifically for films, AD consists in a description of images recorded on an audio track to be added to the audio of the film. The demanding task of the audio describer entails various challenges, from technical and semantic restrictions, to the attention he/she needs to have towards a heterogeneous audience and the artistic expression of the film director.

Firstly, descriptions of actions, scenery, body language and other relevant details must be inserted between dialogues without drowning out meaningful silence, sounds or music. Audio description should not replace the audience's cognitive effort to interpret objects, it "is an assistive technology; it is meant to enhance, not replace, the user's own power of observation" (Snyder, 2014: 3). It is important to balance the amount of information offered correctly: the description should not exceed with details and interpretations, thus letting the blind user interpret the film and recognise sounds and implicit meaning; it should be simple and easily understandable but, at the same time, semantically rich. Moreover, according to the results of the ADLAB project[2] "AD does not merely focus on giving the information that is deemed to be missing, it also aims to create a pleasant experience for its users without overburdening their information-processing capacities" (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 16).

Secondly, the audio describer should respect the film maker's original point of view

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2   *ADLAB - Audio Description: Lifelong Access for the Blind* is the result of a three-year (2011-2014) research project on audio description (AD) for the blind and visually impaired, funded by the European Union under the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP).

and the one possibly created by the audience, he/she must be an invisible intruder, a goal that can be achieved through a detailed analysis and understanding of the filmic language and the product itself.

Finally, the target group is not homogeneous, "the Blind" do not exist, they are the most various individuals, of different age and status, affected by different degrees or types of disabilities.

> Most users of description are not totally blind; indeed, only [a few] are congenitally blind (blind from birth); others are adventitiously blind or developed total blindness later in life. Most at one point had all or some of their sight and now may have only peripheral vision; may see only shapes, light and dark, colors, movement, shadows, blurs, or blobs; or have tunnel vision (Snyder, 2014: 3).

As shown, the target group is composed of individuals with different visual experiences and knowledge of the world, but "for economic and practical reasons, AD today aims to cater for all of these, which means that part of the challenge is to find a golden mean that will make the ST [source text] available to all" (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 15).

These principles are clearly suitable also for audio descriptions of other forms of art, they can be applied to descriptions of television programmes, plays, sports events and even exhibitions of paintings, each of which dictates the features of the final audio described product. Moreover, as a result of technological developments and flourishing research on this field, new techniques and new areas are always being investigated in relation to audio description.

Examples of newer techniques and adaptations offered to improve the experience of the blind and visually impaired are, for instance, the use of audio introductions and audio subtitles.

> An Audio Introduction (AI) is a continuous piece of prose, providing factual and visual information about an audiovisual product, such as a film or theatre performance, that serves as a framework for blind and visually impaired patrons to (better) understand and appreciate a given ST [source text] (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 58).

Whilst audio subtitling (AST) is included

> in order to make subtitled programmes accessible to the blind in countries where a large percentage of the programmes are commercialised in a foreign language with subtitles (Díaz Cintas, Anderman, 2009: 7).

Audio subtitles are the spoken rendering of the written subtitles or surtitles of an audiovisual product and they are mixed into the soundtrack with the AD presented through voice-over or dubbing. In the first case the AST start a few seconds after the original dialogue, which remains audible in the background, in the second case the original soundtrack is completely replaced, a manner that "involves more 'acting' on the part of the voice talent" (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 62). Either techniques can be used for films and for theatre plays.

The audio description that can be offered to a blind or visually impaired audience in theatre plays resembles AD for films as performances in theatres also tell stories through content, characters and spatio-temporal settings. Nevertheless, compared to AD for screened products, AD for theatres entails a few differences:

> theatre has its own range of theatrical techniques that serve as a framework for constructing the narrative, some of which differ considerably from film techniques; AD for theatre is most often delivered live, based on a pre-prepared script. Consequently, the audio describer is usually the person voicing the AD during the performance as well; live AD for the theatre is often, but not always, combined with an AI (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 64).

It is evident that AD offered in theatres presents several challenges that are absent from audio description for films. For instance, theatre performances often only represent reality, thus using minimalistic, static and even artificial theatrical signs, which are more difficult to describe. Moreover, the description cannot be recorded due to the changes the performance can experience on stage, therefore requiring an audio describer with greater flexibility and readiness. Finally, the means through which AD is offered must also be taken into consideration. In fact, the audience receives two types of sound quality, the live on stage and the AD through headphones, therefore longer descriptions are easier to process so the audience has to cope with less sound switching, but, on the other hand, it might be hard to find long strings of meaningless silence into which insert AD. When dealing with opera performances the process of audio description becomes even more complex due to the musical aspect of such products. In fact the audio describer should not interfere too much with music, but at the same time he/she must summarise orally those visual elements without which the understanding of a coherent whole would not be possible (Petillo, 2012). The approaches to opera accessibility are different according to different traditions of different countries. For instance, as reported

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by Matamala and Orero (2007: 207), in the Anglo-Saxon world it is believed that music in opera performances should not be troubled by description, for this reason usually introduction to and description of the opera are recorded and sent, by request, to be listened to before the actual performance. Differently, "the Catalan approach is inclined to be a comprehensive description" (Matamala, Orero, 2007: 207), therefore throughout the whole performance the audio describer speaks over music and sometimes over songs.

Audio description of museum exhibitions, cultural venues and heritage sites is referred to as a descriptive guide (DG). A descriptive guide might stand alone or be offered simultaneously with the tactile experience – when a piece of art can be touched –, it should blend with the rest of the visit and go almost unnoticed as it cannot become the artistic experience itself for the blind and visually impaired user. It differs from regular types of audio description for films or theatres because of its lack of time, space and text restrictions, and, finally, because in DG there is no original text to deal with but, instead, an original non-verbal text that will live as a co-text with the DG and that will determine its nature and structure (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 68-69 / De Coster, Mühleis, 2007: 189-197).

Lastly, when dealing with the audio description of audiovisual products intended for children, there are several important factors to be taken into consideration. First of all the age of the audience, but, above all, the language acquisition and sound recognition problems they might have. Audio description for children should not be too wordy, it should aim at conveying the whole story rather than offering information about every visual element, thus being appropriate for the short attention span young children usually have. Moreover, audio description should not interfere with songs and music, elements that are enjoyed by children even if the plot is not understood because of the very young age or because of more complex visual impairment, in fact "what really matters is that children are given the opportunity to learn the tune and the words, and to enjoy the song" (Palomo López, 2010: 218). Sound effects are also a delicate matter to audio describe considering that blind and visually impaired children can be frightened by sounds they don't understand, especially when loud and scary. For this reason sounds should always be described, and "it is better to slot the description in around important

sound effects than to describe over them" (Palomo López, 2010: 222), implementing in this way also educational factors. Finally, the tone and speed of delivery of the narration should reflect the genre and, when appropriate, change according to the scene being narrated (Palomo López, 2010).

1.3.3 SDH and AD compared

Media accessibility techniques have developed and have been offered to sensory disabled people quite differently. In fact, subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing has been researched, improved and offered earlier and to a greater extent compared to audio description for the blind and visually impaired. This difference might have been connected to stronger and more determinate requests claimed by various associations of the deaf (Arma, 2014: 63) or to the differences in technological means, expenses and number of professionals involved and required in the production and distribution processes.

It is the case of accessibility on television, a medium available in almost every house and through which information and leisure are mostly conveyed. For instance, "many European broadcasters started developing teletext in the 1980s, and the introduction of SDH was directly linked to this development" (Remael, 2007: 24). AD, on the other hand, was introduced only later on, not uniformly in every country and the majority of the blind audience is still waiting for a considerable increment of the programmes audio described. Taking the Italian public national television *RAI* as an example, differences in the offer of the two techniques are evident. *RAI* started offering subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing in 1986, two years after teletext[3] was introduced, while audio description was introduced only in 1991. According to Arma (2014: 63), in Italy, *RAI* plans to reach a 70% of subtitled programmes in the next years, as stated in the contract of service, whereas the percentage of the audio described programmes hardly reaches 10% and the plan for future years does not mention a standard percentage to be covered.

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3   www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/articoli/ContentItem-99d348df-7714-484[a]-9027-ff9f41b5f847.html?refresh_ce (last accessed 31/05/2016).

The summary of the history of the Italian public television found on the website of *RAI*[4] reports that SDH was introduced together with the experimental teletext service – *televideo* in Italian – launched in the 1980s, but it does not mention at all the introduction of AD. Evidence of the first AD offered by *RAI* is reported by Delli Colli (1991) on the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*[5]: the first audio described film broadcast on television – *Spartacus*, by Stanley Kubrick – was offered thanks to a collaboration between the public Italian television and radio. In fact, simultaneously with the film on television, the radio broadcast a newly recorded soundtrack that included the original dialogues and music together with the audio description. The journalist continued reporting few downsides encountered in the attempt, i.e. the elevate costs of recording a special soundtrack and the possible limitations imposed by distribution companies.

Nowadays technological developments surely simplify both the production and distribution processes, among others computer software ease and speed up the work of translators and technicians, and digital television allows an easy and versatile technical reception. Nevertheless, AD is still more expensive than SDH because of the amount of hours and professionals required in the process. For instance, in the case of SDH for television and films, as reported by Díaz Cintas and Remael, "three different professionals can be distinguished in the subtitling process" (Díaz Cintas, Remael, 2007: 34): the spotter, responsible for deciding the in and out times of the subtitles, usually expected to be technologically literate, the translator, in charge of the language transfer, and the adaptor, whose role is to fit the rough translation into the subtitle lines. Nevertheless, in the last few years, "the general tendency in the field seemed to be pointing in the direction of a professional who would embody all three tasks" (Díaz Cintas, Remael, 2007: 35), thus requiring knowledge in both technical, cultural and linguistic matters. Finally, according to Utray, Pereira and Orero, who reported the costs of SDH in Spain for instance,

> subtitling costs in our country range between 4€ and 6€ per recorded minute, and 9€ for almost live (programmes broadcast with a slight delay). This would result in an average

4   Available at www.rai.it/dl/rai/text/ContentItem-20844e48-74d8-44fe-a6f4-7c224c96e8e4.html (last accessed 31/05/2016).
5   Available at ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1991/11/24/una-tv-per-non-vedenti-raidue-ci.html (last accessed 31/05/2016).

cost between 240€ and 360€ per subtitled hour, and 600€ in the case of expensive programmes (Utray, Pereira, Orero, 2009: 254).

For what concerns the AD process, the number of people usually involved varies between four and six. Measuring the time available for AD, a process called spotting as for SDH, can also be performed by the same audio describers who usually work in pair or in teams of three, of which ideally one person is blind. This is the case of Germany, as reported by Orero (2007: 116), where descriptions are written by a group of three people, of which one person is blind, with the consequence of having two different points of view from sighted professionals that can thus complement one another, and specific suggestions regarding a blind audience's needs. Furthermore, recording the audio description requires a voice talent, who reads the script, and a sound designer, who is responsible for the correct technical handling of the recording and the placement of the audio description in between the dialogue gaps of the source materials, as reported in the ADLAB guidelines (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 57). Finally, according to Hernández Bartolomé and Mendiluce Cabrera, "the production of an audio described programme is estimated to cost around 1,000-1,500 €, that is less than the 2% of the cost of a soap opera" (2009: 8-9) and "completing the entire AD process for the average film in terms of length and difficulty is estimated to take about 60 hours" (2009: 14). In addition, according to Utray, Pereira and Orero, in Spain "the estimated average cost per hour is around 800€, plus the cost of the transmission bandwidth for an audio channel" (Utray, Pereira, Orero, 2009: 254).

Conclusively, the load of work the subtitler and the describer have to handle differs as well. In fact, the process of subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing consists in a simple transcription of the audio dialogues into a written text: the language involved is not replaced and changes applied include simplification, reduction and insertion of the additional information conveyed through sounds (Petillo, 2012). Restrictions are dictated by synchronisation between scenes and written text, and by the reading skills of the audience who, in order to have a comfortable experience, need a specific amount of words per line and a specific speed of displaying (Chiaro, 2009: 149).

On the other hand, audio description involves greater creative challenges and

encodes narrative characteristics that range from adequacy, capacity of summary,

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compression of information or absolute relevance related to the communicative function, as well as apparent objectivity (Jiménes, Seibel, 2012: 424).

Moreover, "audio describers are likely to be creative and accurate in the vocabulary choice, and quick when describing images" (Hernández Bartolomé, Mendiluce Cabrera, 2009: 7). Creativity therefore is fundamental when audio describing, especially when audio description is introduced between the dialogues of a film thus becoming the narrative part of an artistic product. For instance, Sabrina Rondinelli (2014), an Italian audio describer, considers audio description, especially when dealing with art and leisure, to be a narration rather than an emotionless description. Narrating a reality in motion, being able to transmit emotions and creating a description that does not interfere with the artistic experience but rather enhances it, can surely be considered a creative and challenging task. Furthermore, the restrictions AD endures are linked with the audio elements of the audiovisual product which it must respect and with which it must interact. AD is also limited by the predetermined time/space pauses into which it must fit. Therefore, space, time and images are typical AVT constraints AD must deal with (Hernández Bartolomé, Mendiluce Cabrera, 2009: 6).

The following chapters will try to investigate exhaustively the technique of audio description.

2 Audio Description in Europe and Italy

> Despite its advantages, AD is one of the latest AVT modes to be developed. Its essence, though, is as old as sighted people telling visually impaired ones what can be seen on stage or on screen. Thus, the purpose is old, but the techniques are new. As a result, the degree of development varies from country to country, the US and the UK being the most outstanding centres (Hernández Bartolomé, Mendiluce Cabrera, 2009: 11).

Compared to the USA, in Europe audio description developed and started to be offered later in time and, similarly, its advent is linked to theatres, which were the first to be equipped. In the last decades, following the example of the USA and the UK, AD branched out to the rest of the European Union. Despite the efforts made by the EU to draft regulations and legislations for every country, the situation in each Member State still differs in terms of academic research, offer and development.

2.1 Brief overview of audio description in Europe

Although English-speaking countries, like the UK and the USA, seem to be leading the the way,

> coinciding with the European Year of People with Disabilities in 2003 (www.eypd2003.org) various actions were taken by the EU at international level and by individual European countries at national level, to raise awareness and to foster changes aimed at improving the lives of people with disabilities (Díaz Cintas, Anderman, 2009:6).

Currently, the Member States of the EU have reached different stages of development of AD. UK and Spain can be considered the leading countries in the development of AD in respect of, for instance, the year of introduction of AD and the considerable progress in the offer of audio described television, cinema or theatre, in national legislation, monitoring organisations or academic interest.

The United Kingdom played a major role in the development of AD on television already since the early 1990s, when the European project Audetel6 was undertaken and extensive research started to be made on audio description, with the consequence of boosting the amount of audio described programmes on British television, setting national guidelines – ITC Guidance On Standards for Audio Description, published in

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6 "Audetel (Audio Described Television) was a European-wide consortium of regulators, consumer associations and broadcasters formed to research and develop audio description" (Greening, Rolph, 2007: 128).

2000 – based on the outcomes of the Audetel project, and legislating on accessible television offer. For instance, in 2004, Ofcom, the independent regulatory organisation for TV broadcasting, published its Code on Television Access, deciding that ten per cent of programmes had to be audio described by the fifth year after the issue of a digital license. Furthermore, in 2003 the UK Film Council agreed to partially fund technical AD equipment in 78 cinemas around England, and in the following years technological renovations have affected more structures. The numbers and percentages linked to AD in the UK are constantly increasing because of extensive work on raising awareness throughout the whole country and important investments in technologies for and research on AD, therefore making the UK an excellent example for Europe (Arma, 2011: 44-45 / Greening, Rolph, 2007: 128-135).

Spain is a good example for what concerns academic research and publications, organisations that monitor and raise awareness on the topic and the offer in theatres and opera houses. The *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* is an important research centre on audio description and it offers specific courses on media accessibility to its students, along with the Universities of Grenada, Seville and Las Palmas. For what concerns theatres, since 2004 audio described opera has been delivered at the Barcelona Opera House *Liceu* and researches and professionals are continuously working towards developments on technologies and improved audio description. Furthermore, in November 2005, the Spanish Centre for Subtitling and Audio Description (CESyA)7 was created in order to promote SDH and AD and encourage accessibility in the Spanish audiovisual arena. Thanks to the common link offered by this public institution,

> associations that represent people with disabilities, the content production/distribution industry, the exhibitors/broadcasters, the consumer electronic industry and the regulator of the audiovisual and accessibility sectors (Utray, Pereira, Orero, 2009: 257)

can converge, work together and access databases, research and training. Another priority of the centre is to raise awareness in the media industry and among the whole Spanish population (Utray, Pereira, Orero, 2009: 257 / Arma, 2011: 67). The CESyA is a successful example that should be followed by each European country in order to build solid foundations for future developments directed towards full accessibility for

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7   Accessible at www.cesya.es (last accessed 31/05/2016).

disabled people.

At the European level, the European Blind Association EBU has recently contributed to digital television accessibility by successfully negotiating with DigitalEurope the presence on the market of digital television with talking screens and accessible menus for the blind and visually impaired. The specification on the technical standards has been approved and published by standards body IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission) in 2013[8]. Moreover the association keeps track of the state of the art and advances made by the European Member States and published, in 2008, a survey[9] from which

> it emerges that some European countries [Finland, Ireland, Slovakia and the United Kingdom] are legally bound to provide audio description while in others there is no specific legislative provision but the service is provided on a voluntary basis (Arma, 2011: 94).

For what concerns European norms and legislation, accessibility for sensory disabled people is treated vaguely. In the European *Audiovisual Media Service Directives*[10], in the last publication of March 2010, we only find a general statement on media accessibility for people with disability:

> (46) The right of persons with a disability and of the elderly to participate and be integrated in the social and cultural life of the Union is inextricably linked to the provision of accessible audiovisual media services. The means to achieve accessibility should include, but need not be limited to, sign language, subtitling, audio-description and easily understandable menu navigation (2010: 6).

This allows each country to have its own freedom of organisation and development, but at the same time it does not impose a strict rule on the matter. The Directives call for an increment of media accessibility but do not impose a percentage of programmes to be covered by AD and SDH:

> (Article 7) Member States shall encourage media service providers under their jurisdiction to ensure that their services are gradually made accessible to people with a visual or hearing disability.

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8   Accessible at www.euroblind.org/working-areas/access-to-information/nr/62 (last accessed 31/05/2016).

9   European Blind Union, with the support of the European Commission
     Digital TV Accessibility - Report on the current status in European countries 2008

10 Available at
     eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1462975496455&uri=CELEX:32010L0013 (last accessed 31/05/2016).

Furthermore, the 2010-2020 European Disability Strategy[11] that was agreed upon by the European Parliament in order to overcome barriers for disabled people in Europe, includes a section on accessibility, highlighting that still too little service is being provided and proposes to legislate at European level in order to have equal standards to be achieved by all Member States:

> 'Accessibility' is defined as meaning that people with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, transportation, information and communications technologies and systems (ICT), and other facilities and services. There are still major barriers in all of these areas. For example, on average in the EU-27, only 5% of public websites comply fully with web accessibility standards, though more are partially accessible. Many television broadcasters still provide few subtitled and audio-described programmes. Accessibility is a precondition for participation in society and in the economy, but the EU still has a long way to go in achieving this. The Commission proposes to use legislative and other instruments, such as standardisation, to optimise the accessibility of the built environment, transport and ICT in line with the Digital Agenda and Innovation Union flagships.

As stated by Arma (2011:87) "audio description does not seem to find adequate room in the European accessibility policies and seems to be left to the initiative of single Member States".

2.2 Italy

As reported in chapter one, the first appearance of audio description in Italy occurred in 1991, thanks to a collaboration between *RadioRai* and *RAI,* the national public radio and television respectively, and the CTT (Cine Television Team). Sergio D'Ottavi, head of the company CTT, first proposed to make television accessible to blind people and designed the *Teleaudio* system, which envisaged mixing an oral commentary and the original soundtrack of a film to be broadcast on radio frequencies simultaneously with the television channel. The film Spartacus by Stanley Kubrik was then broadcast with audio description in December 1991, making *RAI* the first broadcasting company to offer audio description on television[12]. Unfortunately, this successful beginning has continued sporadically and the Italian Broadcaster *RAI* nowadays offers a small amount of audio described programmes (Arma, 2011: 48).

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11 eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0636&from=EN (last accessed 31/05/2016).
12 www.ctt-avid.it/rassegna/bio_dottavi.htm (last accessed 31/05/2016).

Further progress in the development of audio description linked to legislations on media accessibility, the DVD market, theatre and opera, academic research and the establishment of associations aimed at raising awareness on this topic and boosting the quantity of audio described programmes circulating in Italy, had to wait until after the turn of the new millennium.

2.2.1 Norms and legislation

The Italian legislation on media accessibility is vague and scarce, and it does not impose any specific legal provision on public bodies. The so-called *Legge Gasparri,* promulgated in 2004, contains norms to be respected by the Italian public media system but it only very briefly touches on the matter of accessibility encouraging broadcasters to increase the availability of accessible programmes for sensory disabled people[13].

In addition, parliamentary discussions on the matter are uncommon. Accessibility as a point of order was requested by Maria Antonietta Coscioni back in 2009 and addressed to the Ministries for Cultural Assets and Activities, and for Equal Opportunities. Coscioni reported that cinemas, DVDs and television programmes were hardly accessible to a sensory disabled public although the costs to equip cinemas with suitable technology or to introduce SDH and AD already in the production stages of films and audiovisual material are considered to be minimal. She suggested the Ministries compel production companies to introduce SDH and AD already at the production stage when receiving public funding and urge *Anica* (National Association of Audiovisual, Multimedia and Film Industries) and *RAI* to boost accessibility for their products[14]. The request has not had consequences on the Italian legislation yet, nevertheless it brought visibility to the matter and anticipated developments made especially by the several associations scattered throughout Italy (Arma, 2014: 61).

Every three years, the Italian public television *RAI* must draw up a service subscription contract – *Contratto di Servizio* – to be approved by the government and the public institutions that includes the television plan and commitment for the

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13 Available at www.rai.it/dl/docs/[1232099039939]LeggeGasparri.pdf (last accessed 31/05/2016).

14 Parliamentary report available at dati.camera.it/ocd/aic.rdf/aic4_04731_16 (last accessed 31/05/2016).

following years. The contract for the years 2013-2015 has yet to be approved and should be published in its final form shortly. Until now the previous contract for the years 2010-2012 has continued to remain in force. In any case, in both the previous contract and in the draft of the new contract presented in parliament, accessibility for disabled people, especially concerning audio description and the blind and visually impaired, is treated rather evasively: while the percentage of subtitled programmes to be covered is set at at least 70%, no definite numbers are set as objectives to be reached for what concerns audio description (sections of the two *Contratto di Servizi*o are shown in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). Either documents report the commitment undertaken to boost the audio described offer in point c, and, as shown, although few years have passed, the objectives have remained exactly the same: *RAI* commits to progressively boost the offer of audio described programmes and guarantees access to audio described programmes on television and on the *RAI* web page all over the national territory. Moreover, the two contracts continue to report that *RAI* guarantees access to its multimedia and television offer on analogical, terrestrial and satellite devices to people with sensory and cognitive disabilities, for instance through audio described programmes. Additionally it guarantees information on accessibility on its programme schedule, it assures access will be guaranteed regardless of any technological changes and developments and it commits to collaborating with institutions and associations of sensory disabled people in analysing and monitoring the quality and quantity of its accessible offer.

Therefore the Public Broadcaster *RAI* guarantees access to its offer to blind and visually impaired people but it does not explicitly specify what sort of offer and in what time slot it commits to grant accessible materials to its audience. Moreover, *RAI* commits to boost the percentage of accessible material, although it does not clearly refer to a planned commitment including rate increment previsions within a specific time frame. It is also curious to notice that the Website itself, www.segretariatosociale.rai.it, despite the efforts to make television more accessible, does not have an accessible usage mode for the blind and the visually impaired, as pinpointed by Arma (2011: 50).

2.2.2 Television

The Italian public television *RAI* has created a web page that includes its offer for the blind and visually impaired public[15]. It states that audio described programmes, such as the most followed TV series and some other unspecified products, are available on channel two of the digital terrestrial television and on some radio frequencies. The up-to-date schedule is available on page 783 of teletext and, alternatively, audio descriptions can also be listened to on the *RAI* web page under the section AUDIO[16]. When AD is available, *RAI* informs the audience with a message displayed and read aloud before the beginning of the programme, an example of which is shown in Fig. 3. The audio described offer, last accessed in May 2016, includes only one foreign film, a German production of 2011, nine Italian television films, thirty-three Italian television miniseries of two episodes each, and some seasons of forty-seven Italian television series or serials. All the audio described products are broadcast only on the main *RAI* channels: *Raiuno*, *Raidue* and *Raitre*. According to Arma,

> the Italian blind audience seems to be generally happy with the type of service provided, although they complain about the scarcity of audio description and the fact that only movies and some fiction episodes are audio described, while talk shows and other entertainment programmes, such as sport or music programmes, have neither audio description nor live commentary (2011:48).

Moreover, according to the contract stipulated between the Italian government and the public television service, *RAI* committed to organise and offer special activities to the blind public available on line on an accessible web page[17] called *RAI* Easy Web. The contents offered include spoken news bulletins, news linked to disability, accessible teletext pages containing short weather forecasts, sport, horoscope, lottery and cuisine, audio books, classical music and educational and informative audio products.

According to Arma, "commercial broadcasters are not covered by any specific legislation and none of them now provides access services on a regular basis" (2011:

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15 Accessible at www.segretariatosociale.rai.it/dl/sociale/website/ContentItem-16aad8f7-6828-4105-ac14-0e933302abc7.html (last accessed 31/05/2016).

16 www.rai.tv/dl/RaiTV/programmi/page/Page-09f11f27-027c-4140-a208-ab910d028583.html (last accessed 31/05/2016).

17 www.televideo.rai.it/televideo/pub/telesoftware.jsp (last accessed 31/05/2016).

92). The only exception was a single experiment carried out by *La7*[18] in 2009, when the film *Moonshot* was broadcast with optional audio description.

Finally, it is interesting reporting that in the additional comments of the 2008 European Blind Union (EBU) report on television accessibility for blind people, the Italian audio description techniques are criticised: "the description [...] is not completely neutral because some comments concerning the action are arbitrarily included"[19].

2.2.3 DVD and cinema

The first DVD offered on the Italian market equipped with audio description was that of the film *Rosso come il cielo* (2005 – *Red Like the Sky*) released on DVD in 2007 on which, among extras, users can access the audio description narrated by the film director himself[20]. After this, few were the DVDs released integrated with AD: *Fuga dal call cent*er (*2009 – Escape from the Call Cent*er), with a first person AD narrated by the prota*gonist, Il discorso del Re* (*2010 – The King's Speech) and Qualcuno da ama*re (2012 – *Untamed Heart*), created by various associations that work with sensory disabilities (Arma, 2014: 63).

For what concerns accessibility in cinemas, three are the theatres that set up permanent technology to offer audio described films to their audience. The project, called *Cinema Senza Barriere* (Cinema without Barriers)[21], started out in Milan back in 2005 thanks to the association A.I.A.C.E., that shortly after started collaborating with *Raggio Verde*[22], a company based in Rome responsible for the making of the audio descriptions. The first edition was realised at the *Spazio Oberdan* cinema, in Milan, and was then extended to the *Cinema dei Piccoli*, in Rome, and to the *Cinema Nuovo Eden*, in Bari, where, to date, a one monthly accessible screening is offered each yearly edition.

Some films have also been audio described for film festivals: the Venice Film

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18 Reference available at www.osr.regione.abruzzo.it/do/index?docid=6477 (last accessed 31/05/2016).
19 Link to the word document available at www.euroblind.org/working-areas/access-to-information/nr/62 (last accessed 31/05/2016).
20 www.rapportoconfidenziale.org/?p=4920 (last accessed 31/05/2016).
21 Information available at www.mostrainvideo.com/p.aspx?t=general&mid=2&l=it (last accessed 31/05/2016).
22 Web page of the company: www.raggioverde.org/ (last accessed 31/05/2016).

Festival, the Rome Film Festival and the Rome Fiction Fest offered some screenings with AD, although, as reported by Arma (2014:63), the amount of audio described showings was reduced in the last editions due to the lack of economic investments in accessibility.

A major breakthrough and source of pride for Italy lies in MovieReading[23], an Italian app for smartphones and tablet launched in 2011. MovieReading makes up for the absence of obligation for the film distribution companies to release audiovisual products integrated with SDH and AD. Thanks to specific agreements with the major film distribution companies, such as *Warner, Medusa, 01Distribution, Eagle, LuckyRed* and *Bolero*[24], MovieReading is able to receive the audiovisual material before the it is relasead across cinemas, therefore guaranteeing accessibility from the very first showing. The project sprang from the persistence and dedication of the *Blindsight Project*[25], a non-profit organisation that since 2006 has worked to overcome barriers for access and inclusion, and *CulturAbile Onlus*[26], established in 2010 to enhance accessibility to culture for sensory disabled people producing subtitles and audio descriptions. The principal collaborator in the creation of the accessible material is nowadays the company *ARTIS Project*[27]. Sensory disabled people can download the app on their electronic devices, and, from the catalogue, they can buy SDH or AD for 1.79 € each (some are offered free of charge) of the newest releases that, once downloaded, automatically synchronise with the track of the film in cinemas and, if used for home vision entertainment, with the tracks of films on DVD or Blu-ray Disc. The idea can be considered revolutionary[28] because accessibility now only relies on the sensory disabled audience and their electronic devices, in fact the only items needed are a smartphone or a tablet and a pair of headphones, hence relieving cinemas from the pressure of making expensive technological renovations. The first audio description offered on

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23 Web site of MovieReading available at www.moviereading.com/ (last accessed 31/05/2016).
24 culturabile.it/2013/10/dopo-i-sottotitoli-al-cinema-arrivano-anche-le-audiodescrizioni-grazie-a-moviereading/ (last accessed 31/05/2016).
25 www.blindsight.eu/ (last accessed 31/05/2016).
26 www.culturabile.it/ (last accessed 31/05/2016).
27 www.artis-project.it/ (last accessed 31/05/2016).
28 Retrieved from an article available at www.superando.it/2013/12/19/sono-made-in-italy-le-audiodescrizioni-al-cinema/ (last accessed 31/05/2016).

MovieReading appeared in December 2013 for the film *Philomena*[29]. The first success has then been followed by an increase of the offer that has very recently seen a considerable growth[30], hopefully unrestrained in the future years.

Besides the newest releases, Italian associations additionally work on films released in the previous years, in order to fill the void experienced in the past. They have surely accomplished a lot considering the weak support these initiatives draw from the Italian institutions, nevertheless greater coordination and a central unit representative of the Italian area, might be important for further development. For instance, during a conference on audio description held at the University of Trieste in 2013, the Italian audio describer Lugli reported that sometimes she was audio describing films already audio described by others, therefore wasting opportunities to increase the amount of ADs for films available in Italian (Lugli, 2014: 78).

Another significant participant of the Italian audio description area is the first and only film library for blind and visually impaired people, opened by the non-profit cooperative *Senza Barriere ONLUS*[31] based in Trento. The group started working in 2004 and, by now, has produced a considerable amount of audio descriptions that is continuously growing and ranges from feature films, to films for children, television series, documentaries, theatre plays and erotic films[32]. The blind and visually impaired members of the library, 21,000 in 2014, according to Busarello (2014: 111), must pay an annual fee: 25 € to receive 24 films but have no possibility to choose them, or 35 € to be able to choose annually 36 articles. The products are sent all over Italy through postal service and can be kept for one month. The original soundtrack and the additional audio description are recorded on a CD in mp3 format, thus removing the visual components, because of copyright restrictions imposed by film distribution companies. The audio-films offered to the blind and visually impaired unfortunately deprive them of the possibility to perceive visual elements and cannot be enjoyed in the company of sighted people (Busarello, 2014: 108).

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29 www.moviereading.com/static/reviewFiles/Comunicato%20Stampa%20Audiodescrizioni.pdf (last accessed 31/05/2016).
30 The catalogue is available at www.moviereading.com/en/catalog/ (last accessed 31/05/2016).
31   www.senzabarriere.org - www.cineaudioteca.it (last accessed 31/05/2016).
32 The catalogue is available at www.cineaudioteca.it/doc/files/Catalogo%20cineaudioteca%202016.pdf (last accessed 31/05/2016).

2.2.4 Theatre and opera

For what concerns accessible theatre performances, two are the theatres that offer audio described plays: the *Teatro Vittorio Emanuele*[33] in Messina and the *Teatro Ghione*[34], in Rome. Both theatres collaborate with the association *Isiviù*[35], that has provided audio descriptions for the blind and translation into *LIS* (Italian sign language) for the hearing impaired, for theatrical performances and opera since the first event in 2006. *Isiviù* is calling upon more Italian theatres to join the network of accessible theatres. The subscription is free of charge[36].

Furthermore, the *Sferisterio*[37] theatre in Macerata also offers some audio described opera performances. The AD is delivered through a mono headphone before performances start, during the pauses and only occasionally it overlaps with the play. The service is offered free of charge.

2.2.5 University and research

The Italian academic research on audio description is not abundant. Recent developments saw the commitment of the research group of the University of Trieste, where a conference on AD was held in April 2013 with the title *Giornata intorno all'audiodescrizione filmica per i ciechi e gli ipovedenti* (One-day conference on audio description for the blind and visually impaired). The contributions of the various participants were then edited by Elisa Perego and published in 2014. Moreover, to my knowledge, the only Ph.D. thesis on AD presented in Italy was written by Saveria Arma, a researcher at the University of Naples, and published in 2011.

In Italy today there are no specific academic courses specialised in audio description. The University of Macerata offered for the first time during the academic year 2012-2013 the postgraduate Specialization Course 'Accessibility to Media, Arts and

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33 www.teatrovittorioemanuele.it/accessibilita/ (last accessed 31/05/2016).
34 www.teatroghione.it/accessibilita (last accessed 31/05/2016).
35 www.isiviu.com/ (last accessed 31/05/2016).
36 The plea can be consulted at www.isiviu.com/calling-rete-teatri-accessibili/ (last accessed 31/05/2016).
37 www.sferisterio.it/accessibilita/ (last accessed 31/05/2016)

Culture'[38], but, apparently, the course has not been provided after the first experiment. Other Universities might provide introduction to AD included in general courses on audiovisual translation.

Macerata was also the cradle of the software tellmewhat[39], designed by *IRIFOR Macerata* and linked to the newest trends in audio description and text-to-speech technology. The experiment aims at accelerating the process and reducing the costs of AD, in fact the software allows to type the AD directly on the track of the film, then converting it into an audio track through advanced speech synthesis systems. The results do not diverge excessively from the quality and intelligibility of human speech. In collaboration with the University of Turin, the software was tested and the results published in December 2015[40], and, at present, it has been made available worldwide.

Lastly, another important academic project was realised at the University of Ferrara in collaboration with the service for disabled students (SMS), the Department of Engineering and the Department of Humanities. The aim of the project is to offer accessibility to visual components of university courses through audio description, since social trends indicate that images, films, and visual elements are increasingly being used as additional material supporting teaching (De Piano, Ganino, 2014: 106).

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38 www.unimc.it/it/unimc-comunica/news/aperte-le-iscrizioni-al-primo-master-in-accessibility-to-media-arts-and-culture?set_language=it (last accessed 31/05/2016).

39 More information available at www.iriformc.it/il-software-tellmewhat-cambiera-il-modo-di-audio-descrivere/ and tellmewhat.eu/it/ (last accessed 31/05/2016).

40 giornale.uici.it/universita-di-torino-e-irifor-macerata-insieme-per-la-prima-rassegna-cinematografica-nazionale-sperimentale-audiodescritta-con-il-software-tellmewhat/ (last accessed 31/05/2016).

3 Audio description for feature films as a research topic

Henceforth the focus will be set on audio description for feature films mainly for an adult audience, point at issue of this study.

Research on audio description has flourished rather recently and consequently many are the elements of discussion that still have not found proper answers. Techniques and opinions on the matter still differ from country to country and from scholar to scholar, thus making audio description studies a growing and changing field. Recent research has been directed at issues such as relevance, objectivity and coherence of the AD in relation to the source text, to the target audience, to their preferences and reception of the target text, and to standardisation of the practice, aiming at creating a relevant set of golden rules to offer excellent products to the blind and visually impaired audience.

The various challenges AD entails originate from the very nature of this type of translation and the type of products it acts on. It is an intersemiotic and intermodal translation of a multimodal text: the shift from the original to the new product is considered to be intersemiotic because of the nature of the source and target text, the original one is, in fact, a polisemiotic audiovisual product that includes dialogues, special effects, soundtrack and the narrator's voice, audio described only when particularly opaque or unclear, and images, subtitles and title bands, that are translated into a monosemiotic entity, exclusively auditory (Arma, 2011:134-138). Nevertheless, crucial matters are not exclusively connected to the process of verbalisation of images. Additionally, "the cross-modal mediation taking place in AD is shaped (or constrained) by a range of specific conditions" (Braun, 2008: 3). The understanding of the multimodal text in which meaning is conveyed through both verbal and visual modes of communication, which often complement or undercut each other complexly combined, is fundamental. Therefore the AD script is based on the audio describer's interpretation of the source text, rather than on the source text itself, which must be as accurate as possible in order to preserve the original product. The challenge lies in the fact that "multimodal texts provide even greater scope for interpretation than mono-modal texts" (Braun, 2008: 4).

Additionally, linguistic and content choices are constrained by the non-autonomous

nature of audio description. In fact the descriptions have to coherently interact with the other components of the audiovisual product, for instance dialogues and sounds. The description should also fit in between the dialogues without overlapping meaningful sound effects or music, therefore requiring "succinct descriptions and hence decisions and selective solutions on the part of the audio describer" (Braun, 2008: 4). Interpretation plays a crucial role in decision-making and selection, especially when time constraints do not allow for longer descriptions.

Final considerations include the fact that, although the heterogeneity of the target group may determine differences in the perception of the audio description and the audiovisual product, the visually impaired can be considered as a community within the community. Indeed general culture-specific features must be taken into consideration when creating the AD of a foreign film; cultural features can be visual, e.g. proxemic and para-linguistic, but also auditory. An example is the typical sound of fresh coffee made with a moka pot: the description of the sound should not be necessary for an Italian audience, while it should be for a foreign one.

> This means that audio description is a strictly target-text dependent activity and that it can be seen as a culturally sensitive type of translation, where the word "culture" indicates the set of habits and behaviours of a society (Arma, 2011: 143).

As shown, many and more are the elements to be taken into consideration when audio describing an audiovisual product, especially when the source text is a film, therefore dense with meaning and often obscure, and on which the audience creates expectations linked to the artistic experience and enjoyment of art. Audio describing is thus considered to be a complex activity that involves creative skills and problem-solving processes, therefore impelling "professional audio describers [to] refer to their own translation experience rather than to general and isolated cases" (Rodríguez Posadas, 2010: 196). On the other hand, although "audio description is a creative activity, it is considered as an accessible service, and as any service it should be possible to standardize and evaluate its quality" (Orero, Matamala, 2013: 153).

Besides various and multiple research published on the subject, an important matter that has interested scholars in the last decade is the creation of common guidelines for the production of audio description. The need of an international set of guidelines rose

from the contradictions and vagueness of the few existing national or individually created guidelines, often a consequence of personal preferences and intuition rather than research. Vercauteren reports several advantages of making international guidelines based on research available for all:

> [First of all it] would ensure a consistent viewer experience of high quality, regardless of that viewer's location. Furthermore, broadcasters would know what they are purchasing or lending from each other. The future development of audio description will also rely on the organization of courses [...] requiring a set of structured, clear guidelines. Finally, as increasingly more countries are passing accessibility laws, an international convention would avoid that the same effort of drawing up national guidelines is repeated in all those countries. This would save countries where no audio description exists valuable time and prevent them from falling even further behind. In addition to all these practical benefits, scholars might benefit from an international standard as well, as it would provide them with a tool on which to base their evaluations or descriptions of described texts (2007: 140).

The article offered the first suggestions for a broader project that resulted in a three-year study begun in 2011 and funded by the European Union, the ADLAB project. In 2015 the ADLAB audio description guidelines were published and made available for any professional of the field, creating the foundations of future cooperation among European countries and offering means to improve the practice of AD. The ADLAB guidelines do not fail to remark that achieving fixed standards for audio description is a demanding aim, both because of the audience's personal taste and of reception that can vary depending, for instance, on preferences or language choices, and because of the options available to the describer who, after a detailed analysis of the source material that includes background research on the text, context and its production, has to make decisions while creating the AD, decisions that "will always be co-determined by the particular context in which a given narrative event occurs and often there will be more than one option regarding how to describe it" (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 16).

The following sections will examine and report on research on the principal stages of the creation of an AD script and on the major challenges the process implies.

3.1 Analysis of the source text and interpretation of the filmic narrative: choices linked to relevance, objectivity and coherence

The very first step necessary when dealing with audio description is to determine whether an audiovisual product, a film in this case, is suitable for being audio described.

[F]or an audiovisual work to be audio describable, it must contain enough 'sound gaps' so that: a) the dialogues and the inserted comments may not overlap, and b) the listener may not be overwhelmed by too many (long) inserted comments (Hernández Bartolomé, Mediluce Cabrera, 2009: 9).

When the source text meets the appropriate criteria, before beginning with the actual production of the AD script, a thorough analysis and understanding of the film is of utmost importance. Orero, referring to outdated standards and tendencies on AD, stated that

there is a need to create ADs which are the result of a deeper analysis, understanding and interpretation of films, rather than follow existing guidelines which insist on a superficial reading (2012: 25).

Citing Monaco's description of film language, Orero (2012: 17-18) shows the complexities and obstacles that film reading implies: a structure that is apparently simple, made of single frames containing images that convey meaning, is in fact made intricate by the need to take the film as a continuum of meaning and by the means of communication that can be expressed denotatively and connotatively, so that, while the denotative meaning is rather simple, the connotative meaning carries a wealth of symbolism attached.

Because of the complexity of the source text on which the audio describer must work and the challenges entailed in identifying and isolating "from [the] coherent whole the information which is not available to the blind audience but essential in constructing a similar coherent whole" (Braun, 2007: 3), a thorough understanding of the filmic product is necessary in order to accurately choose which elements to audio describe, decide when the description should be given and how the visual and aural information should be described. The ultimate purpose is the creation of an enhanced product that respects the original contents and offers to the blind and visually impaired audience a "dynamic equivalence with the original, as other kinds of audiovisual translations do" (Mälzer-Semlinger, 2012: 30).

As reported by Perego (2014: 27-28), the general tendency of the American branch of professionals, together with some of the European ones, leaned towards a purist interpretation of the matter of objectivity, therefore setting the preference on simple, objective audio descriptions lacking interferences or interpretation. However, new and

more thorough insights into the subject revealed several complexities. These are linked to the level of relevance of information, which is set at the core of the decisional process, and to the ways in which explicit and implicit assumptions should be conveyed. These challenges are closely related to the understanding of the whole filmic product and are made even more complicated by time constraints, stylistic issues – brief and simple sentences are more easily processed – and the interaction with the other elements of the film, thus unlikely to be solved by a relatively superficial "describe-what-you-see" approach.

According to Marzà Ibàñez (2010), in an attempt to systematise the whole process of relevance, the focus should be set on the plot and style of each scene and of the whole film:

> The specific narrative systems and elements will be determined by the context of each film – and each scene –, and should be linguistically mirrored by the description: when facing a scene with a linear presentation of events, the describer must be very aware not to advance action; when a film deliberately plays with the presentation of time, it should be regarded as a clue for the describer to carefully parallel this alteration in the linguistic form; if the movements of the camera highlight the tension of a specific scene, this tension should also be present in one way or another in the description; and even the "excess" elements are to be considered relevant if the narrative analysis confirms that they assist the plot (Marzà Ibàñez, 2010: 150).

Therefore, as already stated, the core of the describing process lies in the analysis of the film, in order to facilitate the selection and prioritisation of the information that best conveys the multi-coded message portrayed by the original in the linguistic code of the description.

Moreover, audio description must carefully deal with the ambivalence that filmic elements might have, trying to avoid channelling the user's attention in a greater way than requested. For example, as shown by Nathalie Mälzer-Semlinger (2012), it often happens that films include hints that become relevant only at the end of the story or after a more detailed analysis, when the audience links apparently random elements to each other or to a specific development.

> [Because usually] these details are shown casually and can be interpreted as 'reality filmed by chance', mentioning them in the audio description places too much strong of a focus on them, taking away all the ambivalence (Mälzer-Semlinger, 2012: 32).

The author suggests that casualness, ambivalence and the multiple connotations of signs

can be achieved through the use of hypotactic sentences or larger descriptions of the scenes, where ambivalent details can be hidden, or the use of the character's gaze, that can serve as an excuse to describe certain elements. Audio description should not be considered as a kind of spoon-feeding that lowers the pleasure in the film.

The function of the elements to be described thus plays a crucial role in the decisional process and, as important, is the question of how they are to be described. Academic research on AD has been moving "in the direction of encouraging more subjective approaches" (Taylor, 2012: 490), in order to obtain descriptions that are a re-creation, as Santos (2015: 253) suggests, that does not sabotage the aesthetic ideal. Nevertheless, the discussion is still open and to what extent subjectivity can be stretched is hard to state. Many are the scholars who support descriptions "of visual stimuli without drawing any assumptions for blind audience" (Mazur, Chmiel, 2012: 175), on the other hand, some claim that "the task of objective interpretation is impossible" (Mazur, Chmiel, 2012: 175). An interesting approach is the one presented by Braun (2007) and based on Relevance Theory: according to this model of communication, information is conveyed through explicatures (explicit assumptions) and implicatures (implicit assumptions) and, in her opinion, identifying them among the filmic language can be useful for the audio describer. She suggests verbalising the "explicatures instead of the individual cues by which they are triggered" (Braun, 2007: 8), but opposes the verbalisation of implicatures in order to leave "scope for individual interpretation" (Braun, 2007: 8).

Interesting evolutions on the matter are linked to the very recent development of the research on AD in eye-tracking analysis, which involves sighted users, and reception studies, which directly involve the very target audience. Because of the recent advent of audio description and therefore because of the need to investigate it from a descriptive approach, empirical research on AD is still at its early stages and doubts on its adequacy and usability are still open (Perego, 2014: 35).

Eye-tracking analysis could be of great help leading audio describers' choices and improving their decisional process. Although it might be considered a good starting point, what sighted users' gaze fixes cannot be the only parameter on which descriptive choices are based (Perego, 2014: 35). For instance, results of eye-tracking analyses followed by a written questionnaire conducted by Orero and Vilaró (2012) show

disagreement between fixation and perception. In fact

> fixation on a specific element does not automatically mean that information is processed and remembered. It can be said that covert attention is implied, since there isn't agreement between eye-tracker data and questionnaire data (Orero, Vilaró, 2012: 313).

Recent research on the reception by the blind and visually impaired audience of audio described products "seems to be one of the best sources of information to be applied when creating both AD standards and audio description proper" (Chmiel, Mazur, 2012: 57), thus this is what might supplement the purely descriptive and linguistic approach of the beginning. Although what the regular audience focuses on is a good starting point, it is important to distance from their perspectives and purposes to move toward the unsighted and visually impaired audience's needs. As stated by Taylor

> it will be the end users […] who will dictate future practice, as blind subjects are brought more and more into the picture [and] researchers and practitioners alike are involving blind people in the production of audio descriptions (2012: 490-491).

Additional restrictions AD undergoes are linked to coherence "within and across individual AD sections, and between these and the other elements of the audio described event" (Braun, 2007: 9), which also implies a thorough knowledge of the product on which the audio describer works. In fact, AD is not a stand-alone product but it modifies only some parts of the audiovisual source while it leaves other parts unchanged. As a consequence "the translation process an audio describer engages in involves identifying and recreating a variety of intermodal and intramodal links" (Braun, 2011: 650). AD involves the translation of intermodal links between images, sound and dialogue into an intermodal link between AD and sounds and an intramodal link between AD and dialogues, combined with the translation of intramodal visual links into intramodal verbal links that have to be recreated for the blind audience "based on a model of coherence which highlights the crucial role of a text recipient in recognizing explicit and implicit links in a text to construct a coherent discourse" (Braun, 2011: 660). Braun concludes by advocating AD processes that attempt to recreate the internal logic within the AD text and within the audio described version as a whole, rather than to report isolated and selected visual elements.

3.2 Main stages of the process of AD making

Following the first and most important steps of the AD process, which are connected to the analysis and understanding of the source text, the major bodywork is based on four main points: what should be described, when should the description be given, how much should be described, and how should the visual and aural information be described.

3.2.1 What should be described?

Roughly speaking, what should be described are images – including characters, actions, spatio-temporal settings –, sounds that are hard to recognise and on-screen text. The previous section indicated that the decisional process is not linear, images can convey a great amount of information often difficult to render through a concise and rapid description. It is impossible to describe everything and frequently too much information can be disturbing for the user, therefore making choices challenging.

The ADLAB audio description guidelines designate two main narrative building blocks which, combined, build a story: characters and their actions, and spatio-temporal settings and their continuity. The analysis of the two parts and the ways in which they are conveyed is the starting point for the creation of an AD.

The describer should investigate whether and how the following features are communicated to the audience: which characters are focal and which ones supporting; whether they are known or unknown; if they are used for the purposes of temporal orchestration; if they are related or linked to each other; whether they are authentic or fictional, real or unrealistic; and if they have a symbolic function because they represent a certain group of people, social class, profession, a stereotype or an idea.

> [In fact], we get to know characters through their physical appearance, actions, and reactions (manifested, for example by means of gestures and facial expressions), as well as through what they say and how they say it. [...] characters can also be revealed to us by the way others react to them as well as by their environment or by means of film techniques (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 20).

For instance, "a character's pedantic nature can be emphasised by describing how all items in their apartment are meticulously arranged" (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren,

2015: 23); features of a character can be described through elements that imply or are connected to that specific feature, the reactions of others or a specific behaviour.

Nevertheless, according to Vercauteren and Orero (2013) and confirmed by the preliminary experiment carried out by Fresno (2012), the personality traits and psychology of fictional characters are what the audience remembers and use in order to create a mental composition of a character, often relying on stereotypical models of characterisation, also due to the time constraint feature films experience compared to novels, while information about their appearance and their clothing plays a secondary role.

> As some of the character-related information is implicit [and possibly conveyed only visually] and has to be inferred, there will always be room for ambiguity, and determining (and describing) it will always include a personal and uncertain component (Vercauteren, Orero, 2013: 189).

According to the objective approach advocated by some scholars and professionals, it is important, as stated by Snyder (2014), to avoid conveying what is inferred by the actions, features, gestures, reactions, or film techniques, and let the user deduce them as a sighted user does. For instance, he suggests that the audio describer

> Describe[s] expressive gestures and movement. Resist any temptation to convey what you may feel is inferred by them, such as an emotional state. Ask yourself: "What is it that I *see* that makes me think he's angry?" Say *that*, what you see (Snyder, 2014: 41).

On the other hand, according to the latest trends leaning towards a more subjective approach and as advanced by Vercauteren and Orereo (2013) in relation to facial expressions, AD should include subjective descriptions of emotions since various studies confirm that at least some emotions are universally and correctly understood and identified. The proposal could be a solution when the description is necessary but constrained by time limitation and, moreover, "the subjective descriptions do not present the listeners with a heavy cognitive processing load, which is the case when lengthy objective descriptions are used" (Mazur, Chmiel, 2012: 179).

A brief but relevant parenthesis concerning characters is ethnicity. It should be identified if known or vital to the comprehension of the content and, in case, all main characters' skin colour should be described: "citing the ethnicity of only non-white individuals establishes white as a default and is unacceptable" (Snyder, 2014: 40).

Secondly, settings are part of the other basic building blocks:

> all stories take place in particular spatio-temporal settings which comprise both a temporal and a spacial dimension, [moreover] these settings are intrinsically linked to the characters and their actions (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 24).

The describer must determine whether the setting is new or already known, real or imagined, well-known or unfamiliar; if it is a background for the action or if it has a narrative/symbolic function; if it is presented explicitly or implicitly, and through which channel it is signalled, i.e. film editing, film techniques, dialogue and/or sound effects/music; and, finally, in which way different settings are linked to each other, chronologically, in flashback or in flashforward. The describer must choose whether to express these factors directly or to hint at the circumstances that distinguish them, a decision process that should respect both the intention of the filmmaker and the experience of the user.

Furthermore, Snyder adds that, while describing, colours should not be avoided: most visually impaired people have seen colours at some point and can retain the visual memory or the significance of them, while people who are blind from birth can often understand the significance of a particular colour by its association.

> Colour [...] is usually translated in the audio description when describing the atmospheres and sceneries within which the action in the multimodal text is developed: lighting, wardrobe, appearance of people or objects, and so on (Chica Núñez, 2015: 212).

Lastly, "describers must not censor information for any personal reason [...], they must rely objectively the visual elements of nudity, sexual acts, violence, and the like" (Snyder, 2014: 43).

3.2.2 When should the description be given and how much should be described?

AD should implement the original track and combine with it harmoniously. For this purpose, the choice of the moments where to insert the audio description is crucial. Regularly, the AD script should fit in between natural pauses without interfering with dialogues, music and meaningful sounds and silence, and, additionally, it should match the scene described. Nevertheless, in some cases, the audio description can cover music, sound effects and even dialogues. This happens when what is being described is notably

more significant for the understanding of the film than what is being covered or if the film is too dense with dialogues and sounds, thus leaving little space for meaningless pauses. Other strategies could include anticipating or postponing the description of scenes, filling the closest available pauses. Although the closer the description is to the elements it refers to, the more accessible the film results for the user's linking process,

> preceding descriptions set up events in the audience's mind and make it easier to make the link with the ensuing sound, music or dialogue. [On the other hand], descriptions that follow their referent contribute to suspense, surprise and comic effect (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 52).

Subsequently, the following issue to be encountered concerns the length of the aural description and the amount of information to be included in it. The ADLAB guidelines suggest a general pace of 160 words/minute but the describer's decision-making process is not so linear. As stated by Perego (2015: 25-26) an excessively long, detailed, rich and continuous description can be tiring for the user, nevertheless, a short and poor description can jeopardise the fluidity and understanding of the film. Blind people do not need to listen to the description of every single aspect of the visual channel because they can receive information from dialogues and sound effects too. Consequently, coordinating space, time and information is not a trivial task and it should be pursued considering that a blind or visually impaired user does not need to receive more information than a regular user: offering space for interpretation is crucial.

3.2.3 How should the visual information be described?

Arma (2011: 152) suggested that the language of audio description should be regarded as an LSP, Language for Special Purposes. The author refers to the definition of LSP formulated by Schröder: languages for special purposes do not differ from the general language but are characterised by the use particular means of communication of a certain language in a specific way and with a specific frequency of occurrence. In addition, the language of AD is specifically addressed to a community and, therefore, used for a special purpose. Finally, the use of codified language is habitual, e.g. formulaic and formalised expressions are used to describe the logos of film distribution companies, the list of producers, actors or dubbers, or the employment of technical

perspecives to describe what is happening. These features and the recurrent use of grammatical and lexical peculiarities "can provide with sufficient reasons to believe that the language of audio description can be considered as a language for special purposes" (Arma, 2011:163).

However, standardising how information should be described is the most controversial cornerstone of AD because it leads to a broad set of diverse issues, such as language, style and, as already reported, objectivity. Firstly, the describer should investigate particular features of the film that might require a specific type of description in order for the two parts to be congruent. These include the genre the source text belongs to that might mandate a specific jargon; the time period and place in which the film is set or the year of production that might require a particular style; the author's particular expression; and the type of the target audience the film is addressed to. For what concerns the language, the guidelines suggest the audio description be meticulous, succinct, vivid, and concrete. An accurate choice of vocabulary meets the need to provide the user with a precise and detailed description, that avoids obscurity and vagueness and meticulously transposes images into words. A specific lexicon must be used to render vivid, rich and imaginative descriptions and lexical variety is preferred to a dull repetition of common words, "for instance, in verb variation (chat, gossip, confer rather than just talk, depending on the context)" (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 47). On the other hand, the guidelines additionally suggest avoiding obscure vocabulary and unnecessary pomp, and adhering to easily understandable and conversational words; for instance, technical or specific jargon, including film techniques used in the source text, should be avoided or limited to well-known terms. Furthermore, "the visual nature of the film can be reflected in the use of verbs of movement and simile, metaphors and other figures of speech" (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 47).

Investigating the grammar of audio description, the guidelines recommend writing in the present tense, while "past tenses are limited to referring back to previous descriptions" (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 47). However, some suggest that the use of the present continuous and present participle, if time allows, might give a better narrative feel. Moreover, in the choice of verbs, as stated by Vercauteren, "hyponyms

are preferable to general superordinates combined with adverbs" (2007: 144) in order to have, as already stated, a precise and meticulous description. Audio descriptions should predominantly use third person pronouns, "as they reflect the voice of an omniscient narrator" (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 48), thus contributing to keep the highest objectivity and detachment; whereas "second person pronouns occur, for example, in indirect speech for audio subtitles or descriptions of gestures" (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 48). The choice of definite or indefinite articles is instrumental to the creation of a coherent text: a definite article can be used if there is only a single object of a defined category on the screen, or if that object has already been named.

> [Finally], personal and demonstrative pronouns are a common cohesive device. [...] they are appropriate within an interrupted block of description, but can cause confusion when the description is interrupted by sound, [silence], music or dialogue (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 53),

thus requiring a repetition of the identifying name.

For what concerns syntax, the general rule recommends the use of short sentences rather than the use of subordination, "simple noun phrases with no verb at all are also common for describing time and spatial settings or to pinpoint objects" (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 48). On the other hand, if time permits, more variation in sentence structure can be pleasant and engaging, therefore subordination can be expressed through the use of conjunctions of time, the most common being "as" or "while", or non-finite clauses. This more flexible approach is advocated, for instance, by Mälzer-Semlinger who suggests allowing "the use of a more complex syntax that would be able to give varying emphases to the information and create room for connotations and ambivalence" (2012: 35). Moreover, the distribution of information in the sentence has an impact on users' reception: "starting with known information in sentence-initial position provides the best framework for what follows" (Remael, Reviers, Vercauteren, 2015: 48) as well as with the prominent piece of information that usually provides the context of the sentence, in a manner that usually goes from general to specific. However, alternative strategies can be used as cohesive or attention-drawing devices: starting with a new piece of information might draw attention to a specific element, or setting the prominent element at the end of the sentence might allow the

most important information to remain in the listener's mind.

As this brief outline of the guidelines shows, it is challenging to gather a rigorous set of directions for what concerns the audio description of films. The factors to take into consideration while creating an AD can be very diverse and, consequently, the choices to be made can differ remarkably, thus leaving several options to the discretion of describers.

3.4 Italian guidelines for audio description

Likewise in Italy some guidelines were formulated and made available by non-profit organisations. The *Blindsight Project* group created a concise set of suggestions on what to pursue and what to avoid41 while producing audio descriptions; whereas the *Senza Barriere* association published a manual for aspiring audio describers (Busarello, Sordo, 2011), which includes both a theoretical and a practical section in order to guide the describer into his/her practice. The Italian guidelines do not differ significantly from the international ones; nevertheless, comparative research on Italian and English audio descriptions and their variation – thus far the only language Italian has been contrasted with in the field of AD – shows several differences in the final product. For instance, the preliminary investigation on the Italian language of audio description conducted by Saveria Arma determined that

> the language used seems to be influenced by the relatively isolated, slow and new development of audio description in Italy, but also by its literary traditions and the 'cultural' attitude of professionals towards spoken and written language (2012: 37).

Generally, Italian audio descriptions tend to be more various and complex, the linguistic choices mostly belong to a higher written register, the language contains a higher amount of embedded secondary clauses, they are filled in with subjectively orientated interpretations and maintain a more 'narrative' mood (Arma, 2012: 51).

Similarly, the following chapters will aspire to investigate the Italian audio description of the film *The Silence of the Lambs*, the choices that were made on the language to use, on relevance and objectivity, in comparison with their English

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41 Available at blindsight.eu/cms/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/blindsight-project-linee-guida-audiodescrizione-filmica.pdf (last accessed 31/05/2016).

counterpart.

4 A Comparative analysis of the Italian and English audio descriptions of the film
The Silence of the Lambs

This analysis is based on the comparison of two audio descriptions of the film *The Silence of the Lambs*, one in English and one in Italian. The Italian version is not a translation of the English one, its creation was based entirely on the Italian dubbed version of the film. The English script analysed was made available by ITFC (Independent Television Facilities Centre in the UK) and accessed through the TIWO project thanks to Andrew Salway, while the Italian script was produced by the social cooperative *Senza Barriere* and obtained thanks to Eraldo Busarello.

The film was chosen because both audio described versions were available. Nevertheless, the choice proved to be pertinent and interesting due to the fact that the film includes several features, which might be considered challenging and significant when dealing with audio description. For instance, many of the scenes display thorny elements, such as violence and transsexualism, and complex filmic techniques, such as the ones used to create suspense, therefore making it interesting to investigate the ways these elements have been dealt with in the two versions.

The analysis is based on the scripts of the audio descriptions, therefore it will not include information on the pitch, inflection or speed of the describers' voices. This analysis will compare the two versions following the structure of the ADLAB guidelines, therefore investigating how characters, settings and time lapses are described and through which lexical, grammatical and syntactical preferences the ADs were produced. The investigation will be followed by a brief quantitative and qualitative analysis of few elements and by an inquiry focused on information selection and description linked to relevance and objectivity. Specifically, this chapter will be divided into six sections: section one will present the film itself; section two will consider the description of characters; section three the settings, actions and time lapses; section four will compare the language and grammar of the ADs; section five will investigate how violence and macabre images are described; section six will present further differences in the choice of relevant elements to describe and in the level of objectivity used. The entire analysis has been verified against manual check and could therefore be subject to errors; however, the domains investigated required to be gathered manually and could

have hardly be collected through computerised software. Moreover, the analysis of the film was deepened thanks to the essay *Jonathan Demme – Il silenzio degli innocenti* by Norman Gobetti, together with the original screenplay written by Ted Tally. Finally, this research only takes into consideration a limited quantity of data – only two texts were analysed – and, for this reason, can only be considered as an individual study to be verified against more extensive comparative research.

4.1 The film *The Silence of the Lambs*

The Silence of the Lambs is a thriller film released in the United States in 1991, directed by Jonathan Demme and starring Jodie Foster as Clarice Starling, Anthony Hopkins as Hannibal Lecter, Scott Glenn as Jack Crawford and Ted Levine as Jame Gumb, also known as Buffalo Bill. The screenplay was written by Ted Tally and based on Thomas Harris' homonymous novel. This is the second film of a series that features Hannibal Lecter, the sagacious psychiatrist and cannibalistic serial-killer.

The story develops around Clarice Starling, a student at the FBI Academy of Quantico, Virgina; Jack Crawford, head of the Bureau's Behavioural Science Unit; Hannibal Lecter, former psychiatrist and cannibalistic serial killer incarcerated in the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane; and Jame Gumb, skilful but psychologically unstable serial-killer; among others, minor characters are Ardelia, Clarice's classmate and friend, Frederick Chilton, chief of the State Hospital, and Katherine Martin, victim of Buffalo Bill. The serial-killer, known only as Buffalo Bill, kidnaps his victims, always corpulent young women, in order to starve them for some days, kill them and finally remove their skin. His maniacal plan aims at sewing a women suit for himself, created with real human flesh. His well organised kidnaps, murders and dumping of the bodies frustrate the FBI, which is only able to relate the murders to a single person, but cannot find additional clues on the killer's background. Jack Crawford, in search for alternative resolutions after finding himself at a dead end with the development of the investigations, sends one of his top students, Clarice Starling, to interview Hannibal Lecter at the State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, with the unspoken purpose of having the brilliant mind of the psychiatrist help solving

the case, certain it has aroused Lecter's curiosity. Crawford's presumption proved true as it is Dr Lecter himself who offers his help to Clarice in the search of Buffalo Bill. Trading his knowledge for a transfer away from the head of the hospital, Dr Chilton, and for an insight into Clarice's past and psyche, to which she agrees, Hannibal Lecter assists the student in the outline of an excellent psychological profile of Buffalo Bill that will eventually lead Clarice directly to the serial-killer's house.

The simple outline of the story and its evolution is made intricate by various film techniques mostly conveyed through the visual channel. For instance, in order to play with the audience and create suspense, the film director intertwines known and unknown geographical places or characters, suggesting fallacious perceptions that end up startling the audience. Moreover, insights into the characters' psyches, central elements of the story and extensively reported through the dialogues, are additionally supported through the visual channel by long and extreme close-ups of the characters' faces and eyes. The characters' gazes are therefore used to display their perception of and reaction to the world around them, especially in the case of Clarice Starling. In fact, the majority of the scenes are shot from her point of view in the attempt of showing the public what her eyes see.

4.2 Characters

Right from the beginning Clarice is set at the core of the story; throughout the film the audience slowly becomes acquainted with her and it is her meandering through the events that the public follows. She is an active participant of almost all the scenes, she is continually moving from one place to another taking the public into a world made of men in which she struggles to hold her position and redeem herself and her past, together with all the other women victims of the serial-killer. Through her acting, the actress exposes the protagonist's various facets: Clarice is resolute and intrepid, she has got an eager desire to discover, aims at her purposes indefatigably and, because of the entirely masculine society she has to face, she resorts to an extra dose of courage and strength compared to the male characters. However, she is also anguished by a traumatic past, the fear of failure and the psychotic characters she has to deal with.

The different facets of Clarice's personality conveyed to the audience through the visual channel are reported using different strategies by the two audio descriptions. Her frail side and nervous reactions are often described using strategies that directly convey what might be inferred by the images by both ADs. Some examples retrieved from the English version are 'Clarice nervously removes her ID', 'trying hard to retain her composure', 'Clarice looks hurt' and 'she has a frightened face', whereas the Italian version reports that she is *imbarazzata* ('embarrassed'), *titubante* ('hesitant') and *scossa* ('shaken'), continuing with *Clarice trattiene a stento le lacrime* ('Clarice struggles to hold back her tears'), *sforzandosi di non fa trapelare l'inquietudine* ('striving to retain her composure') and *i ricordi sembrano angosciare la donna* ('she seems anguished by her memories'). On the other hand, for what concerns her determination and courage, strategies differ. In fact, the Italian AD describes her combative side, especially when confronting with men, reporting judgements on her attitude and on the reaction of the people around her, e.g. *resiste ai pugni di un collega che non la risparmia* ('she endures the punches her colleague does not spare on her'), *sostiene gli sguardi sfrontati degli uomini* ('she stares back at men's impudent looks'), *impressionati dalla risolutezza della Starling* ('the men were awestruck by Starling's grit'). Conversely, in the English version only one positive sentence can be found, i.e. 'the girl has a determined look'. However, in the film, her courage and strength are often rendered through close-up shots of her eyes and strong gazes (Fig. 4) and, from this perspective, the English AD manages to expresses the director's intention picturing Clarice's eyes with adjectives like 'unflinching', 'wide', 'staring', 'fixed', 'firm', 'steely'. This particular feature is not mentioned in the Italian AD, where the only references to Clarice's eyes are linked to their blue colour.

Clarice's physical appearance and clothes are described only at the very beginning of the film, when the audience becomes acquainted with the character. In the English AD she is described as follows: 'in her twenties, with dark brown hair pulled back from her high cheek-boned face, she is dressed in training shoes, black jogging pants and a grey jogging top, bearing the insignia of the FBI Academy'. In the Italian AD the same scene is described as follows: *sopra un dolcevita bianco indossa un bel maglione azzurro, ormai impregnato di sudore. I capelli castani, raccolti in una coda, sfuggono alla*

costrizione dell'elastico ('over a white polo neck she is wearing a nice light blue sweater, by now soaked in sweat. Her brown hair, gathered in a ponytail, slip out of the tight hair-band') (Fig. 5). The Italian AD includes an additional appreciation of Clarice's physical appearance later on in the film that reads *bella Clarice* ('beautiful Clarice').

Moreover, in the film, the director deliberately chose to present the story through her insatiable eyes in order to show her point of view on the events and give the audience the chance to have an insight into a female character, who fights and struggles in a men's world. The director accomplished to render the effect through the abundant use of point of view shots, also known as subjective camera, via which the audience is able to see what the character is seeing from her position. Being this an exclusively visual but technical detail, thus not a directly tangible part of the film, it might result difficult to be expressed verbally. In the English AD, in order to give to the unsighted audience a similar feeling, the audio describer resorted to an abundant and repetitive use of verbs expressing eye movement to which Clarice is related as the agent of the action. In this way, the blind and visually impaired audience receives a description of what the character sees and understand that it is her gaze the public is following. Comparing the number of occurrences of the semantic spectrum of the English 'to look' and the Italian *guardare* ('to look') when Clarice is the agent of the action in the two ADs, the results show that the English version opted for this strategy in a greater way than the Italian one, in fact 50 variants are found in the English version, compared with only 24 variants in the Italian one.

Long close-up shots that linger on the eyes also characterise the relationship between Clarice and Hannibal Lecter; the intimacy they quickly establish in their relationship and the mutual desire to inspect each other's psyche are rendered through scenes where they mutually hold gazes. This feature is expressed by the English AD with, for instance, 'Lecter [...] looking into her bright, blue, unflinching eyes, holds her gaze' (Fig. 6), while the Italian version does not include any specific description of this circumstance.

Hannibal Lecter, known as the cannibal, is another crucial character in the film. Although the other characters abundantly speak about him and his behaviour, he only appears in four scenes, three of which are shot in his cell at the State Hospital for the

Criminally Insane while he chats with Clarice, and the last being the one of his transfer to a more permissive jail from which he manages to escape after atrociously murdering two police agents. From the other characters' voices the audience learns about his ferocious crimes and brilliant intellect, his gentleman-like behaviour and cool-headedness, features that are additionally transmitted through his words, behaviour and inscrutable gaze. The comparison of the audio described sections that deal with Hannibal reveals that the English AD authors decided to report only the mere actions of the character leaving the blind audience free to interpret the character, in fact no adjectives unveiling the character's manners or conduct can be found. The Italian counterpart, however, accompanies the audience with descriptions that show the impassivity Hannibal keeps in any kind of situation, even by recurring to the use of similes to better describe the vicious Zen monk he is: *impassibile* ('impassible'), *sorride sornione* ('he smiles slyly') (Fig. 7), *come un mostruoso clown* ('like a monstrous clown') (Fig. 8), *come un maestro d'orchestra in estasi* ('like a ravished orchestra leader') (Fig. 9). Moreover, the description of the first appearance of Hannibal in the film (Fig. 10) is rendered in English with the sentence 'inside the cell standing at attention a man in his fifties with sleeked-back hair', while in Italian with *al centro dell'ultima stanza [...] un uomo in piedi l'attende, immobile* ('in the centre of the last room a man waits for her, standing still'): the addition of the adjective *still* in the Italian version might slightly better render the composure distinctive of the character. However, in the Italian AD Lecter's physical appearance is not mentioned.

The last of the crucial characters this section will dwell on is Jame Gumb, known almost throughout the whole film as Buffalo Bill. The serial-killer does not kill women because he hates them, he rather hates himself because he is unable to hold a position in society, be accepted and loved by people and by himself. Due to a traumatic past and the loss of his mother, he grew apathetic and able to see women only as objects he cannot have, as material he covets and finally manages to obtain, believing that the female skin he is trying to create and wear will transform him in the perfect woman his idealised mother is and thus be accepted by society and himself. The visual elements that show Bill's nature in the film are reported differently in the two audio descriptions. First of all, the film director chose to convey Bill's personality through the use, similarly used

for Clarice and Lecter, of close-up shots on his covetous eyes and on the infra-red night-sight glasses he recurrently uses, through which he dispassionately detects reality and, in one of the last scenes, follows Clarice in the dark of his maze-like house, giving the audience the only point of view shot that does not belong to Clarice. The first image the audience receives of Buffalo Bill is indeed a close-up on his eyes that he promptly covers with infra-red binoculars (Fig. 11). Both versions stress the importance of the meaningful gaze on the woman who will be Bill's next victim and the description differ only slightly. The Italian AD reports: *dietro le lenti di un binocolo a infrarossi, due occhi verdi la osservano mentre parcheggia* ('behind infra-red night-sight binoculars, two green eyes observe the woman while she parks her car'). Whereas in the English AD the description is as follows: 'watching her arrival at her block of apartments is a man wearing a leather mask, holes cut for the eyes […] he attaches to his mask a pair of infra-red night-sight binoculars'. Differently from the Italian version that gives no description of the assassin, the English description continues by giving an account of Bill's appearance and clothing, 'a man in bomber-jacket, jeans and baseball cap, one arm heavily bandaged'.

The other scene where Bill's eyes are the key element, when he confronts Clarice and observes her in the dark, is rendered in English with 'Bill is wearing his infra-red night-sight glasses and sees her every move', followed by two more occurrences of verbs such as 'to see' and 'to watch' where Bill is the agent of the action. Differently, the Italian description of the scene includes only one occurrence of the verb to observe and it additionally includes the use of similes: *Bill ha indossato il suo binocolo a infrarossi simile a una maschera da sub e osserva […] la donna* ('Bill has worn his infra-red night-sight binoculars, which look like a diver's mask, and watches the woman') and *sembra un gatto che abbia intrappolato un topolino in un angolo* ('he looks like a cat that snared a mouse in a corner').

Moreover, a significant detail concerning Bill that the film director chose to highlight with close-up shots is the tattoo Bill has got on his hand that reads the word LOVE (Fig. 12), that is, what he lacks and searches for. In the Italian AD the detail is completely omitted, while the English version chose to describe only one of the two close-up shots on the tattoo that the director portrayed in the film: 'hand on which is tattooed the word

LOVE'.

Finally, another important feature of Bill is his supposed transsexualism, a peculiarity clearly represented in the film as false, considering that it is related to a psychological instability and violence more than to a true feeling of being a woman. The matter is amply discussed orally by the characters, while visual hints at his pathology occur only once in the scene that portrays Bill dancing cross-dressed while filming himself (Fig. 13). The Italian description of the scene discloses Bill as follows: *Bill accende la cinepresa e si fotografa mentre, agghindato come una prostituta, balla contorcendosi davanti allo specchio. Poi nasconde i testicoli e il pene serrandoli tra le gambe, indreteggia sculettando e si rimira in tutta la sua nudità* ('Bill turns on the camera and films himself while dancing in a contorted manner in front of the mirror, dressed up like a prostitute. Then he hides his testicles and penis by clamping them between his legs, moves backward swaying his hips and admires his whole naked body'). Instead, the description of the English version is as follows: 'Bill continues his gyrations in front of the camera. Squeezing his male organs between his tightly closed legs he reveals himself to the camera as the female he wants to be. Naked apart from blue stockings and a multi-coloured cape opened up by his outstretched hands, he stands and poses for himself'. The serial-killer's behaviour cannot be attributed to transsexualism, thus to the physical and mental feeling of belonging to another gender, but to severe childhood disturbance associated with violence, therefore, using Hannibal Lecter's words in the film: "Billy hates his own identity and he thinks that makes him a transsexual. But his pathology is a thousand times more savage and more terrifying". Consequently, the choice of the English AD to use 'as the female he wants to be' might not respect the original intention of the film and mislead the blind audience. Nevertheless, it can be considered appropriate considering the fact that he actually is cross-dressed as a woman, wearing make-up and hiding his genitals. On the other hand, in the Italian AD, the strategy chosen slightly differs. In fact, Buffalo Bill's outfit is not described, but, instead, rendered through a simile. Choosing not to compare him to a woman but to a prostitute might be considered a controversial strategy. It might not match the interpretation of every user and it is rather subjective, moreover it can be considered offensive by some people.

Concerning Buffalo Bill, the choice of the occasion in which to introduce the serial-killer with his real name is also interesting and differently handled by the two ADs. The Italian AD initially refers to him using *due occhi verdi* ('two green eyes') and *un uomo* ('a man'), but already after 56 minutes from the beginning of the film his identity is made explicit and the public hears the describer calling him Bill. Once introduced for the first time, the describer refers to him in different manners, i.e. *Buffalo Bill*, *lo scuoiatore di donne* ('the man who skins women'), *Jame Gumb alias John Grent, detto Buffalo Bill* ('Jame Gumb also known as John Grent, called Buffalo Bill'), *il mostro* ('the monster'). Whereas the English AD initially and repeatedly refers to him as 'a man' and one time as 'the tormentor', and only much later than its Italian counterpart, 1 hour and 22 minutes after the beginning, introduces him with the name 'Buffalo Bill', then exclusively referring to him as 'Bill' until the end of the film.

4.3 Spatio-temporal settings

Throughout the whole film the geographical settings where the events take place are explicitly pinpointed through different strategies, i.e. text on screen, people that embody specific places, as Dr. Chilton with the State Hospital, or well known outlines of the locations. All of them are accurately transcribed in the English AD, whereas the Italian AD omits two of them: Washington DC (Fig. 14) and an island in the Bahamas (Fig. 15). Neither place is specified explicitly but presented implicitly by means of well known buildings or views, therefore basing the understanding of the audience on their personal experience and knowledge. The English AD makes the two locations explicit by using: 'The night skyline of Washington DC with the Washington Memorial and Capitol Building lit up' and 'the Bahamas', while the Italian AD deals with the places assuming the Italian audience is unable to grasp at the location only by means of a skyline, thus describing as *dall'aereo appaiono le luci di una grande città* ('from the plane the lights of a big city appear') and *luogo di vacanze* ('holiday destination'). Moreover, in the Italian AD there is a small inaccuracy in reporting a geographical name: in the dubbed version of the film the name of the State of West Virginia is not translated into *Virginia dell'Ovest* but left unchanged. Nevertheless, in the Italian AD,

the State is referred to as ovest della Virginia ('western Virginia').

Besides these details, the audience's perception to control every geographical movement in the film is in reality a filmic strategy to shock the public when discovering the apparently known house of Buffalo Bill. The audience is persuaded of being in a privileged position throughout the whole film due to the fact that they have control over every geographical place and happenings, although, in reality, the elements kept obscure and hidden are several. In particular, the scene that pictures Buffalo Bill's capture is a crescendo of suspense that resolves very differently from what the audience is made to expect. In fact, the film technique used by the director to win the trust of the audience is to pretend to show the public a favoured view of the happenings alternating the scene of the police approaching Bill's house, the interior of his house and Bill's reaction to the bell ringing. When the audience discovers the police has in reality broken in an empty house and it is Clarice who Bill actually meets at his door, they feel outsmarted by the director's strategy, but surely astounded and excited by the suspense created. The two ADs deal with the description of the scene in a slightly different manner. Firstly, the English version does not specify that the house the police is approaching is Bill's, while it is clearly conveyed in the Italian version: 'the exterior of a detached bungalow in a leafy suburb of Calumet City, Illinois' and *a Calumet City, presso Chicago, gli agenti del corpo scelto agli ordini di Crawford si appostano per circondare la residenza di Jame Gumb – alias John Grent* ('in Calumet City, near Chicago, the special agents under Crawford's command are disposing to surround the house of Jame Gumb – also known as John Grent'). Soon after the Italian AD continues stating that *il campanello sorprende Bill nel suo covo* ('the doorbell surprises Bill in his hideout'), while the English AD keeps it ambiguous stating that 'Bill glances up at the old electric bell system'. Curiously, the English description is vague and equivocal throughout the whole scene but ends with a sentence that explicitly solves the plot: 'the troops are in another house altogether'. Conversely, the Italian version describes in detail the unfolding of events but leaves implicit the scene finale. In fact, it does not include any explicit description of the happenings and, soon afterwards, when Clarice enters the house, refers to Buffalo Bill as *l'uomo* ('the man'), thus trying to hold the misunderstanding and suspense longer than the English counterpart. In the English AD the man who opens

the door to Clarice is directly referred to as Bill, whereas in the Italian AD, before mentioning the name of the assassin, the audience is given clues through the hint *Clarice libera la pistola dalla fondina* ('Clarice frees her gun from the holster'), although Bill's face is already known to the regular audience who is able to recognise the man.

One last aspect related to the setting to be taken into consideration is the description of Hannibal Lecter's cell. Both ADs only describe the glass in place of metal bars, so that the whole cell is visible from the outside, but neither mentions the total absence of windows or a view on the outside. The detail is relevant because it conveys the notion of isolation and total seclusion from the outside world that led Lecter's introspective ability to increase excessively, therefore creating a subtle mind that rejoices in digging into people's psyche, for example Clarice's and Buffalo Bill's.

Although the temporal progression of the story is not explicitly stated, its understanding is rather simple, in fact all the events develop progressively in a limited period of time. Nevertheless, in order to clarify some of the happenings and some of the characters' behaviour, the director resorted to using various strategies. For instance, the microfilms and newspaper articles about Hannibal Lecter and Buffalo Bill that Clarice examines while investigating, Lecter's words about Bill's past and Clarice's words about her past while they reveal themselves in the mutual exchange of information dictated by Lecter, and Clarice's flashbacks on her infancy. Among the various techniques used, the one that is often exclusively conveyed through the visual channel and might be arduous to audio describe is flashback. Rendering the idea of a flashback through an audio description is surely a challenging task and requires determining which strategy might better express the temporal parenthesis. In the English AD the constructions used are rather straightforward and simple: 'Clarice thinks back to her childhood and seeing her father, a town Marshall, pulling up in the front drive of their house and her watching him from the wooden veranda', then 'she recalls [...]', 'she remembers [...]' and 'Clarice recalls as a young girl walking up to her father's body in the coffin, looking down at her father and kissing him'. In the Italian version, the first flashback is conveyed in a similar manner: *le viene in mente di quando, bambina, attendeva davanti a casa l'auto blu con la stella bianca del padre poliziotto. Tentava di*

coglierlo di sorpresa ('she recalls when, as a child, she would wait for her father's blue car with white star in front of their house. She would try to take him by surprise'). For the second one, however, the choice made is different. In fact, the construction that expresses the flashback also dwells on the atmosphere technically created in the film that makes a regular viewer understand the temporal jump: *nell'incedere tutto le si confonde. Quello che, con stupore, vede nella bara è il volto di suo padre, morto molto giovane. Il particolare clima che la riporta indietro nel tempo trasforma lei in una bambina senza lacrime che si accosta, ormai rassegnata, per deporre su una guancia del genitore il bacio dell'addio. Il richiamo di Crawford riporta Clarice bruscamente alla realtà* ('while slowly proceeding, everything becomes blurred. What she surprisingly sees in the coffin is her father's face, dead when still very young. The particular atmosphere that take her back in time transforms her in a tearless child who, by then already resigned, approaches the coffin to lay on her father's cheek the farewell kiss. Crawford's call takes Clarice abruptly back to reality').

4.4 Language of AD

According to the guidelines mentioned in chapter three, the language used in audio descriptions should be adequate and well-selected. Precision and detail should be expressed by the use of colourful adjectives and adverbs, in order to make images as vivid as possible through words. Nevertheless, oftentimes restrictions of time force to keep the description simple and limited to important actions. The first element analysed is linked to the use of adverbs, adjectives and simile in order to investigate the level of vividness of the language and to what degree the language of the two ADs resorted to the written register.

The use of adverbs and adjectives was analysed on the basis of their frequency and type. The two versions include a limited amount of adverbs, the English one including a slightly greater amount, 23 occurrences compared to 19 of the Italian version. Some examples are: *frettolosamente* ('hurredly'), *bruscamente* ('abruptly'), *affannosamente* ('anxiously'), *tranquillamente* ('calmly'), *alacremente* ('promptly'), *vistosamente* ('garishly'), and, in English, 'flashly', 'nervously', 'uncomfortably', 'dispassionately',

'tenderly', 'rhythmically', 'grotesquely', 'frantically'. The use of adverbs indicates a level of language that moves away from the oral language to approach a more standardised variation, closer to written language, in that they perfect the general meaning conveyed by simple verbs.

Similarly, the choice of a particular type of adjectives shows that the selection is mostly taken from the written register. For instance, in the English AD 17 occurrences of compound adjectives can be found. The oral language generally lacks compound adjectives, complex forms that manage to convey a great amount of information with few words. Some examples are: 'sleeked-back', 'old-fashioned', 'bell-domed', 'cross-legged', 'round-faced', 'brown-stained', 'well-built', 'bean-shaped', 'spiky-haired', 'metal-barred', 'blood-spattered'. Similarly, the position of adjectives in the Italian version indicates that the describer resorted to the written register of the Italian language. In fact, the standard position of adjectives in Italian in the noun group is after the noun they refer to and, while in spoken language the alternative position of adjectives before nouns is due to syntactical requirements of formulaic expressions, in written language the adjectival position before the noun stands for a more creative and free use of language (Arma 2012). Among the 86 adjectives used in the audio description, 39 are placed before the noun they modify, some examples are: *mesta cerimonia* ('sorrowful ceremony'), *borioso Chilton* ('arrogant Chilton'), *placido fiume* ('quiet river'), *belle farfalle* ('beautiful butterflies').

Another interesting point to investigate is the inclusion of colours in the creation of the audio description. Both versions analysed extensively refer to colours, even when mentioning them is apparently irrelevant for the understanding of the story. In the English AD colour is reported in 22 occurrences, e.g. 'dark brown hair', 'black jogging pants', 'red shirts', 'red flesh', 'red and white stripes', 'black and white cat', 'blue bucket', 'white poodle', 'orange-coated men', and 'blond wig'. Similarly, in the Italian AD colour occurs 19 times, e.g. *occhi azzurro ghiaccio* ('ice-blue eyes'), *legno rossiccio* ('reddish wood'), *occhi verdi* ('green eyes'), *bozzolo brunastro* ('brownish cocoon'), *schizzi vermigli* ('vermilion spots'), *pianta verde brillante* ('bright green plant'), *si colora le labbra di rosso aranciato* ('he paints his lips orangey-red') and *lampade termiche azzurro-verdi* ('blue-green heat lamps').

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Further investigation was conducted on the use of similes recommended by the guidelines in order to better reflect the visual nature of the film. Interestingly, the Italian AD resumes to this strategy several times, whereas in the English counterpart no occurrence of metaphors or similes is found. The similes used in Italian are: *come un topo in cerca di cibo* ('like a mouse looking for food') (Fig. 16), *sembra un mostruoso clown* ('he looks like a monstrous clown'), *come una sonnambula* ('like a sleepwalker') (Fig. 17), *come un maestro d'orchestra* ('like an orchestra director'), *pare in volo* ('it seems he is flying'), *come due grandi ali* ('like two big wings'), *agghindato come una prostituta* ('overdressed like a prostitute'), *tesa come una corda di violino* ('tense like a coiled spring'), *simile a una maschera da sub* ('similar to a diver's mask'), *sembra un gatto che abbia intrappolato il topolino in un angolo* ('he looks like a cat that has trapped a mouse in the corner'). The use of similes might lower the register of the language because it compares circumstances to common familiar objects, nevertheless, for the blind and visually impaired audience, it might simplify the process of reconstruction of images by helping the imaginative leap.

As reported in the previous chapter, audio description should be simple, clear and accessible. Nevertheless, descriptions that are too monotonous and standardised could undermine the pleasure of watching a film. Therefore, various strategies can be used to create a more engaging product and the following lines will dwell on some of those found in the audio descriptions analysed.

Firstly, a vivid language that engages the listener can be expressed, for instance, in verb variation. In this case, because of its considerable recurrence in the scripts and crucial role of the action highlighted throughout the whole film, the verb *guardare*, 'to look at / watch' in the English version, and the variation included in the semantic spectrum connected to eye movement, were taken into consideration in order to examine the degree of repetitiveness of the two ADs. In the English script there are 18 occurrences of the verb 'to look at', 21 of the verb 'to see' and 6 of the verb 'to watch'. Beside these basic and common choices, 7 variants were found. These include 4 occurrences of the verb 'to stare', 2 of the verbs 'to glance' and 'to notice', and 1 of the verbs 'to peer', 'to peep', 'to eye' and 'to spy'. Whereas in the Italian script there are only 8 and 9 occurrences of the common verbs *vedere* ('to see') and *guardare* ('to look

at') respectively, while the 12 variants include 5 occurrences of the verb *osservare* ('to observe'), 3 of the verbs *esaminare* ('to examine') and *dare un'occhiata* ('to have a look'), 2 of the verb *fissare* ('to stare') and 1 of the verbs *controllare* ('to look over'), *rimirare* ('to gaze'), *scorgere* ('to catch sight of'), *scrutare* ('scrutinise'), *notare* ('notice'), *rivolgere l'attenzione* ('to direct attention to'), *puntare gli occhi* ('to focus on') and *individuare* ('to identify'). The comparison of the amount of verb variation shows that in the English AD the strategy used is based on more repetition and simplicity, whereas the Italian script includes a greater amount of diversification.

Furthermore, the following lines will dwell on the choices made between the use of pronouns, the repetition of proper nouns, and synonyms when referring to characters. Personal pronouns are a common cohesive device but have to be used carefully considering that, if the reference is not consecutive or clear, it can be confusing for the blind listener. Repetition is also a strong cohesive device, tighter that synonymy, nevertheless it can also be considered monotonous compared to the vividness and engagement synonymy can create. The choices analysed refer to Clarice Starling and Buffalo Bill. In the English AD, right at the beginning while introducing the character, the protagonist is mentioned twice with the term 'woman', 1 with 'Clarice Starling' and 1 with 'Starling', then, once introduced, she always is referred to as 'Clarice', which occurs 84 times. Whereas the character of Buffalo Bill is referred to as 'man' 6 times and 1 as 'the tormentor' before revealing his identity, then, once introduced and called 3 times with the name 'Buffalo Bill', he is always referred to as 'Bill', a name that recurs 23 times. The strategy chosen to deal with the matter in the Italian AD is substantially different. In fact, the protagonist is referred to once with the noun *giovane* ('young woman'), 1 with *ragazza* ('girl'), 5 with *donna* ('woman'), then, once introduced, the proper nouns *Starling* and *Clarice* are used alternately 24 and 48 times. Whereas Buffalo Bill is referred to alternately as *uomo* ('man') 4 times, *scuoiatore di donne* ('man who skins women') twice, *mostro* ('monster') once, *Jame Gumb – alias John Grent* twice, *Buffalo Bill* once and *Bill* 16 times. The analysis shows that in the English version the describer chose to repeat the same expressions rather than use alternative ones, whereas in the Italian counterpart alternative choices occur abundantly throughout the whole script.

Moreover, although the need for an intelligible style promotes the use of short, simple sentences, more variation in sentence structure might be pleasant and engaging for the listener. The results drew from the comparison of the two scripts are analogous, which is peculiar due to the fact that the Italian language is usually expressed through a more complex syntax than the English language. However, in both ADs, paratactic sentences are juxtaposed with hypotactic sentences that occur abundantly. In the Italian script, subordination is frequently expressed through gerund and past participles, whereas in the English script the recurrent structures are expressed through the use of 'as' or of non-finite clauses.

Finally, the amount of words used in the two audio descriptions is slightly different: the English AD includes 5,185 words whereas the Italian AD includes 4,896 words. Given the fact that the English language is usually considered to be more brief and concise than the Italian language, the difference must be connected to the amount of information described and conveyed.

4.5 Violence

Violence is a delicate matter to be taken into consideration while creating an audio description. Graphic images have to be dealt with carefully as, while regular users have the option of looking away from the screen if too sensitive, blind users directly receive an oral description that plays an important role in reconstructing through imagination. Although censorship should always be avoided, including excessive details in the description of brutality might result discomforting and unnecessary. The film analysed presents several violent scenes that involve massacred bodies, cruelty and blood.

The first element investigated is related to Buffalo Bill's practice of skinning women's bodies in order to sew for himself a coverall entirely made of human flesh. Images that show the massacred bodies occur twice in the film, the first time the bodies are shown in the case-file photos hung in Craword's office, and, the second, the body of one of the victims is shown in detail in the autopsy scene, when Clarice and Crawford check the last dead body of a woman found in a river. For the first scene (Fig. 18), the English AD deals with the images accurately by describing what is shown in a manner

that proves to be more exhaustive than the one adopted in the Italian counterpart, which, instead, uses harsh adjectives omitting to describe in detail what the photos represent. The description used in English is 'the photographs are mainly of girl bodies, with patches of raw, red flesh where skin has been cut off – a whole arm, breasts, a back...', while the Italian script reads *fotografie macabre di donne nude, straziate* ('macabre photos of tortured naked women'). For the second scene (Fig. 19), neither ADs describe the body of the dead woman shown in the mortuary chamber but instead they report the reactions of the people attending the autopsy. The scene is however already well described by Clarice who records a detailed account of the autopsy. In this instance, in the English script the sentences used are rather mild, 'the doctor and the undertaker recoil at the stench' and 'Clarice closes her mouth tight, puffing out her upper lip'. The words chosen in Italian highlight the distress the view provokes to a greater extent compared to the English version, particularly for what concerns Clarice: *la vista e l'odore costringono i tre uomini a ritirarsi* ('the view and the stench force the three men to recoil'), *Starling si avvicina titubante per esaminare l'opera del maniaco* ('Starling reluctantly approaches the body to examine the maniac's work'), *alla vista dello scempio, Clarice trattiene a stento le lacrime* ('seeing the massacre, Clarice struggles to hold back tears'). The difference lies in the description of Clarice's reaction, in fact no emotion is mentioned in the English AD, whereas the Italian one includes more subjective hints at her behaviour.

Great violence is also exhibited in the scene of Hannibal Lecter's escape from prison that, beside displaying brutality, blood and dead bodies, is also loaded with suspense and ambiguity tricking the audience until the end. During these happenings Lecter brutally kills the two police officers who guard his cell. The body of the first police officer is arranged by Lecter in a macabre composition, hanging open-armed on the gate of his cell, in a crucified-like position. Then he removes the facial skin from the other in order to cover his own face with it and pretend to be the police officer, although the audience is unaware of it till the end. He then throws the dead body on the top of the lift being sure it will be mistaken for his. Only when taken away on an ambulance in the guise of the police officer, he reveals himself to the audience and, after killing the ambulance staff, manages to run away. The table below shows parallel examples of the

English and Italian descriptions of the scene and images of the scene are shown in Figures 20, 21 and 22.

English AD	Italian AD	Back translation
Hannibal kicks the metal-barred door in the face of the sergeant and leaps on him biting a chunk out of his cheek.	*Con un calcio, Hannibal gli manda la porta in faccia, poi gli afferra il capo e gli pianta i denti su una guancia.*	With a kick, Hannibal pushes the door on his face, then he grabs his head and bites his cheek with his teeth.
He slams the sergeant's head repeatedly on the bars of the cage, releases him then sprays his eyes so he slips, blinded to the floor.	*Tenendolo stretto, sbatte ripetutamente la testa del sergente contro le sbarre e gli riempie gli occhi del gas lacrimogeno sottrattogli in precedenza.*	Holding tight to him, he repeatedly slams the sergeant's head against the bars and fills his eyes with the teargas he had stolen from him before.
His mouth circled in blood, Hannibal turns to the handcuffed and helpless lieutenant. He raises the long truncheon high above his head.	*Mentre il tenente cerca affannosamente le chiavi per liberarsi dalle manette, il detenuto toglie a Penbury, svenuto, lo sfollagente e massacra Boyle.*	While the lieutenant anxiously looks for the keys to free himself from the handcuffs, the prisoner takes the truncheon from Penbury, who fainted, and massacres Boyle.
The lifeless body of the lieutenant is lying in a pool of blood, on the floor of the cage, one hand still cuffed to the bars, the contents of his pockets and the long handled truncheon beside him. The blood-spattered figure of Hannibal Lecter is standing, eyes closed, rhythmically swaying to the music coming from the cassette-player.	*Compiuta l'opera Hannibal riavvia il registratore e, come un maestro d'orchestra in estasi, accompagna con la mano destra la musica. Ha la faccia piena di sangue, gli schizzi vermigli gli sporcano la fonte stempiata. Boyle è a terra, in una pozzanghera rossa.*	Having finished his work, Hannibal turns on the cassette-player and follows the music with his right hand like a thrilled orchestra director. His face is full of blood, vermilion spots cover his balding forehead. Boyle is on the floor in a red puddle.
Lieutenant Boyle is crucified on the cage bars, his stomach cut open, his insides removed.	*[...] si intravede la figura di un essere che pare in volo. Il gruppo di agenti scopre il tenente Boyle appeso, con le braccia aperte, alla parete della gabbia. Una lunga bandiera gli corre tra le mani e dietro la schiena accentuando l'impressione di due grandi ali. Boyle ha la cavità toracica svuotata.*	[...] it is possible to distinguish the figure of a person that seems flying. The group of agents discovers lieutenant Boyle hanging on the bars of the cage, with his hand open. He is holding a long flag with his hands that spreads behind his back, emphasizing the impression of two big wings. Boyle's thoracic cavity has been emptied.
Penbury is lying on his back, his head in a pool of blood. His face is covered in blood.	*Penbury è steso a terra con il volto completamente senza pelle.*	Penbury is lying on the floor, the skin of his face completely removed.
[...] a bloodstained figure face down on the elevator roof.	*[...] vedere dall'alto la schiena insanguinata di Lecter steso sulla pancia.*	[...] to see from above the bloody back of Lecter face down.
Penbury rises, peeling the bloody skin from his face. Revealing... Lecter!	*Il ferito si leva la maschera fatta con la pelle del volto di Penbury.*	The wounded takes off the mask made with Penbury's facial skin.

Table 1: Examples of the English and Italian ADs of a scene that involves great violence and suspense.

The comparison shows that in the English AD the description is simpler, unencumbered by obscure formulation and unnecessary pomp, it formulates the disclosure of the events in a linear manner, whereas the structure of the Italian AD is slightly more complex and embellished with similes, adjectives and adverbs. Moreover, in the Italian AD, the final description presents some incoherence resulting in an inaccurate and obscure report of the facts. Firstly, Penbury's face is not skinned, in fact it is Lecter who lies down on the floor with the officer's facial skin over his face. Secondly, mentioning Lecter's name when describing the dead body on the top of the lift can lead to wrong deductions, whereas in English the man is described generally as 'a bloodstained figure'. Finally, the sentence that describes the disclosure of the events reveals the happenings only implicitly, therefore leaving the blind and visually impaired audience to understand the actions through the other aural elements and the dialogues of the film, that do not clearly indicate what has happened. The strategy adopted in the Italian AD might result confusing. On the other hand, it might enhance the sensation of suspense and intrigue in the listeners' imagination and it can be considered more dynamic and engaging.

4.6 Relevance, objectivity and understanding of the film

A detailed analysis of the film and the comparison of the two audio descriptions revealed additional points of interest that are worth mentioning in this study.

   To begin with, it is interesting to investigate how the two audio descriptions have dealt with some of the details the director chose to stress visually through the use of close-up shots, thus treating them as hints for the audience, who, in this way, might connect pieces of information and solve the intricate plot. The first example concerns Hannibal Lecter and Chilton, the director of the hospital the psychiatrist was confined in. Although Chilton should be a professional doctor, his mental twists make him treat Lecter harshly and spitefully, with the consequence of increasing Lecter's desire of revenge. Curiously, it is Chilton himself who gives the prisoner the elements he needs to escape by forgetting by mistake his pen in Lecter's cell. In the film, before Lecter uses the pen to open his handcuffs and escape, the director chose to highlight Chilton's mistake stressing with close-up shots the pen laid on Lecter's bed (Fig. 23) and Chilton

vainly searching his pockets for his pen soon afterwards. The two ADs deal with the visual hints in a different manner. The English description might result clearer because the events described are well connected thanks to the repetition of 'Chilton's pen' in every sentence that report the event. In fact, already in Lecter's cell the listener discovers through the prisoner's gaze that the pen has been left on the bed, 'he spies Chilton's pen', soon after, the description continues with the sentence 'Chilton can't find the pen he last had in Hannibal's cell', to end explicitly with 'Lecter meanwhile disgorges from his mouth the clip-on part of Chilton's pen'. In the Italian script the correlation of the events is less obvious. The strategy used in the first part of the description that concerns the pen is clear enough: *all'aeroporto internazionale di Memphis, Chilton cerca inutilmente la sua penna. Lecter sa bene che il dottore l'ha dimenticata sul lettino della sua cella* ('at Memphis International Airport, Chilton vainly looks for his pen. Lecter knows well that the doctor has forgotten it on the bed of his cell'). But, when the pen reappears on the screen from Lecter's mouth, it is introduced by an indefinite article and no explicit description, which makes the link between the elements weak: *Lecter li ascolta impassibile, succhiando un pennino. Hannibal infila il pezzetto di metallo nella serratura delle manette* ('Lecter, impassive, listens to them, while sucking the nib of a pen. Hannibal inserts the little piece of metal in the handcuffs lock'). Moreover, in the Italian AD, there is no reference to the long close-up shot of the pen laid on the bed in Lecter's cell, that is the very first hint helping the disclosure of the events.

The second example worth reporting concerns Clarice's realisation of Buffalo Bill's plan. The elements connected are the two large diamond-shaped cuts on one of the victims' body (Fig. 24) and a dress sewed by Frederika, the first victim, that has two diamond shaped patches attached (Fig. 25). In the film, the director zooms in till shooting a close-up of the image of the two patches and soon afterwards shows Clarice telling Crawford her deduction: Buffalo Bill is sewing a coverall with pieces of women's skin. Like the example shown before, this close-up shot hints at the explanation of the events and creates connections. The image of the skinned back of the dead body is described by Clarice and, therefore, not mentioned in the audio descriptions. The detail of the sewed dress, on the other hand, is reported in the English

AD as 'the inquisitive Clarice, opens it and finds dresses in it. One in particular has two white diamond shapes pinned to the thighs...', whereas this is completely omitted from the Italian AD. The English description of the diamond shapes pinned to the dress exactly corresponds to the description of the dead body reported by Clarice, who describes that the skin is removed in two large diamond-shape sections, thus making it easier for the blind and visually impaired audience to link the two occurrences.

Furthermore, in both audio descriptions, there is no allusion to the not crucial but interesting subtle connection between the Death's-head Hawk moth, *lepidottero testa di morto* in Italian, and the character of Buffalo Bill. The serial-killer illegally imports the bug's cocoons, grows them in his house and, before disposing of the bodies killed, inserts a moth in the victims' throat. Beside the implied meaning of the moth that refers to transformation and changing, this particular species has a skull-like drawing on the back of the head, an image that was also chosen for the film poster. The skull-like drawing is perfectly visible in the film through a close-up shot of the vivisection of one of the moths found in the throat of one of the victims (Fig. 26) and surely it enhances the artistic experience of the audience who can draw a fine and elegant connection between the animal and Buffalo Bill. Unfortunately, neither ADs mention it, imaginably because the scene at issue is dense with dialogues thus leaving very little space for description.

Both audio descriptions include several instances that can be considered subjective. This coincides with controversial cases where the difference between objectivity and subjectivity is less obvious and where an objective description would be impossible due to time constraints. These cases often coincide with the use of evaluative adjectives and adverbs, and the description of facial expressions. Some examples retrieved from the English AD are: 'smiling insincerely', 'he dances grotesquely', 'beautiful countryside', 'flashily dressed', and 'Clarice looks hurt'. Examples retrieved from the Italian AD are: *bel maglione* ('pretty sweater'), *bella vetrina* ('beautiful shop window'), *bella Clarice* ('beautiful Clarice'), *gesto gentile* ('kind gesture') and *sguardo perplesso* ('perplexed look'). Moreover, the Italian AD offers several very subjective interpretations of facts to its audience, adding judgements of value to the mere description of facts. For instance, the Polaroid photographs that Clarice finds hidden in the first victim's bedroom, show

Frederika dressed only in her underwear posing for a mysterious photographer (Fig. 27). The Italian audio describer reported that Frederika *pare vergognarsi di quella situazione e si nasconde come può con le mani, nonostante la sua biancheria intima la protegga già decorosamente* ('it seems like Frederika is embarrassed by the situation and she tries to cover herself with her hands, although her underwear covers her body appropriately'). Another example is retrieved from the very end of the film, when, at Clarice's graduation ceremony, Crawford congratulates her by shaking her proffered hand. The scene is reported as follows: *Jack le stringe, un po' troppo a lungo, la mano* ('Jack shakes her hand for a bit too long').

Finally, the Italian AD includes a small incoherence subject to criticism, which is probably due to a wrong interpretation of the images shown in the film. One of the last scenes of the film displays Clarice in Buffalo Bill's house. In the pitch dark, maze-like basement, the assassin follows Clarice; she is completely lost and unable to see anything while he can see her thanks to his infra-red night-sight glasses. The audience sees Clarice from his point of view, therefore the images are shot under green light as if seen through the binoculars (Fig. 28). The Italian audio describer reports that there is a glass panel between the two characters, while, in reality, there is no glass at all and it is the infra-red light, instead, that creates the strange atmosphere. The scene is described as follows: *Bill […] osserva, dall'altra parte di un vetro, la donna tremante* ('From the other side of a glass panel, Bill observes the quivering woman'), *Bill si avvicina alla parete di vetro che lo separa da Clarice* ('Bill gets closer to the glass panel that separates him from Clarice'), *i colpi sparati in rapida successione infrangono il vetro e stendono l'uomo* ('the shots blown rapidly break the glass panel and kill the man').

5 Results

The comparison of the Italian and English audio descriptions of the same film drew interesting observations on the dissimilarities in the attitude the different countries adopt while verbalising an audio description.

First of all, the strategies used in the description of the characters differ considerably in the two versions. The English AD is undoubtedly more objective and technical than the Italian counterpart, which conforms to the mere description of what is seen to a lesser extent. In fact, especially while describing characters and their actions, the Italian describer chose to include explicit statements about their feelings or reactions while the English counterpart remained loyal to reporting exclusively what is tangible. The examples compared in the analysis concern Clarice Starling, the protagonist, Hannibal Lecter and Buffalo Bill. In the examples showed, for instance, the Italian audio description explains the meaning of various behaviours or actions in a more subjective manner, directly describing what is most of the time inferred by the character's gazes, their facial expressions or gestures. Otherwise, in the English counterpart the same feelings are implied through the use of adjectives that describe eyes or through factual descriptions of gestures and faces, thus leaving more space for interpretation. Moreover, when dealing with characters, the Italian subjectivity is increased by the abundant use of similes that, although stimulating the imagination, also powerfully channel it into one direction. The copious amount of references to the characters' personality included in the Italian AD replaces the description of the characters' physical and external appearance, which is almost non-existent. Differently, the English AD includes at least a few particular external features of the main characters. According to the ADLAB guidelines, characters' fundamental traits should be conveyed describing what reveals them rather than drawing subjective conclusions. The English description conforms to the guidelines and the film director's intention mainly by describing the characters objectively and especially lingering on their eyes. The Italian description results in a more colourful presentation but leaves the audience less room for interpretation.

Settings and time lapses are well reported in both audio descriptions which differ only slightly. For instance, places that might be unfamiliar to the Italian audience, such as Washington DC and the Bahamas, are left implicit and described only generally in

the Italian AD. Flashbacks, on the other hand, are described in the Italian version including the visual technical strategies used to introduce the temporal jump, in accordance with the examples reported in the Italian guidelines (Busarello, Sordo, 2011: 15). Differently, the English description does not include any and only reports what the character is thinking back at.

As suggested by several research and the European guidelines, a thorough analysis of the source text and its content is essential in order to create a target text that mirrors the original product. Important and crucial features of the film *The Silence of the Lambs*, the understanding and description of which might not be organised easily and linearly, are the use of suspense and hints that mislead the audience, considerable exhibition of violence, the delicate topic of transsexualism, the abundant close-up shots and the recurrent use of Clarice Starling's point of view shot.

The method through which suspense is dealt with is chosen differently. The examples taken into consideration are Crawford and Clarice's arrival at Buffalo Bill's house and Hannibal Lecter's escape from prison, both built up by the director in order to confuse and shock the audience with interesting filmic strategies. The English description deals with the construction of suspense in a precise manner, alluding to facts at the beginning then untangling the happenings with an explicative final sentence. Whereas the approach of the Italian AD might result slightly confusing. In fact, the reconstruction of the scenes includes both explicit and implicit statements that might disorient the audience, while the final development is kept concealed and vague so that the blind audience's understanding of the situation might take longer.

Additionally, the violent traits of the film, especially the description of the massacred bodies, are described less impartially in the Italian script, as often the descriptions do not dwell on the real images but on the feeling those images might provoke.

The only hint at transsexualism included in the Italian AD might be considered a bit ventured and impolite beside being rather subjective, especially because a description of the character's physical appearance is absent. As shown in the analysis of the film, the topic of transsexualism is quite complex and requires a deep understanding of the original film maker's idea in order to be interpreted. The two ADs cover the issue rather superficially, although this is a very important part of the film.

Furthermore, the film director chose to include numerous close-up shots used as a strategy to focus the attention on various elements. Many are the close-ups on the characters' faces and eyes, as if the film director wanted the audience to enter their inner self. In order to report these very visual elements, the strategy used in the English AD entails the use of abundant descriptions of the characters' eyes, whereas in the Italian AD very few adjectives related to sight can be found. Close-up shots are also employed by the film director in order to give the audience hints that better explain features of the film or forewarn of subsequent revelations and disentanglement of the events. None of the four examples shown – the pen used to break the handcuffs open, the diamond-shaped patches cut from the body and pinned on the dress, the skull-like drawing on the back of the moth and the tattoo representing the word LOVE – are reported in the Italian AD. The only exception is the pen, although the report of the connections is rather vague and the description does not match the time when the close-up shot is displayed.

Finally, understanding that the point of view from which the story is disclosed is the protagonist's also requires a deep analysis of the film. The strategy used in the Italian AD is rather mild and does not stress the feature enough. Differently, in the English description there is a recurrent use of adjectives, nouns and verbs retrieved from the semantic spectrum linked to eye movement and connected to the protagonist either as subject or agent of the action.

For what concerns the language used in the audio descriptions, the analysis of the linguistic aspects showed that both of the audio descriptions resorted to the written register, indeed by abundantly using adverbs, compound adjectives in the English script and adjectives positioned before the noun in the Italian script, and subordinate constructions. Nevertheless, the Italian description proves to rely to a greater extent on the written literary tradition of the country. In fact, the Italian AD favours a structure that is more refined, garnished and less repetitive, preferring linguistic choices that give a literary allure to the final product. Moreover, the interpretation of events is oriented towards a more subjective reading that, together with an embellished structure, enhances the narrative mood of the text.

Moreover, the vocabulary of the Italian AD is structured and chosen in order to create more variety and less repetition than the English counterpart. In fact, the quantitative

analysis drew from the comparison of the occurrences of the verbs 'to look at' and 'to see', *guardare* and *vedere* in Italian, showed more diversification of the terms chosen and a greater use of synonyms. Similar results were obtained from the quantitative analysis of proper nouns used to refer to characters, as indeed the Italian AD shows more variety and interchange, preferred to the disadvantage of redundancy.

In conclusion the results of the analysis reveal that the English audio description is standardised, unruffled and objective, whereas the Italian audio description is embellished, inventive and more subjective. The Italian AD, although distancing from the European standards, might prove to be more engaging and artistic, adapting its structure to the expectations of the Italian public who might better enjoy to listen to a varied and dynamic audio description. The results are consistent with previous comparative analyses of the Italian language in audio description (e.g. Arma, 2012) and to the Italian guidelines published by *Senza Barriere – ONLUS*, that, in fact, read: "the final described product should have a tale-like structure"[42] (Busarello, Sordo, 2011: 23).

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42   My translation from the Italian: "La realizzazione dei testi descrittivi deve essere una narrazione".

Conclusions

The comparative analysis of the Italian and English audio descriptions of the film *The Silence of the Lambs* showed that the Italian product differs from the English one in several ways. In fact, compared to the English version, the Italian audio description proved to be less objective, more various and less repetitive, its language taken from the higher written register and its mode more narrative than descriptive. Its features slightly deviate from the standards imposed by the ADLAB project, producer of the most recent set of European guidelines, and from the longer tradition of audio description in the English language.

However, as the creation of audio descriptions strictly depends on the target group it addresses, the differences the Italian audio description presents might reveal that the Italian audience requires and is accustomed to a specific product that considers the artistic and literary traditions of the country. Consequently, this analysis should be included in a broader comparative analysis that involves more data and draws more exhaustive results. Most importantly, it should be juxtaposed with research on the reception of audio description by the Italian audience that investigate on their preferences, information-processing capacities and story reconstruction process.

Moreover, in Italy, audio description is a rather recent practice, professionals and researchers are still slowly developing this field of expertise and the offer of audio described products is only now becoming more copious, although they have not yet reached the standards of other European countries. Due to these reasons, the majority of the Italian audio describers might still be in a training phase and, as practice makes perfect, an Italian tradition of audio description might still not be in force.

Additionally, audio description is scarcely developed in Italy both from a practical and an academic perspective due to the fact that it is barely supported on the national level by legislation and initiatives made to measure. Recent developments are mostly due to private initiatives and separated groups of people who succeeded in finding alternatives to bypass the lack of an official stance on the matter public institutions have not yet taken. Furthermore, creating a representative centre which professionals and organisations can refer to at a national level, might facilitate exchanges and

collaboration among all the groups that are now working on audio description individually.

Another important flaw of the Italian area is linked to the very scarce knowledge the Italian population shares on the matter and to the low visibility audio description and, more generally, sensory disability have in the country. This is evident, for instance, from the scanty number of theatres that responded to the plea of the association *Isiviù*: they organise events and supply audio descriptions free of charge but so far only two theatres have joined the network.

The democratic society people have built cannot leave some individuals behind; full inclusion into every aspect of the system should be of the utmost importance and, hopefully, this will be the direction towards which Italy is going.

Appendix

4. La Rai:
a) incrementa progressivamente, nell'arco del triennio di vigenza del presente Contrat volume della programmazione sottotitolata fino al raggiungimento nel 2012 di una quot ad almeno il 70 per cento della programmazione complessiva delle reti generaliste tra 6,00 e le ore 24,00, al netto dei messaggi pubblicitari e di servizio (annunci, sigle, ecc.);

b) amplia progressivamente la sottotitolazione ai diversi generi di programmazione inc programmi culturali, di attualità, di approfondimento politico, di sport e di intrattenimenti

c) incrementa progressivamente l'offerta di programmazione audiodescritta, garantendo e stessa, così come l'offerta in modalità telesoftware, possa essere effettivamente ricevi tutto il territorio nazionale;

d) promuove la ricerca tecnologica al fine di favorire l'accessibilità dell'offerta multimedial persone con disabilità e con ridotte capacità sensoriali e cognitive, in collaborazione cor istituzioni e associazioni del mondo delle persone con disabilità;

e) riferisce periodicamente al Ministero, all'Autorità, alla Commissione Parlamentare e alla di confronto sulla programmazione sociale, in merito all'attività svolta, nonché se tempestivamente alla commissione paritetica di cui all'articolo 29 eventuali problemi connesse alla programmazione di cui al presente articolo.

Figure 1: Contratto di Servizio 2010-2012 - Section 13, Paragraph 4, page 89. Available at www.rai.it/dl/docs/1417011597240Contratto-servizio-Rai-2010-2012.pdf

4. La Rai si impegna a:
a) produrre un volume della programmazione sottotitolata pari almeno al 70 per cento della programmazione complessiva delle reti generaliste tra le ore 6,00 e le ore 24,00, al netto dei messaggi pubblicitari e di servizio (annunci, sigle, ecc.);

b) promuovere la ricerca tecnologica al fine di favorire l'accessibilità dell'offerta multimediale alle persone con disabilità e con ridotte capacità sensoriali e cognitive, in collaborazione con enti, istituzioni e associazioni del mondo delle persone con disabilità;

c) incrementare progressivamente l'offerta di programmazione audiodescritta, garantendo che la stessa, così come l'offerta di un palinsesto web per le persone non vedenti (già tele software), possa essere effettivamente ricevuta su tutto il territorio nazionale;

d) riferire periodicamente al Ministero, all'Autorità, alla Commissione Parlamentare e alla Sede di confronto sulla programmazione sociale, in merito all'attività svolta;

e) operare gradualmente, entro il termine di scadenza del presente Contratto per sottotitolare le produzioni e co-produzioni previste dall'art.6, comma 2, lettera h).

Figure 2: Draft of Contratto di Servizio 2013-2015 - Section 11, Paragraph 4, page 17. Available at www.senato.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/BGT/728626.pdf
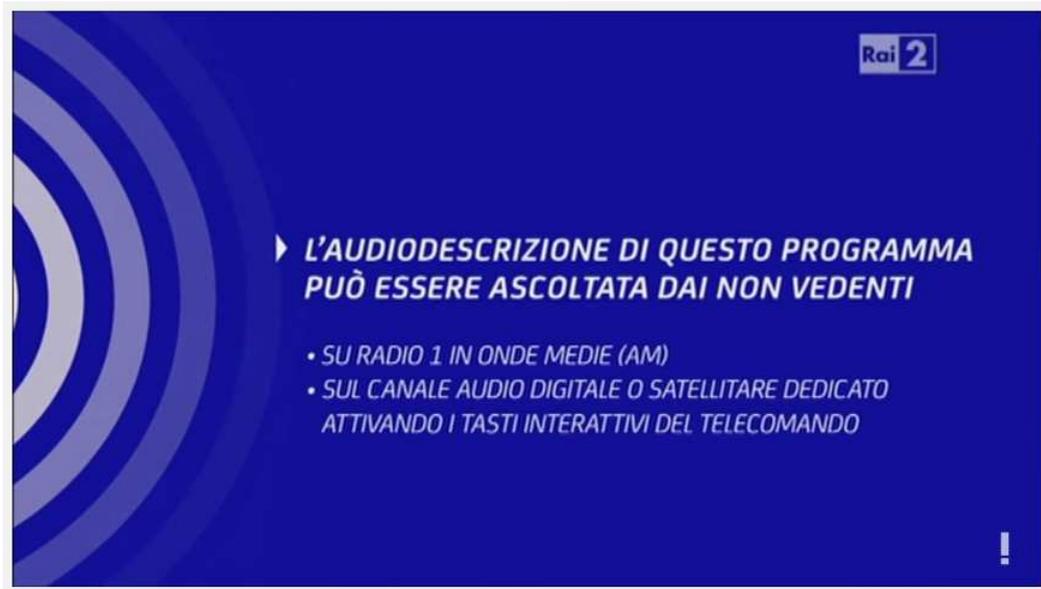
Figure 3: AD notice on RAI channels. Available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=dV0JPb3pHf0:
The audio description of this programme can be listened to by blind people on medium-wave radio
station 1 or on the reserved digital or satellite audio channel by enabling the interactive buttons of
the remote control.

Figure 4: Close-up shot of Clarice Starling.

Figure 5: First appearance of Clarice Starling.

Figure 6: Close-up shot of Dr Hannibal Lecter.

Figure 7: Hannibal Lecter's expression described in the Italian AD as *sorride sornione* ('he smiles slyly').

Figure 8: Scene described in the Italian AD resorting to the use of a simile: *come un mostruoso clown* ('as a monstrous clown').

Figure 9: Scene described in the Italian AD resorting to the use of a simile: *come un maestro d'orchestra in estasi* ('as a ravished orchestra leader').

Figure 10: First appearance of Hannibal Lecter in the film.

Figure 11: Close-up shot of Buffalo Bill's eyes observing his victim.

Figure 12: Tattoo on Buffalo Bill's hand of which the description is omitted in the Italian AD.

Figure 13: Buffalo Bill cross-dressed dancing in from of a camera.

Figure 14: The audience understands the city shown is Washington DC because of the well known skyline that displays the Washington Memorial and the Capitol Building. In the English AD the description reports in detail the name of the city and the monuments lit up, whereas the Italian AD only reports that a big city is shown.

Figure 15: the Bahamas, geographical place left implicit in the Italian AD.

Figure 16: Lecter sniffs the air, described in Italian through the use of a simile, *come un topo in cerca di cibo* ('as a mouse looking for food').

Figure 17: Scene reported in the Italian AD with a simile, *come una sonnambula ('as a sleepwalker').*

Figure 18: Photos of the women skinned by Buffalo Bill.

Figure 19: Detail of the autopsy in which Clarice and Crawford participate.

Figure 20: Great violence exhibited by Lecter in the scene of his escape from prison.

Figure 21: Police officer killed and hung by Hannibal Lecter. Scene described with similes in the Italian AD, *pare in volo* ('it seems he is flying'), *come due grandi ali* ('like two big wings').

Figure 22: Hannibal Lecter reveals himself taking off the mask made of the police offer face.

Figure 23: Close-up shot on the pen Chilton forgets in Lecter's cell, the image hints at the fact that Lecter will eventually use it to escape from prison.

Figure 24: The two diamond-shaped sections removed from the victim's body by Buffalo Bill. The shape is similar to what found by Clarice in Frederika's house.

Figure 25: Diamond-shaped patches found by Clarice in Frederika's house. The image hints at Buffalo Bill's plan of sewing with human flesh.

Figure 26: Vivisection of the Death's-head Hawk moth found in one of the victim's throat, close-up shot of the skull-like drawing on the back of the moth.

Figure 27: Polaroid photographs found by Clarice hidden in the first victim's bedroom, that show Frederika dressed only in her underwear.

Figure 28: Buffalo Bill sees Clarice through his infra-red night-sight glasses in his pitch dark basement. In the Italian AD the image is misunderstood and described as if there was a glass panel between the two characters.

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Riassunto

Negli ultimi decenni, la società globale è stata interessata da notevoli e rapidi mutamenti che agiscono su diversi livelli. L'ambito il cui sviluppo ha avuto un impatto rilevante e molteplici conseguenze su diversi aspetti sociali riguarda la rete di telecomunicazioni. Le trasformazioni legate al progresso tecnologico nell'ambito comunicativo interessano la modalità e la qualità della circolazione delle informazioni, che ha ora la possibilità di raggiungere vaste aree geografiche e la popolazione a livello globale, di essere rapida, efficiente, sia dal punto di vista dei mezzi attraverso i quali viene trasmessa, sia per la natura in sé del prodotto ora usato per comunicare. Infatti, grazie allo sviluppo della nuova telecomunicazione, relazioni interpersonali con individui distanti, archiviazione e trasmissione di una quantità crescente di informazioni, accesso a cultura e informazione estesa a più membri della società globale sono ora possibili. Inoltre, la forma del moderno tipo di informazione sfrutta molteplici canali, come quello visivo e uditivo, e permette uno scambio rapido e molto completo di vari contenuti.

La complessità del tipo di prodotti utilizzati come mezzo informativo e il pubblico sempre più allargato al quale essi sono indirizzati, sono in stretta relazione con lo sviluppo degli studi sulla traduzione audiovisiva. Nell'intento di creare una società interconnessa a livello globale e uno scambio di informazioni facilmente accessibili, la traduzione audiovisiva gioca un ruolo fondamentale per superare le barriere linguistiche e geografiche e facilitare la diffusione delle informazioni. La traduzione audiovisiva agisce su prodotti complessi, formati da componenti visive e uditive, e, nonostante generalmente operi solo sull'elemento linguistico, non può non tenere in considerazione la complessità dovuta all'interconnessione di vari elementi per poter ricreare un prodotto coerente al suo interno. La traduzione audiovisiva opera su prodotti multimediali di diversa natura, film, serie televisive, cartoni animati, sitcom, telenovelas e documentari, la cui quantità è in costante aumento e il mercato per il quale sono pensati sempre più vasto, e programmi di attualità, come telegiornali, discorsi politici, interviste e simili, che coinvolgono sempre più la popolazione a livello globale.

Le varie tecniche di tradizione si dividono normalmente tra sostituzione del dialogo originale o aggiunta di testo scritto. Per il primo approccio le tecniche sviluppate sono il doppiaggio, il voice-over, la narrazione e il commento libero. Tutte prevedono una

modifica della componente uditiva del prodotto audiovisivo attraverso la sostituzione completa o parziale della traccia audio originale. Il secondo approccio invece, utilizzato dalla tecnica del sottotitolaggio, prevede un'aggiunta di testo scritto e non modifica in alcun modo la traccia audio originale.

Oltre a operare verso l'inclusione sociale dal punto di vista geografico e linguistico, la traduzione audiovisiva ha recentemente allargato i suoi confini, includendo tematiche quali l'accessibilità inerente alla possibilità per i disabili sensoriali di usufruire dei prodotti audiovisivi. Le tecniche sviluppate sono il sottotitolaggio per i non udenti e l'audiodescrizione per i non vedenti. Il sottotitolaggio per i non udenti differisce dal normale sottotitolaggio perché, oltre a non prevedere una traduzione dei dialoghi ma solo una totale o parziale trascrizione, include informazioni extra linguistiche trasmesse attraverso il canale uditivo che contribuiscono alla comprensione del prodotto audiovisivo. Il sottotitolaggio per non udenti è utilizzato in ambito televisivo, cinematografico e teatrale.

L'audiodescrizione per i non vedenti, argomento principale di questo studio, è stata sviluppata più recentemente rispetto al sottotitolaggio per i non udenti e per questo l'offerta disponibile varia notevolmente da paese a paese e la tecnica è ancora soggetta a studi e modifiche volte a migliorarne l'efficienza. Per esempio, in Italia, la prima testimonianza risale al 1991, quando, in collaborazione con diverse parti, la televisione nazionale italiana RAI riuscì a offrire il primo film audiodescritto al pubblico cieco italiano. Da allora il progetto è progredito in modo discontinuo e ancora oggi l'offerta di materiale audiodescritto in televisione non arriva a essere pienamente soddisfacente. Scarsi sono anche gli esempi di prodotti audiovisivi audiodescritti per il cinema e il teatro. Nonostante gli sforzi per migliorare l'offerta a livello nazionale mossi da varie associazioni, la mancanza di una normativa e leggi nazionali e lo scarso supporto delle parti governative impediscono un progresso continuo e consistente. Malgrado queste difficoltà, apprezzabili sono le numerose iniziative dei vari gruppi indipendenti presenti su tutto il territorio italiano. Per esempio, la cooperativa Senza Barriere ONLUS ha aperto nel 2004 la prima e unica cineteca italiana per non vedenti, inviando su tutto il territorio nazionale audio film di vario genere. Altro interessante progetto è l'applicazione per tablet e smartphone MovieReading che, grazie ad accordi con le

maggiori case produttrici di film italiane, offre audiodescrizioni di film in contemporanea con la loro uscita nelle sale cinematografiche, scaricabili sul personale dispositivo elettronico e automaticamente sincronizzabili con la traccia originale del film.

Anche la ricerca accademica sul tema ha difficoltà di sviluppo in Italia, mentre a livello europeo si sta evolvendo rapidamente, caratterizzata dal fermento tipico delle nuove aree di studio che necessitano di sviluppi rapidi per provvedere all'offerta a lungo assente di un servizio necessario nella società. Il progetto europeo ADLAB, per esempio, è convogliato nella pubblicazione, nel 2015, di linee guida europee nell'intento di creare uno standard della tecnica traduttiva al quale poter fare riferimento. In generale l'audiodescrizione si propone di comunicare verbalmente le informazioni trasmesse attraverso il canale visivo, quindi non accessibili dai non vedenti, creando una traccia audio da inserire nelle pause silenziose di un prodotto audiovisivo. Le complessità sono molteplici: la dimensione polisemiotica del prodotto audiovisivo deve essere trasformata in un'entità monosemiotica, la creazione di un'audiodescrizione implica un lavoro di analisi del prodotto la cui interpretazione è resa complicata dalla natura multimendiale del testo, e l'aggiunta di materiale uditivo, l'audiodescrizione, è limitata dai tempi prestabiliti del prodotto originale implicando quindi un processo di selezione delle informazioni da inserire tra i dialoghi e le parti rilevanti della colonna sonora.

Le difficoltà sono molteplici e aumentano se il prodotto originale è un film, la cui comprensione non è sempre lineare a causa della densità di significato, spesso resa complicata da intrecci, escamotage artistici e dalla natura denotativa o connotativa delle informazioni. Un'analisi approfondita del testo originale e la sua completa comprensione sono fondamentali per il processo decisionale che si occupa di selezionare le informazioni da audiodescrivere e il modo, esplicito o implicito, di trasmetterle. Rilevanza e oggettività sono temi centrali dell'attuale ricerca sull'audiodescrizione e sono strettamente collegati all'analisi del film. È necessario individuare la priorità che ogni elemento visivo ha all'interno di un film, con l'obiettivo di ricreare un prodotto che sia completo, coerente e comprensibile. Inoltre, per quanto riguarda la modalità di trasmissione dell'informazione, il dibattito tra gli studiosi rimane ancora diviso tra chi predilige un approccio completamente oggettivo, quindi

descrivendo in dettaglio solo ciò che è fattuale, e chi avanza ipotesi sulla possibilità di esprimere soggettivamente alcune informazioni, per questioni di restrizione dovute al tempo disponibile, per universalità di, ad esempio, emozioni comuni come rabbia o gioia, e per, dal punto di vista stilistico, poter ricreare un prodotto che non sia prettamente tecnico ma includa una componente artistica piacevole per il pubblico cieco.

In particolare per quanto riguarda l'audiodescrizione di film, il corpo principale del lavoro si basa su quattro punti fondamentali: cosa audiodescrivere, quando inserire l'audiodescrizione, quale quantità di informazione e in che modo trasmetterla.

In generale, gli elementi da audiodescrivere sono le immagini – i personaggi, le loro azioni e le componenti spazio-temporali –, i suoni difficilmente riconoscibili e le parti di testo presenti sullo schermo. Il processo decisionale non è lineare, le immagini possono trasmettere una grande quantità di informazioni spesso difficili da rendere attraverso una descrizione sintetica e rapida. Difficilmente è possibile descrivere tutto e spesso una quantità eccessiva di informazioni può essere fastidiosa per l'utente, per questo la selezione delle informazioni è un processo impegnativo. Inoltre, coordinare lo spazio, il tempo e le informazioni audiodescritte può non essere un processo semplice, nonostante sia molto importante considerando il fatto che un utente non vedente o ipovedente non ha bisogno di ricevere più informazioni di un utente normale: offrire uno spazio per l'interpretazione è di fondamentale importanza. Per quanto riguarda la lingua dell'audiodescrizione, le linee guida europee suggeriscono di utilizzare un vocabolario succinto, vivido, meticoloso e concreto, prediligendo però la varietà lessicale alla ripetizione monotona. È preferibile utilizzare una grammatica e una sintassi semplice e facilmente comprensibile, attraverso l'utilizzo, per esempio, di verbi al tempo presente e frasi semplici e coincise. Nonostante questo, più variazione e complessità nella struttura della frasi può risultare in un prodotto finito più coinvolgente e meno monotono.

La parte principale del lavoro di tesi verte sull'analisi comparativa delle audiodescrizioni inglese e italiana dello stesso film, *Il silenzio degli innocenti,* diretto da Jonathan Demme. La versione italiana è basata sulla versione doppiata del film, quindi non una traduzione di quella inglese. Il testo dell'audiodescrizione inglese è stato reperito grazie al progetto TIWO e a Andrew Salway, mentre il testo

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dell'audiodescrizione italiana è stato prodotto dalla cooperativa Senza Barriere ONLUS e ottenuto grazie a Eraldo Busarello.

La scelta del film è legata alla disponibilità di entrambe le versioni, italiana e inglese, ma si è dimostrata pertinente e interessante per il fatto che il film comprende diverse caratteristiche significative per l'ambito di studio, rendendo quindi interessante indagare i modi in cui vari elementi sono stati affrontati nelle due versioni. Le complessità che gli audiodescrittori possono aver riscontrato durante la stesura del testo sono legate alla presenza di tematiche delicate, quali la violenza e la transessualità, ma anche dovute a complesse tecniche filmiche utilizzate, per lo più veicolate attraverso il canale visivo. Per esempio, la strategia utilizzata per creare suspense si basa sull'intreccio di luoghi geografici o personaggi noti e sconosciuti che suggerisce informazioni fallaci e finisce per sorprendere il pubblico. Inoltre, la psicologia dei personaggi è centrale nello svolgimento dell'intreccio ed è approfondita ampiamente sia attraverso i dialoghi sia attraverso il canale visivo grazie all'utilizzo di lunghi primi piani degli occhi e volti dei personaggi. Gli sguardi dei personaggi sono infatti utilizzati per mostrare le loro reazioni al mondo che li circonda, strategia particolarmente utilizzata per i tre personaggi principali. Infine, il punto di vista della protagonista, Clarice, è utilizzato per mostrare la maggior parte delle scene del film, nel tentativo di mostrare al pubblico ciò che i suoi occhi vedono.

L'analisi si basa sui testi delle audiodescrizioni e per questo non include informazioni su tono, intonazione e velocità delle voci degli audiodescrittori. Gli aspetti analizzati riguardano le modalità descrittive usate per i personaggi, le loro azioni e le sequenze spazio-temporali, le scelte lessicali, grammaticali e sintattiche, indagate attraverso una breve analisi qualitativa e quantitativa, la selezione delle informazioni audiodescritte e il grado di oggettività usato nel riportarle. I parametri dell'analisi coincidono con le linee guida proposte dal progetto ADLAB, le quali sono utilizzate per verificare il livello di aderenza delle due versioni allo standard europeo.

Il film, distribuito negli Stati Uniti nel 1991, appartiene al genere horror/thriller ed è basato sull'omonimo romanzo scritto da Thomas Harris. La storia verte su tre personaggi principali: Clarice Starling, studentessa dell'accademia dell'FBI, Hannibal Lecter, psichiatra e assassino seriale, e Jame Gumb, soprannominato Buffalo Bill,

assassino seriale ricercato. L'FBI sta indagando sugli assassinii di Buffalo Bill, che, seguendo sempre il suo piano prestabilito, rapisce giovani donne per ucciderle e decorticare sezioni di pelle. L'obiettivo dell'assassino è quello di cucirsi con i vari pezzi di pelle un vestito che lo trasformi in chi pensa di essere: una donna. Ritenendo che Hannibal Lecter possa offrire un punto di vista alternativo sul caso e nuove informazioni, Clarice, ancora studentessa, è inviata a intervistarlo nell'ospedale psichiatrico dove è rinchiuso. Infatti, Lecter conosce Buffalo Bill e la sua psicologia in modo molto più approfondito rispetto all'FBI, ma le sue informazioni hanno un prezzo. Oltre a richiedere di essere alloggiato in una struttura più confortevole, vuole anche ottenere informazioni sul passato della protagonista. Così scava abilmente nella sua psiche, costringendola a rivelare i suoi traumi più intimi e mettendola in una posizione di vulnerabilità quando meno può permettersi di essere debole, in una società interamente maschile dove Clarice necessita di maggior coraggio e forza per poter dimostrare di avere pari capacità e il diritto di ricoprire il ruolo a cui aspira. Alla fine è proprio Clarice a uccidere l'assassino seriale riscattando così se stessa e tutte le donne vittime della violenza di Buffalo Bill.

Il confronto delle audiodescrizioni italiana e inglese ha prodotto interessanti risultati. Innanzitutto sono state indagate le strategie utilizzate nella descrizione dei personaggi e ne è emerso che l'audiodescrizione inglese è in generale più oggettiva rispetto alla versione italiana. Gli esempi messi a confronto riguardano i tre personaggi principali e mostrano come l'audiodescrizione italiana tenda a spiegare il significato dei vari comportamenti o azioni in modo più personale, descrivendo direttamente cosa è il più delle volte dedotto dagli sguardi dei personaggi, dalle loro espressioni o gesti. Diversamente nella controparte inglese gli stessi sentimenti sono trasmessi implicitamente attraverso l'uso di aggettivi che descrivono gli occhi o attraverso descrizioni fattuali di gesti e volti, lasciando così più spazio per l'interpretazione. Inoltre, l'approccio soggettivo della versione italiana è sostenuto dall'abbondante uso di similitudini che, pur stimolando la fantasia, tendono a incanalarla in una specifica direzione. L'abbondanza di riferimenti espliciti alla personalità dei personaggi inclusi nell'audiodescrizione italiana sostituisce completamente la descrizione dell'aspetto fisico ed esterno dei personaggi che è quasi inesistente, mentre la versione inglese include

almeno alcune caratteristiche esterne principali di tutti i personaggi centrali. Secondo le linee guida ADLAB, i tratti fondamentali dei personaggi dovrebbero essere riportati attraverso la descrizione di ciò che li rivela piuttosto che trarre conclusioni soggettive e, in questo ambito, l'audiodescrizione inglese dimostra essere conforme allo standard europeo ma soprattutto all'intenzione del regista descrivendo i personaggi oggettivamente e, in particolare, soffermandosi sui loro occhi. L'audiodescrizione italiana risulta in una presentazione più variegata, ma lascia al pubblico meno spazio per l'interpretazione.

Le componenti spazio-temporali sono ben segnalate in entrambe le audiodescrizioni e le differenze sono esigue. Per esempio, luoghi come Washington DC e le Bahamas, non specificati esplicitamente nel film, nella versione italiana sono descritti in modo implicito e generale, presupponendo che per il pubblico italiano siano difficilmente riconoscibili. I flashback sono descritti, nella versione italiana, includendo informazioni sulle strategie filmiche visive utilizzate per introdurre il salto temporale, in conformità con gli esempi riportati nelle linee guida italiane. Diversamente, la descrizione inglese si limita a riportare quello che il personaggio rivive escludendo qualsiasi descrizione degli elementi visivi caratterizzanti il flashback.

Come suggerito da numerose ricerche e dalle linee guida europee, un'analisi approfondita del testo di partenza e del suo contenuto è essenziale al fine di creare un testo di arrivo che rispecchia il prodotto originale. Caratteristiche importanti e cruciali del film *Il silenzio degli innocenti*, la comprensione e la descrizione dei quali potrebbero non essere percepite in modo semplice e lineare, sono l'utilizzo di suspense e suggerimenti fallaci per creare stupore nel pubblico, una notevole esposizione di violenza, il delicato tema del transessualismo, gli abbondanti primi piani e l'uso ricorrente del punto di vista di Clarice, la protagonista.

Il metodo attraverso il quale la suspense è trattata differisce da una versione all'altra. Le scene prese in considerazione riguardano l'arrivo di Crawford, commissario dell'FBI, e Clarice a casa di Buffalo Bill, e la fuga di Hannibal Lecter dal carcere, entrambe costruite dal regista in modo ingannevole al fine di confondere e stupire il pubblico. L'audiodescizione inglese ricostruisce i fatti in maniera precisa, evitando di suggerire informazioni aggiuntive che priverebbero il pubblico della sorpresa legata allo

scioglimento finale dei fatti, per poi districare gli avvenimenti con una frase finale esplicativa. Al contrario l'approccio italiano potrebbe confondere il pubblico e la descrizione risultare contorta. Infatti, la ricostruzione delle scene include informazioni sia esplicite che implicite anticipando in modo disordinato lo sviluppo finale dell'intreccio, il quale viene invece mantenuto nascosto e vago, richiedendo al pubblico uno sforzo maggiore per la comprensione degli eventi.

Anche le immagini più brutali e violente sono descritte in modo meno imparziale nell'audiodescrizione italiana. Infatti, spesso la descrizione evita di riportare una dettagliata ricostruzione delle immagini reali prediligendo descrivere le emozioni che le immagini potrebbero provocare.

L'unico accenno al transessualismo incluso nell'audiodescrizione italiana potrebbe essere considerato piuttosto azzardato e scortese, oltre ad essere piuttosto soggettivo, soprattutto perché una descrizione dell'aspetto fisico del personaggio è assente. Come mostrato nell'analisi del film, il tema del transessualismo è piuttosto complesso e richiede una profonda comprensione dell'idea originale del regista per essere interpretato. Entrambe le audiodescrizioni affrontano il problema piuttosto superficialmente, nonostante sia un elemento molto importante del film.

Il regista ha scelto di includere numerosi primi piani utilizzati come strategia per focalizzare l'attenzione su vari elementi. Molti sono i primi piani sui volti e gli occhi dei personaggi, come se il regista volesse che il pubblico entri nel loro io interiore. Per trasmettere questi elementi esclusivamente visivi, la strategia utilizzata nell'audiodescrizione inglese comporta l'uso di abbondanti descrizioni degli occhi dei personaggi, mentre nell'audiodescrizione italiana pochissimi sono gli aggettivi legati allo sguardo dei personaggi. I primi piani vengono inoltre impiegati dal regista con l'obiettivo di offrire al pubblico suggerimenti legati ai successivi scioglimenti degli intrecci. Lunghi primi piani su oggetti apparentemente insignificanti o su dettagli particolari sono usati per sottolineare o suggerire sottili collegamenti che rendono la ricostruzione della storia da parte del pubblico stimolante e appassionante. Solo uno dei quattro esempi indagati è riportato nell'audiodescrizione italiana, anche se il rapporto dei collegamenti è piuttosto vago e la descrizione non corrisponde al momento in cui viene visualizzato il primo piano dell'oggetto, mentre nella versione inglese solo uno dei

quattro non è stato incluso nella descrizione.

Infine, un ultimo elemento che richiede una profonda comprensione del film riguarda il punto di vista dal quale viene mostrata la storia, che è quello della protagonista. La strategia utilizzata nell'audiodescrizione italiana è piuttosto debole e la comprensione di questo importante aspetto è dubbia. Nella descrizione inglese, invece, l'uso ricorrente di aggettivi, sostantivi e verbi riconducibili allo spettro semantico legato al movimento degli occhi e ai quali la protagonista è collegata in funzione di soggetto o agente dell'azione, ricrea oralmente una componente tanto visiva quanto importante all'interno del film.

Per quanto riguarda la lingua utilizzata nelle audiodescrizioni, l'analisi degli aspetti linguistici ha dimostrato che entrambe le versioni ricorrono al registro scritto della lingua. Ciò è dimostrato dall'ampio utilizzo di avverbi, aggettivi composti nella versione inglese e aggettivi posizionati prima del sostantivo in quella italiana, e di costruzioni subordinate. Tuttavia, l'audiodescrizione italiana dimostra di ricorrere in misura maggiore alla tradizione letteraria scritta del paese. Infatti, predilige una struttura più raffinata, guarnita e meno ripetitiva, e scelte linguistiche che danno un fascino letterario al prodotto finale. Inoltre, l'interpretazione degli eventi è orientata verso una lettura più personale e soggettiva che, combinata a una struttura elaborata, incrementa l'aspetto narrativo del testo.

Inoltre, il vocabolario dell'audiodescrizione italiana è strutturato e scelto in modo da includere una maggiore varietà e meno ripetizioni rispetto alla controparte inglese. Infatti, l'analisi quantitativa delle occorrenze dei verbi 'vedere' e 'guardare', *to look* e *to watch* per la versione inglese, ha mostrato una maggiore diversificazione dei termini scelti e un maggior uso di sinonimi. Risultati simili sono stati ottenuti dall'analisi quantitativa dei nomi propri utilizzati in riferimento ai personaggi, per i quali l'audiodescrizione italiana mostra più varietà preferita a svantaggio della ridondanza.

In conclusione, i risultati dell'analisi rivelano che l'audiodescrizione inglese è convenzionale e obiettiva, mentre l'audiodescrizione italiana è arricchita e più soggettiva. La versione italiana, nonostante si discosti dagli standard europei, potrebbe rivelarsi più coinvolgente e artistica, con una struttura adatta alle aspettative del pubblico italiano che potrebbe prediligere l'ascolto di un'audiodescrizione più variegata

e dinamica, tesi difficile da sostenere a causa dell'assenza di studi sulla ricezione del pubblico cieco italiano. I risultati sono comunque in linea con le precedenti analisi comparative delle audiodescrizioni italiane e con le linee guida italiane pubblicate da Senza Barriere – ONLUS, che, di fatto, suggeriscono che "la realizzazione dei testi descrittivi deve essere una narrazione" (Busarello, Sordo, 2011: 23).