

AUDIO DESCRIBING THE HORROR GENRE: "CREATING FEAR IN THE VIEWER"¹

AUDIODESCRIÇÃO DO GÊNERO TERROR: "CAUSANDO MEDO NO ESPECTADOR"

Marcella Wiffler Stefanini*
Anna Matamala**

ABSTRACT

Much research on audio description (AD) has been developed in the field of Translation Studies (FRYER, 2016; ORERO & MATAMALA, 2016). However, there are few bibliographic references regarding AD of the horror genre (MICHALEWICZ, 2015). With the aim of promoting a discussion about the translation of particular characteristics of the horror genre, eight audio describers were interviewed about their experiences with horror AD. Thematic analysis was adopted as methodology, and nine themes were selected based on bibliography on horror in cinema (CHERRY, 2009) and on the answers of the interviewees in order to guide our reflection on the topic: 1) Genre; 2) Effect; 3) Language; 4) Cinematographic Language; 5) Content; 6) Soundtrack; 7) Silence; 8) Voice; and 9) Prosody. According to the interviewees, the horror genre influences the work of the audio describer in many respects.

Keywords: audio description; horror; cinema; interviews.

RESUMO

Muitas pesquisas sobre audiodescrição (AD) têm sido desenvolvidas no âmbito dos Estudos da Tradução (FRYER, 2016; ORERO & MATAMALA, 2016), entretanto, há poucas referências bibliográficas no que concerne à AD do gênero terror (MICHALEWICZ, 2015). Com vistas a promover uma discussão acerca da tradução de características particulares do gênero terror, foram feitas entrevistas com oito audiodescritores a respeito de sua experiência com AD de terror. Adotou-se como metodologia a análise temática, de modo que nove temas foram selecionados com base em bibliografia sobre terror no cinema (CHERRY, 2009) e nas respostas dos entrevistados para nortear nossa reflexão sobre o assunto: 1) Gênero; 2) Efeito; 3) Linguagem; 4) Linguagem Cinematográfica; 5) Conteúdo; 6) Trilha Sonora; 7) Silêncio; 8) Voz; e 9) Prosódia. Os dados indicam que os entrevistados consideram que o gênero do produto audiovisual influencia o trabalho do audiodescritor.

Palavras-chave: audiodescrição; terror; cinema; entrevistas.

INTRODUCTION

According to Greco (2018), accessibility consists of providing the necessary means for all human beings to have access to material and immaterial goods that are considered to be essential for a dignified life. As the Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that culture is one of these immaterial goods, it follows that accessibility to audiovisual forms of arts, such as cinema, TV shows, documentaries, etc., is mandatory in any social context. Among the many resources that ensure this accessibility are: 1) subtitles for the deaf and the hard of hearing (SDH), for those people who do not have access to the auditory information of an audiovisual material; 2) audio description (AD) for those who do not have access to the visuals; and 3) dubbing, subtitling and voice-over, for those who do not understand the source language (DÍAZ-CINTAS, 2005).

Multiple elements are involved in making audiovisual content, and they all work together in order to promote an experience of immersion, resulting in diverse emotional responses from the audience (VISCH et al., 2010). Therefore, we believe that AD, as an audiovisual translation (AVT) form, should translate the visual information into auditory verbal language, bearing in mind that it will be added to an existing soundtrack and that, together, they will be responsible for allowing the audience to be part of the cinematic experience.

In this sense, the audio describer must always consider that the two main elements which constitute cinema are 1) the moving image, which includes both the "what" (content) and the "how" (cinematographic language),

1 This article is the result of a research done during a sandwich PhD at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, and financed by CAPES/PrInt Process n. 88887.716557/2022-00.

* PhD student at the Applied Linguistics Graduate Program from the State University of Campinas. marcella.wiffler@gmail.com
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8385-3265>

** Professor at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and a researcher at TransMedia Catalonia, a research group funded by the Department of Universities and Research of the Catalan government (SGR funding scheme 2021SGR00077). anna.matamala@uab.cat
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1607-9011>

alongside with 2) the soundtrack, which involves sounds arising from the action, sound effects, and music. When it comes to horror films, those elements tend to be carefully thought out in order to evoke emotions of fear, tension, scare, disgust, etc. (CHERRY, 2009). Considering that, this article discusses the specificities of audio describing the horror genre from the audio describer's perspective. In order to do so, we have interviewed AD professionals from Spain and from English speaking countries about their experience audio describing audiovisual content that could be related to the horror genre.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION AND AUDIO DESCRIPTION OF HORROR

AD is a translation of visual information into verbal auditory language produced with the purpose of making that information accessible to those who cannot access the visuals (FRYER, 2016; MATAMALA & ORERO, 2016). It can also serve as a tool for foreign language teaching (MORENO & VERMEULEN, 2013) and has proven to help people with learning difficulties, particularly those related to reading skills (BERNABÉ & ORERO, 2020), as well as individuals with cognitive disabilities (STARR, 2022).

The art of making the unseen visible exists since the Ancient Greece in the form of *ekphrasis*: a vivid description (PUJOL & ORERO, 2007) that is part of an oral tradition, similar to the epic poems, used for preserving Greek memory and history. As audiovisual forms of expression became more popular, especially the theater and the cinema, and also with the advent of the television, which slowly began to be part of the everyday life, describing images became a common resort for those who wanted to include blind and partially sighted people into this new cultural atmosphere (PUJOL & ORERO, 2007). However, it was the concept of accessibility, in particular, which was established in 1948 with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (GRECO, 2018), that increased the awareness around the need for resources capable of promoting access to audiovisual materials by people who, for some reason, could not access it, particularly persons with visual and auditory impairments.

In the academic context, studies in AD have gained prominence over the last years, especially in the field of Translation Studies, where AD has been acknowledged as a form of Audiovisual Translation (GAMBIER, 2003; DÍAZ-CINTAS, 2005; FRANCO & ARAÚJO, 2011), because the latter encompasses all kinds of translation involved in audiovisual texts (FRYER, 2016). As pointed out by Fryer (2016), some authors may find it difficult to consider AD as a translation, as translation has traditionally been associated with a process involving two languages, or what Jakobson (1959) identified as interlinguistic translation. However, some others, such as Díaz-Cintas (2005) claim for the need

to revisit the concept of translation and make it more flexible and inclusive, capable of accommodating new realities rather than to disregard practices that do not fit into a corset outdated notion of a term coined many centuries ago, when the cinema, the television and the computer had not yet been invented (DÍAZ-CINTAS, 2005, p. 3).

Despite the extensive research on AD published in the last two decades (BENECKE, 2004; JIMENÉZ, 2007; JIMENÉZ et al., 2010; MASZEROWSKA et al., 2014; MATAMALA & ORERO, 2016), little has been written about audio describing horror. The only related study is Fryer's (2016), which mentions Michalewicz' (2015) presentation at the Advanced Research Seminar on Audio Description (ARSAD), in 2015. According to Fryer, Michalewicz highlights several elements commonly present in horror films that should be considered when audio describing this genre.

The author understand that the main goal of horror movies is to generate fear in the audience. To do so, the director usually employs certain strategies, such as restricting the action into a place with limited escape possibilities. Therefore, Michalewicz (2015) believes that describing the space and making sure to create this notion of a confined atmosphere should be important when audio describing a horror film. The author also points out to the use of metonymy, a common strategy to reveal just a part of something in order to create suspense around the whole thing. Fryer (2016) gives the example of the shot of a hand pushing open a door, which allows the audience to speculate whose hand it is. This relates to another common strategy for building horror: the camera shot. For instance, a scene filmed over a character's shoulder creates the sensation that the character is being followed.

Lastly, Fryer (2016) explains that the soundtrack is a key element in any audiovisual material, regardless of its genre, especially for visually impaired audiences, who rely exclusively on auditory prompts. For this reason, the audio describer should always bear in mind that the AD is a complement to the already existing soundtrack.

According to the author, the audience will interpret the visual information based on auditory information, including sounds from the actions, such as footsteps, screams, heavy breath; sound effects (SFX), both environmental, like the howling of a wolf, and non-naturalistic sounds, such as an amplified heartbeat; and music, with or without lyrics. This soundtrack will help create an atmosphere and, therefore, evoke effects on the audience.

When it comes to the availability of horror films audio described, English seems to have a higher availability compared to other languages, an aspect which motivated one of our interview questions.

HORROR AND CINEMA

Horror has been a relatively popular genre in cinemas since the beginning of the 20th century (WOOD, 1979). The short films *The Devil* (1908) and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1908), both produced in the USA, are considered the first horror movies. Nonetheless, only in the late 1970s did horror started to figure in the agenda of film studies (GLEDHILL, 1985).

In the 1920s, right after World War I, horror became an important means to express the emotional impact of the war. German Expressionism was one of the main art forms to do so in cinema (CARROL, 1990), as we can see with *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and *Nosferatu* (1922).

Following the success of German horror, Hollywood started to invest more in horror films in the 1930s, releasing *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Dracula* (1931), both based upon the homonymous books by Mary Shelley (1818) and Bram Stoker (1897). According to Neale (2000), these films kicked off a period of low-budget horror films in Hollywood, such as *Cat People* (1942), *I Walked With a Zombie* (1943), *The Seventh Victim* (1943) and *The Leopard Man* (1943). Most of these films are associated with a type of horror known as the Grand Guignol – or naturalistic horror - for its theatrical and melodramatic characteristics (NEALE, 2000).

The 1950s brought a shift in horror movies produced worldwide, with the release of new versions of *Frankenstein* (*The Curse of Frankenstein*, 1957) and *Dracula* (*Dracula*, 1958). The 1950s films presented a more hybrid form of horror combining elements of sci-fi and starting a new cycle for horror in cinema. According to Jankovic (1996), this is due to the context of the Cold War and the “outsider narrative”, in which an outsider threat must be defeated, often involving militarism as a weapon, and creatures that resulted from nuclear mutation or aliens serving as the enemy.

However, the main change in horror’s cinema only happened in 1960 with *Psycho*. As stated by Neale (2000, p. 88), “the advent of *Psycho* (1960) is generally regarded as a turning point, as the beginning of something new: as the film which located horror firmly and influentially within the modern psyche, the modern world, and the modern (dysfunctional) family”. The author explains that this shift towards a more psychological aspect of horror inspired the slasher, stalker and serial-killers films of the following decades.

Tudor (1989) identifies two main differences between the horror films produced before and after *Psycho* (1960): 1) the shift from a “threat” that used to come from “outside”, rooted in the polarity between science and supernatural, to a closer “threat”, part of an everyday contemporary life; and 2) the change in classical Hollywood narrative, making room for new and experimental filmic languages.

However, this did not mean the end of the Grand Guignol melodramas. On the contrary, it expanded the scope of horror in cinema, introducing the demon baby and demonic possession films - such as *Rosemary’s baby* (1968) and *The Exorcist* (1973) -, and the slasher and stalker films - such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and *Halloween* (1978). From the Film Studies perspective, it meant the emergence of subgenres and a wide range of possible horror sources. Still, as problematized by Cherry (2009, p. 1) when enumerating several classic horror movie scenes, “given that film genres are intended to be descriptive categories based on shared common traits, how can so many different scenes of horror be usefully contained by either popular or academic conceptions of genre?” Gledhill (1985) argues that the establishment of genres in cinema was driven by the desire to approach film study and critique to the general viewer, and, therefore, it is associated with the mainstream, commercial and Hollywood films (NEALE, 2000). Nonetheless, any film is constrained to be labeled as belonging to one genre or, at least, as being a hybrid from two or more genres.

The horror genre in cinema has changed a lot throughout the years. This happens not only because the context changes and, therefore, art, as a means of expressing feelings and thoughts, also changes, but also due to the need to create new forms of evoking horror (CHERRY, 2009). Hence, it is not easy to encapsulate all

horror movies into one specific structure and it seems more useful to think about horror as an umbrella term encompassing several different sub-categories of horror film, all united by their capacity to horrify. This response that a horror film is designed to provoke is thus a more crucial defining trait of the horror genre than any set of conventions, tropes or style (CHERRY, 2009).

Considering that the main characteristic of the horror genre is to evoke the feeling of horror, some scholars propose dividing the genre based on the nature of the monster, which is, perhaps, the principal cause of the viewer's horrifying response. Kawin (2012), for instance, proposes *The Book of Monsters* to identify the horror's sub-genres, classifying the monsters into: 1) monsters; 2) supernatural monsters; and 3) humans. Adopting a different approach, Cherry (2009) determines the following cinematic horror categories: 1) the gothic; 2) supernatural, occult and ghost films; 3) psychological horror; 4) monster movies; 5) slashers; 6) body horror, splatter and gore films (including postmodern zombies); 7) exploitation cinema, video nasties or other forms of explicitly violent films.

Despite the chosen classification, the common trait in every horror film is the emotional effect it produces. Many scholars will engage in trying to understand how people can be frightened by fiction and why people are interested in something that makes them feel horrified (CARROL, 1990). Regardless of the answer to these questions, the fact is that horror attracts a significant number of people to movie theaters. Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been an increasing number of horror films released each year as well as their gross revenue. In 2021, for instance, 49 horror films were released in the English language market, representing 12.81% of the total box office of that year². This means that horror, although a niched genre, has a faithful audience that seems to be slowly increasing over the years (CHERRY, 2009).

METHODOLOGY

According to Saldanha and O'Brien (2014), there are four possible research objects in Translation Studies: 1) texts that are products of a translation; 2) the translation process; 3) the participants involved in that process; and/or 4) the context in which translations are produced and received.

For this study, our focus was on the translation process of audio describing horror and on the participants involved in this process, namely, the audio describers. To this end, we have: 1) conducted semi-structured interviews with professional audio describers³ to collect data; and 2) used the thematic analysis method and the Atlas.ti software as a tool to analyze the data.

Regarding the interviews, we prepared six questions to explore the interviewees' professional experience with AD, especially if they had audio described horror films before. As the interview's aim was to understand their process of audio describing horror, they were asked to provide an example and, based on it, share the strategies they used both from a linguistic point of view, i.e., the linguistic choices they made, and in terms of the content selection, i.e., what they chose to describe, considering that a major issue in audio describing films is the lack of time available for inserting the AD units, which implies in making choices regarding what will be described, since there is not enough space and time to describe all visual information. They were also asked about their opinion on whether genre influences the AD and their perspective on the relationship between soundtrack and horror films. The interview included the following questions:

1. How long have you been working with audio description? What types of content do you audio describe? Which are your main customers?
2. In the case of movies, do you think the genre influences the audio description?
 - 2.1. If so, why and what would be the main differences?
 - 2.2. If not, why do you think that?
3. Do you usually make audio descriptions of horror movies?
 - 3.1. If so, what is the frequency? What is the demand for the audio description of horror movies?

² <https://www.the-numbers.com/market/genre/Horror> <access on May 2023>

³ The research project was approved by La Comisión de Ética en la Experimentación Animal y Humana (CEEAH) de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, on March 17th 2023, under the name "La audiodescripción del género de terror" and number "CEEAH 6376".

- 3.2. If not, why? Don't you like the horror genre or don't you like audio describing it? Is there no demand?
4. What would be some specificities of audio describing horror films?
5. Think of an example,
 - 5.1. From a linguistic point of view, what strategies do you use to describe horror?
 - 5.2. From a content selection point of view, what strategies do you use to audio describe horror?
6. Do you think there is a relationship between the soundtrack and the audio description in the case of the horror genre?

A total of eight audio describers were interviewed: five of them are from Spain – three from Catalonia, one from Granada, and another from Valencia – and do AD in Spanish and Catalan/Valencian; the other three work with AD in English – one is from the USA, another is from the UK, and the third one is from Australia.

All of the interviews were conducted using the videoconferencing system Microsoft Teams and recorded both by the Teams platform and by the recording application on the researcher's personal mobile. They were done in Spanish or in English depending on the interviewee, and later transcribed so they could be uploaded to the Atlas.ti software in text file format. Atlas.ti was chosen as a tool for this study because it helps to analyze textual data in qualitative research by allowing the researcher to tag and segment the text, also providing statistical data on the number of times a word or phrase appeared (VERDÚ et al., 2015), which makes it a recommended tool for thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis, as described by Bryman (2008), is a method of quantifying qualitative research by identifying

the frequency of the occurrence of certain incidents, words, phrases, and so on that denote a theme. In other words, a theme is more likely to be identified the more times the phenomenon it denotes occurs in the course of coding. This process may also account for the prominence given to some themes over others (BRYMAN, 2008, P. 598).

To guide our thematic analysis, we created nine tags on Atlas.ti based on the questions prepared: 1) Genre; 2) Effect; 3) Language; 4) Cinematographic language; 5) Content; 6) Soundtrack; 7) Silence; 8) Voice; and 9) Prosody. Since there are questions about genre, language, content and soundtrack, these four themes were expected to appear in the interviews. The other tags represent topics we anticipated that could come up during the interviews based on our literature review. Regarding "Effect", we looked forward to the interviewees discussing the expected effect of the horror film on audiences to be a relevant aspect when audio describing, as it is an important characteristic when talking about genre (NEALE, 2000). In addition, regarding content selection, we wanted to analyze if they would mention cinematographic strategies commonly used to create a horror atmosphere, such as lighting, which can produce darkness and shadows, as well as editing techniques, camera shots and angles, which can suggest danger (CHERRY, 2009). Concerning the film's "Soundtrack", we believe the silence (CHERRY, 2009) is also an important resource for creating tension in horror films, so we decided to include it in our analysis. Moreover, we understand that once the audio description is inserted into the film, it becomes part of the film (SZARKOWSKA & ORERO, 2014), so we wanted to know if the interviewees would explore in their answers how the delivery process of audio describing horror could also help creating the anxiety, the fear and the thrill of horror films, that is why we selected "Voice" and "Prosody" as tags for this study.

In addition to the tag resource, Atlas.ti also has a quotation system, which allows to highlight quotes from the texts, allowing us to outline important information given by the interviewees that did not fit in the tags. Information related to their experience with AD (answers to question 1), particularly if they had worked with horror films (answers to question 3) were selected and tagged as "quotation" to facilitate identification (VERDÚ, 2015).

INTERVIEWEES

Before starting the discussion, we will briefly present the interviewees, in order to understand their context of work and their experience with AD of horror. They will be referred as A1 to A8, according, first, to the audio

describer group they are part of (Spanish or English) and, second, to the chronological order they were interviewed. Thus, A1 – A5 are part of the Spanish group and A6 – A8 are part of the English group.

Audio describer	Work with AD since	Experience with horror	Language
A1	2006	A1 does not recall working with horror. A1 has done a few ADs for suspense and mystery movies	Spanish
A2	2013	A2 has done a few ADs for psychological horror and suspense movies	Spanish
A3	2005	A3 does not recall working with horror, but due to many years of practice, cannot affirm to have never done it.	Spanish
A4	2017	A4 does not recall having worked with horror.	Spanish
A5	2020	A5 has not worked with horror, only with suspense.	Spanish
A6	1981	A6 has audio described a couple of horror movies, from the classics of the XX century to the most recent ones.	English
A7	2007	A7 has done quite a few AD for horror movies in the DVD and Blu-ray format, but since these ceased to exist, the demand for audio describing horror has decreased.	English
A8	2017	A8 has not worked with horror, only with suspense.	English

Table 1: Interviewees presentation

DISCUSSION

The interviewees presentation in Table 1 shows that only a few of them have actually worked with horror movies, and they have some hypotheses on why. Many of them, including the ones who have audio described horror, believe it to be a niche genre and that, as a consequence, there is little interest from the broadcasters and distributors to invest in audio describing the relatively small number – when compared to other genres – of horror movies produced. As observed, an average of only 10% of the films released every year are classified as horror. This suggests that only a few of them are audio described, which can be the reason why most of the interviewees have never worked with horror before. Another potential cause for this can be that, as many of them have explained, most of the audio described content in Spain is from Spanish productions, and they believe Spain is a country which traditionally does not invest in the production of horror movies. This may explain the lack of horror films audio described in Spain. Nonetheless, a quick research on IMDb showed that, in 2022, eleven Spanish horror films were released, which can point to a growth of this genre in the audiovisual market compared to previous years⁴.

CONTENT (AND GENRE)

When analyzing only the quotes tagged as content, we notice that the interviewees discuss strategies they use to select which content they will audio describe regardless of the genre. For example, A1 mentions the debate around describing colors in AD:

4 https://www.imdb.com/list/ls074291393/?sort=date_added,desc&st_dt=&mode=detail&page=1 <access on June 2023>

For example, sometimes there is a major debate about colors, to describe or not to describe. When I feel colors are significant, I describe them, because there are visually impaired people who were not blind from birth, who know colors. Colors also have cultural values.⁵

We agree with that, since there is consistent research indicating the importance of audio describing colors (PUIGDOMÈNECH et. al., 2010; SNYDER, 2014). However, A1 will also relate this to the horror genre, specifying:

So in a horror movie, everything is very dark, we must say that everything is dark, or that it is red, right? Because it has impacts, because that creates that atmosphere of fear, horror, mystery.

In this case, we tagged both content and genre. Nevertheless, in most of the times, content was tagged without genre, and it usually happened because the interviewees were talking about when and how to describe important information in general. Two examples worth mentioning are related to when there is not enough time, so the audio describer needs to anticipate or delay important information, and to how to describe information that, at first, seems to be irrelevant, but later proves to be important for the narrative. These kind of situations can happen in any film, and that is why we did not categorize this discussion as genre, unless the interviewee made this association, like A5 did in this excerpt:

I think that compensation could be an strategy for when many things happen at the same time, for example, and we don't have time to describe them all at the same time that they happen, because perhaps there is dialogue at the same time. In those cases, we either have to anticipate the information a bit, but it is very dangerous, because [in] a horror film, you can spoil the mystery of the film and the whole point that the film has, which is, well, that, creating fear in the viewer.

In this case, by giving the example of the horror film, as A1 did, the interviewee also relates this common issue in AD with the expected effect of the horror film on the audience, which is to make them scared.

Focusing on another case where content was associated with genre, A7 mentioned a frequent technique used by filmmakers to scare the audience: introducing jump scare moments in the narrative or using shot cuts (CHERRY, 2009). This is a very common element in horror movies responsible for most of the frightened reactions from the audience. On that matter, A7 shared their AD strategy:

And if there are jump scares in particular, if you don't have time to describe the jump scare afterwards and it's important to the plot and whatever is happening, what I try to do is describe before hand, but leave enough room so they don't know when it's going to happen, and hopefully they will have more of the experience of the jump scare. And that's very particular in the horror genre.

It is worth highlighting that A7 explained their strategy and complemented saying “hopefully they [the audience] will have more of the experience of the jump scare”. This denotes the need for research on this subject to determine whether this strategy effectively achieves this purpose. Another dilemma in AD arises when important information is presented without a great emphasis on it, however, as the narrative unfolds, this information becomes crucial for the plot, a strategy known as foreshadowing (MURPHY, 2008; SUGIHARTI, 2020). This is common when the director wants to hint at something without explicitly making clear how important it is for the outcome of the story. Many interviewees identified foreshadowing as a frequent resource used in horror films to create suspense. However, as many filmmakers use it to build up a plot twist, it is not necessarily restricted to horror movies, the reason why we did not tag it as genre – again, unless the interviewee made this connection. This narrative choice poses a problem to the audio describer, because they must convey this information without highlighting it, in order to not give away the plot. As A3 explains:

There are films in which there are things that are not so obvious and become more obvious later, but you as a viewer have already seen if it was more or less obvious, right? So, if it's not, for example, in the audio description course, we work a lot on these issues, right? In other words, how explicit is the information when you see it for the first time? Is it very explicit? In other words, visually, this is what we do. Is it very visually explicit? Well, then we would have an explicit audio description. It is not very visually explicit, so in the audio description we try not to be very explicit.

We believe that language choices are very important to address this issue, as they can help when you want to present an information without anticipating it will be important later. Another particular challenge in horror films is describing the monsters. Although there was not a specific question about this topic, we expected the

5 All interviews carried out in Spanish were translated into English by the authors for this article.

interviewees would mention it when asked about the content. Nonetheless, as mentioned before, most of them did not have previous experience audio describing horror movies, or at least could not record any concrete example, that is why few of them brought up the challenge of describing monsters, which, most of the time, are non-existent creatures (CARROL, 1990). One of the interviewees who addressed this issue was A1, who said:

If we say 'a smoke' it is possible to imagine, or 'a fog', or 'a human form', or 'a shaped shadow with a human form'. From there I can develop the description, but starting from something that is part of the collective imagination, then I go from there, and perhaps, throughout different scenes, I can add details to this first thing, but it is very important, because I always think, when I am watching a movie, the first impression is very important, because that first impression, with the minimum of words, can have it as close to the reality that I am seeing as possible.

It is interesting to notice A1 tries to audio describe the unrealistic characters based on pre-existing concepts from the collective imagination. This approach helps familiarize the audience with the creature, making it easier for them to imagine what it looks like. For that, A1 uses comparisons. Additionally, A7 emphasized the audio describer should not censor the information, as horror films often involve demoniac creatures, violence and gore. As mentioned in the following excerpt, the horror audience normally knows these elements will be present and still chose to watch these films.

I think one thing to be very aware of is that you don't try to censor things in horror. I think there seem to be a tendency in AD to try and filter things and censor things a bit, and for me they are adults who chose to watch a horror film or a slasher film, they wanna know the gore, they wanna know what's going on, you need to fit that into it. And I mean in horror you've got the nudity, you've got the gore, and also some violence, and stuff like that. And I think it's very important to try and capture that as much as possible to give them that experience.

As far as content is concerned, another relevant issue when audio describing particular genres like horror and suspense is how to describe the unseen. In this kind of films, a common strategy for creating tension consists in filming from the perspective of the character who represents a threat, normally the monster or the killer peeking at another character without them noticing the threat, using the point-of-view shot (CHERRY, 2009). A question made by A8 is how to audio describe that:

So if it's like to feel scared, often what we don't know is more scary than what we do know. So you know, when you can't see the person, but you know someone is there, but how do you describe that?

CINEMATOGRAPHIC LANGUAGE (AND GENRE)

Another important topic when discussing film AD is the cinematographic language, a topic we decided to tag in the interviews, despite none of the questions being explicitly about it. Only two of the interviewees have not mentioned the role played by the cinematography language in constructing a narrative. There is still a heated debate on whether camera shots should be audio described or not (ALVES & ARAÚJO, 2016). Despite that, they can not be disregarded, as we have established the image includes the "what" (content) and the "how" (cinematographic language). As A6 simplified

The most important thing to be aware of is what the director is telling you. The cinematographer, the director is telling you what's critical with their camera shots, their angles, where they are focused. They're telling you 'look here, this is important'.

We can also relate this thought with what A3 said about foreshadowing. That is why we believe that having at least a notion of cinematographic language is important to audio describe cinema (ALVES & ARAUJO, 2016). For this same reason, we chose to analyze if and how this topic appeared in the interviews. However, as there was no question about it, it was mentioned in different moments of the interview, sometimes related to the language, others to the genre or to the content. An interesting observation is that all of those who mentioned it, considered the cinematographic language as an important element to take into account when audio describing. When asked about whether the genre influences the AD or not, all eight interviewees agreed it should guide the translation choices behind AD.

Nonetheless, A3 pointed out that not all horror movies follow the same structure. Not all of filmmakers use the same cinematographic strategies to build tension and fear, although some strategies are more common, such as the previously mentioned foreshadowing and also the metonymy (FRYER, 2016). According to A3,

In the end, each film is a world, that is, each film is a world and maybe there is some generalization, not by genre, but for me it doesn't work like that. From my experience it doesn't work to say "in such a genre you always have to do this", that is, always and never for me are words that do not fit in audio description process.

We tend to agree with that idea, especially because genre is constantly changing (NEALE, 2000). It is very common that, within the same film, the narrative is built blending characteristics of different genres, and, consequently, two films classified as horror could present divergent characteristics, such as cinematographic language, aesthetics, characters features, color palette, narrative style, etc. (CHERRY, 2009). Because of that, it can be dangerous to generalize. However, the concept of genre exists because, even though there might be exceptions, most of the films can be associated with one or more genres for sharing the same characteristics, particularly what we have named as effect (NEALE, 2000). In this sense, there is no doubt that every horror film is classified as horror because it somehow intends to evoke on the audience a feeling of tension, fear and scare (CARROL, 1990). That is why A5, despite recognizing every film is unique, believes that guidelines providing any kind of reference or suggestion on how to audio describe each genre could be helpful.

Also the norm, for example, the UNE 153020 norm⁶, would have to be reformed a bit and would have to specify, therefore, a series of guidelines for each genre, because each genre has its complexities, each film is a new challenge that you face and many times you do not have a specific reference to base yourself on, so you would also have to work on it.

LANGUAGE (AND GENRE)

The same logic can be considered when we think about language in AD. Since AD is an intersemiotic translation (JAKOBSON, 1959) from a visual language to a verbal language, special attention should be paid to the language used to describe the visual information. In other words, we understand that the language used in AD should somehow translate the visuality of the audio-described material. Thus, we can establish a relationship between genre and language. An example of that is given by A6, when they talk about two specific horror films which are very different from each other:

But also, I think it's helpful if the linguistics of the film, of the audio description rather, can match the language or the tone of the film you are describing, the tone of *Nosferatu's* from 1920s and the style is very distinctive from say *Night of the Living Dead*, which I've described, which comes 20, 30 years later. I think that it will suggest different language choices. Language choices that match that year of the 1940s versus the 1920s and you can pick up some of that from the language of the characters of the movie. Obviously, *Nosferatu* is a silent film, but even the language used to write those cards can give you a clue, and the describer can research the language choices and the words that seem to fit and reflect the film.

If we understand that an audiovisual material results from the association of audio and visual inputs and that both of them work together to build the film (BAZIN, 1967) and produce a certain effect – emotional and physiological responses – on its audience (CHERRY, 2009), as the AD is a translation of the visual inputs, we must consider it will work together with the audio to become the film. In this sense, A6 summarizes their opinion:

So I think that, when you say the linguistic choices, that rings a bell with me, because I think that gives you the difference between a rudimentary description and one that is really trying to be of the film and not in it.

Based on this idea, we notice an intimate relationship between language and genre in AD, as every linguistic choice should be carefully thought according to the genre and its intended effect on the audience. Other examples on this were given by A2 and A3 during the interview. Talking about the horror genre, A2 said

(...) a term that, in principle, you don't think of using, because maybe it's more, I don't know, related to something else, I don't know, eschatological or something else, I don't know. But well, I think basically, following, perhaps, the structure of the film, right? Like the visual language of the film.

This reminds us of what A7 said about censorship in AD, since horror can be visually disgusting and explicitly gore (CARROL, 1990). The AD needs to translate these elements as they are an essential part of the genre and it is a fundamental feature to achieve the intended effect on the audience. That is why the audio describer

6 The UNE 153020 is a Spanish norm which establishes the parameters and guidelines for AD in Spain.

cannot ignore it and should not be afraid of using a language that can sometimes deviate from the standard language and be more vulgar.

Another example, from A3, compares the language used to describe a romance and an action scene. According to them, in a romantic scene, the audio describer can take the liberty of being more poetic, whereas in an action's scene, they have to be more direct.

When I describe a scene, a romantic scene and an action scene, I am not going to use the same words or the same tone, surely one is even more poetic and the other is more descriptive.

SOUNDTRACK (AND GENRE)

Although the last example does not involve horror, we can understand the relationship between genre and language. Likewise, AD of audiovisual content, as a translation from the visual inputs, should work together with the audio inputs, complementing it (FRYER, 2016). That is why the soundtrack plays an important part in the process. When asked if there was an association between the soundtrack and the AD of horror film, all of the interviewees answered "yes", emphasizing that this relationship is important not only when audio describing horror, but all audiovisual texts, regardless their genre.

Nonetheless, many of them mentioned the difficulty of describing important visual information happening simultaneously with sound effects or with music intentionally placed in the movie to build a particular atmosphere, which happens frequently in horror in order to create suspense or intensify the fear caused by a situation (CHERRY, 2009). In this case, the audio describer needs to choose between anticipating the description, like A7 suggested when talking about the content, or overlapping the soundtrack. This decision requires sensibility to identify the best strategy for each case. According to A4, there needs to be a balance:

And then I think that the balance between soundtrack and audio description would also have to be established very well, because I think that the sounds in scary movies, the sounds really are always important in audio description. There are some that you can go over, others that you can't, but precisely in scary movies I think that this balance between soundtrack and audio description would have to be identified very well for precisely that, right? So as not to reveal, so as not to break the moments of tension really.

VOICE AND PROSODY (AND GENRE)

It is also relevant to understand that the auditory inputs in any film are not restricted to the original soundtrack, but are also related to the AD soundtrack once it becomes a part of the film (FRYER, 2016). That is the reason we created the tags voice and prosody, as five of the interviewees addressed these topics. By voice we refer to the narrator's voice, for instance, if it is female or male, and by prosody we mean the speed, the rhythm, the pitch, and the volume. Both are related to the translation choices, just like the linguistic aspect of the AD discussed before.

This means that AD is not only a verbal translation, but one that will be later oralized. Thus, we wanted to analyze what the interviewees said about it. When talking about the importance of genre for the AD, A4 mentioned the script as well as the voice and the rhythm:

It (genre) also seems important to me not only for writing the script, but also for the voiceover, adjusting the rhythm, right? There are times when, as the UNE norm says that the voice has to, well, the voice has to adapt to the tone of the product, and that is often interpreted as a neutral voice, because you have to be objective and so on. But I think that it is very important.

Answering the same question, A8 says the language and the voice are influenced by the film's genre, and that both should fit in the film's style:

And also the voice and the text should match the style.

Talking particular about horror films, A2 mentions how the voice and the voice's tone can help create tension and fear:

The voice and I think the tone of the voice can reflect a lot of the tension or the fear.

These are just a few examples from the interviews that show how complex AD is and how it involves several translation decisions that will impact the way the audience will receive and perceive an audiovisual material.

SILENCE (AND GENRE)

One last topic related to the soundtrack that we chose to highlight was silence. Five of the interviewees mentioned the pauses in AD. However, more than the pauses, we believe silence plays an important role in audiovisual content (TORRES I SEGURA, 2022), as it involves not only the sound effects, the songs, the dialogues, but also the silences, particularly in horror movies (FRYER, 2016). We understand the silence has a meaning and, therefore, it must be considered in AD (ORERO et al., 2016). According to A7,

The other fun thing with horror in particular is the timing, because silence is incredibly important in horror, so usually in AD you try to fill up the silence if you can, but in horror you do need to let things run and let the creepy silence spill.

In the same sense, A3 explains that

What happens in horror movies? They tend to have less dialogue, right? In general. As viewers, well, we play a lot with silences, we play a lot with sounds, with recognizable things. I understand that if in general we believe that horror movies play with that, then we will have to use this strategy too, that the audio description does not go over all those silences right?

Both A7 and A3 understand it is important to maintain the silences in horror movies, as possible. However, A8 points out an issue that must also be considered on this matter. As they clarify,

There's another flip to that, in that a lot of visually impaired, they don't like too many pauses, because they're like "what's happening?" And so you have to sort of, I call it like a very light touch, like a light sprinkle of AD as an intrusive, but is worth it. Like when there is this long corridor, and like the film is, you know, them going down the corridor, and it's dark. That is the suspense of, it's just going on forever, but a visually impaired person may not know that, so like, they keep walking, the same action is happening, but it's a very light touch, it's very like I say it and I leave.

In other words, what A8 suggests is that, instead of just maintaining the silence for a long period, AD should describe what is happening in a slow rhythm, and if necessary repeat the information – “they keep walking” –, but still leave enough room for silence, without the need to fill in the entire gap. This balance, once again, demands a sensibility of the audio describer, who must be tuned in to the films' own audiovisual language, in order to make translation choices that will allow the audio-described film to have a similar effect on its visually impaired viewers as on the sighted audience.

Although further studies are needed to identify whether an AD that takes the genre into consideration – and therefore is a result of choices related to content, language, cinematographic language, soundtrack, voice, prosody, and silence – will be more likely to evoke in its audience similar feelings to the ones the sighted audience experiences – the effect –, such as fear, disgust, and scare, there is a consensus among the interviewees about the importance of genre for AD.

CONCLUSION

From the previous discussion, we can identify some of the difficulties surrounding the AD of horror films, as well as think about some strategies for dealing with them. The two main difficulties mentioned, which can happen in any audiovisual text, are what to prioritize 1) when there is not enough time to audio describe the visual information; and 2) when there is important visual information happening simultaneously with the sound effects.

We believe that the audio describer's choices in both situations should reflect the fact that AD is a translation that allows more people to access an audiovisual material, especially those who cannot access its visual information.

Regarding audiovisual art forms, specifically cinema, which is our main interest here, this accessibility also involves promoting an immersive experience. For this reason, it is important to consider the soundtrack and the cinematographic language, and how these two elements work together in order to promote this immersion and, therefore, to evoke emotions, such as fear, tension, scare, disgust, characteristics of the horror film.

Considering this, the interviewees mentioned some strategies used by filmmakers in horror movies to evoke these emotions, such as foreshadowing, jump scares, point of view shots, and we can also add, based on Fryer (2016), the metonymy. There is a recent thesis by Emma Andrews on visual foreshadowing in AD, but further research on the other strategies should provide more insight into how to audio describe these filmic choices in a way that the feelings they potentially create can be translated. More than identifying these techniques, the AD should translate the effect they may cause in the audience.

Another specificity of horror films lies in the figure of the monster – human or not –, an essential element for creating an atmosphere of fear and disgust, so special attention should be paid to the description of this character and its actions. We have seen that language plays an important role both in the translation of cinematographic language and in the monster's description. That is why one of the interviewees emphasized the importance of the audio describer not censoring things, as the words must reflect the violence and the gore present in the film.

A final aspect to consider when choosing what to prioritize in AD is the role of the soundtrack. For instance, the already mentioned jump scare is built from the association of the image with the sound, so this should be considered when deciding whether to overlap the music or the scream. Again, further research could help determine what would be the best strategy for audio describing moments of jump scare, as well as how to deal with long periods of silence, which can also be used for building suspense in films.

Finally, when it comes to AD as a translation, not only the linguistic choices but also the choices involving the narrator's voice and the AD prosody are part of the translation process. Further research devoted to this could also clarify how these elements affect the audience's audiovisual experience.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the conclusions of this study were generated during a sandwich PhD at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) and authorised by the ethics committee of UAB. CEEAH approval number: 6376. Raw data can be requested via the authors' e-mail.

REFERENCES

- ALVES, S. F.; ARAÚJO, V. L. S. (2016). Formação do audiodescritor: a estética cinematográfica como base para o aprendizado da estética da audiodescrição. *Materiais, métodos e produtos. Cadernos de Tradução*, v. 36, n. 3, p. 34-59. DOI: 10.5007/2175-7968.2016v36n3p34
- ANDREWS, E. (2020). Representing Visual Foreshadowing in Audio Description. Doctoral thesis, University of Huddersfield. Available at: <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/35504/1/FINAL%20THESIS%20-%20Andrews.pdf>
- BAZIN, A. (1967). *What is cinema?* Essays selected and translated by Hugh Gray. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press.
- BENECKE, B. (2004). Audio-description. *Meta: Journal des traducteurs*, 48(1), p. 78-80. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/009022ar>
- BERNABÉ, R.; ORERO, P. (2020). Easier audio description. Exploring the potential of Easy-to-Read principles in simplifying AD. In: BRAUN, S.; STARR, K. (eds.). *Innovation in Audio Description Research*. London: Routledge, p. 55-75.
- BRYMAN, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- CARROL, N. (1990). *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart*. New York: Routledge.
- CHERRY, B. (2009). *Horror*. London: Routledge.

- DÍAZ-CINTAS, J. (2005). Audiovisual Translation Today. A question of accessibility for all. *Translating Today*, v. 4, (s.n.), p. 3-5.
- FRANCO, E. P. C., ARAÚJO, V. L. S. (2011). Questões terminológico-conceituais no campo da tradução audiovisual (TAV). *Tradução em Revista*, v. 11, (s.n.), pp. 1-23. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17771/PUCRio.TradRev.18884>
- FRYER, L. (ed.). (2016). *An Introduction to Audio Description a Practical Guide*. London: Routledge.
- GAMBIER, Y. (2003). Introduction: Screen Transadaptation: Perception and Reception. *The Translator*. Special issue on Screen Translation, 9 (2), London: Routledge, p. 191-205.
- GLEDHILL, C. (1985). The Horror Film. In: COOK, P. (ed.). *The Cinema Book*. British Film Institute London, p. 99–105.
- GRECO, G. M. (2018). The nature of accessibility studies. *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*, v. 1, n. 1, p. 205-232. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47476/jat.v1i1.51>
- JAKOBSON, R. (1959). Aspectos linguísticos da tradução. In: JAKOBSON, R. *Linguística e Comunicação*. Translated by Izidoro Blikstein e José Paulo Paes. Editora Cultrix: São Paulo-SP, 24th edition, 2010, p. 79-91.
- JANKOVIC, M. (1996). *Rational Fears: American Horror in the 1950s*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- JIMENÉZ, C. (ed). (2007). *Traducción audiovisual y accesibilidad*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- JIMENÉZ, C.; RODRÍGUEZ, A.; SEIBEL, C. (2010). *Un corpus de cine. Teoría y práctica de la audiodescripción*. Granada: Ediciones Tragacanto.
- KAWIN, B. F. (2012). *Horror and the Horror Film*. London: Anthem Press.
- MASZEROWSKA, A.; MATAMALA, A.; ORERO, P. (eds.). (2014). *Audio Description. New perspectives illustrated*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- MATAMALA, A.; ORERO, P. (eds.). (2016). *Researching audio description. New approaches*, London: Palgrave.
- METZ, C. (2011). *Language and Cinema*. De Gruyter Mouton.
- MICHALEWICZ, I. (2015). ‘Is it a monster? Audio describing horror films’. Paper presented at *Advanced Research Seminar on Audio Description (ARSAD) 2015*. Barcelona (March).
- MORENO, A. I.; VERMEULEN, A. (2013). Audio Description as a Tool to Improve Lexical and Phraseological Competence in Foreign Language Learning. In: FLOROS, G.; TSAGARI, D. (eds.). *Translation in Language Teaching and Assessment*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, p. 41-64.
- MURPHY, S. (2008). An Audiovisual Foreshadowing in the First Thirty Seconds of the Last Eight Minutes of Psycho. In: HAYWARD, P. (ed.). *Terror tracks: music, sound and horror cinema*. London: British Library, p. 47-59.
- NEALE, S. (2000). *Genre and Hollywood*. London: Routledge.
- ORERO, P.; CASACUBERTA, D.; MASZEROWSKA, A. (2016). Audio describing silence: Lost for words. In: JANKOWSKA, A.; SZARKOWSKA, A. (eds.). *New Points of View in Audiovisual Translation*, p. 219-236. DOI: 10.3726/978-3-0353-0761-0
- PUIGDOMÈNECH, L.; MATAMALA, A.; ORERO, P. (2010). “Audio description of Films: State of the Art and a Protocol Proposal”. In: BOGUCKI, L.; KREDENS, K. (eds.) *Perspectives on Audiovisual Translation*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 27-44.

- PUJOL, J.; ORERO, P. (2007). Audio Description Precursors: Ekphrasis and Narrators. *Translation Watch Quarterly*, v. 3, n. 2, p. 49-60. Available at: http://www.translocutions.com/tsi/twq/twq_vol3issue22007.htm
- SALDANHA, G.; O'BRIEN, S. (2014). *Research Methodologies in Translation Studies*. London: Routledge.
- SNYDER, J. (2014). *The visual made verbal: A comprehensive training manual and guide to the history and applications of audio description*. Æ Academic Publishing.
- STARR, K. (2022). Audio description for the non-blind. In: TAYLOR, C.; PEREGO, E. (eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of Audio Description*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- SZARKOWSKA, A.; ORERO, P. (2014). The importance of sound for audio description. In: MASZEROWSKA, A., MATAMALA, A.; ORERO, P. (ed.), *Audio Description*. New perspectives illustrated. Amsterdam: Benjamins Translation Library.
- SUGIHARTI, R. (2020). *The comparative of foreshadowing and plot in horror novels : The Haunting Of Hill House by Shirley Jackson and Danur by Risa Saraswati*. Doctoral thesis, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung.
- TUDOR, A. (1989). *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- VERDÚ, C. P.; CHICA, A. A.; GARCÍA, F. J. F.; FERNÁNDEZ, O. A. S. (2015). *La investigación cualitativa: técnicas de investigación y análisis con Atlas.ti*. Cuenca-Ecuador: Pydlos Ediciones.
- VISCH, V. T.; TAN, E. S.; MOLENAAR, D. (2010). The emotional and cognitive effect of immersion in film viewing. *Cognition and Emotion*, v. 24, n. 8, p. 1439-1445. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699930903498186>
- WOOD, R. (1979). 'Introduction'. In: BRITTON, A.; LIPPE, R.; WILLIAMS, T.; WOOD, R. (eds) *The American Nightmare: Essays on the Horror Film*, Toronto: Festival of Festivals, p. 7-28.

FILMOGRAPHY

- Cat People* (1942), Jacques Tourneur. United States: RKO Radio Pictures.
- Dracula* (1931), Tod Browning. United States: Universal Pictures.
- Dracula* (1958), Terence Fisher. United Kingdom: Hammer Films Productions.
- Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1908), Otis Turner. United States: Selig Polyscope Company.
- Frankenstein* (1931), James Whale. United States: Universal Pictures.
- Halloween* (1978), John Carpenter. United States: Compass International Pictures.
- I Walked With a Zombie* (1943), Jacques Tourneur. United States: RKO Radio Pictures.
- Nosferatu* (1922), Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau. Germany: Jofa-Atelier Berlin-Johannisthal Prana-Film GmbH.
- Psycho* (1960), Alfred Hitchcock. United States: Shamley Productions.
- Rosemary's baby* (1968), Roman Polanski. United States: William Castle Enterprises.
- The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), Robert Wiene. Germany: Decla-Film.
- The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), Terence Fisher. United Kingdom: Hammer Films Productions.
- The Devil* (1908), D. W. Griffith. United States: Biograph Company.

The Exorcist (1973), William Friedkin. United States: Hoya Productions.

The Leopard Man (1943), Jacques Tourneur. United States: RKO Radio Pictures.

The Seventh Victim (1943), Mark Robson. United States: RKO Radio Pictures.

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1974), Tobe Hooper. United States: Vortex.

Recebido: 2/8/2023

Aceito: 21/8/2023

Publicado: 29/8/2023