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**TAYLOR, CHRISTOPHER AND PEREGO, ELISA. THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF AUDIO DESCRIPTION. LONDON AND NEW YORK, ROUTLEDGE, 2022, 666 PP., ISBN 978-0367434199**

Over the past thirty years, there has been a notable increase in literature and research focused on audio description (AD) for the blind and visually impaired (BVI) audience, with a primary goal of establishing standardised approaches. As stated in the dedication, *The Routledge Handbook of Audio Description* (2022), edited by Christopher Taylor and Elisa Perego, is the culmination of years of collaborative scholarly effort and interest in this intriguing practice of media accessibility. Due to space constraints, it is impractical to delve into each of the 38 chapters of this handbook. Therefore, in my review I provide a summary and critical discussion of the key topics it addresses.

The volume is intentionally organised into eight sections. In Part I, the chapters provide a broad overview of AD, addressing questions of accessibility and proposing a social and legal framework to advocate for increased use of AD (illustrated in contributions by Greco and Bestard-Bou, and Arias-Badia, respectively). Additionally, this section offers a practical understanding of AD's end-users and their requirements, such as the use of easily understandable or non-discriminatory language (examined in Chapter 3 by Perego and Taylor). Unfortunately, like other audiovisual translation (AVT) modes, AD is often viewed as demanding but lacking prestige, probably because the general public is mostly unaware of this practice, its value and importance (p. 49).

Part II delves into theoretical discussions surrounding AD. For instance, Holsanova's contribution offers an interesting exploration of methodologies used to track the cognitive processes involved in audio describers' work when analysing audiovisual content in order to produce and deliver AD scripts, along with how these audio-described products are received by end-users. Reception studies, frequently advocated for in AVT (e.g. Orrego-Carmona 2018; Orero et al. 2018) can indeed address such demands. It is also possible to find in this handbook contributions by esteemed scholars in AD who offer their perspectives on narratology, textual elements, and culture-specific references in AD (explored, respectively, by Vercauteren, Mazur, and Jankowska). For example, Jankowska's chapter raises a pressing matter (for both academia and the industry) regarding the translation of AD scripts, complemented by Oncins's discussion in this volume, and Liu and Tor-Carroggio's pilot study on the translation of Spanish ADs into Chinese. Despite initial reservations, as Jankowska notes, script translation has proven

to be an economical and effective means of producing quality ADs (p. 315). In the same section, Secchi's chapter concentrates on what can be seen as niche in AD practice and research, meriting special mention. She debates how AD can convey aesthetic aspects of artworks on display in museums. Her insightful exploration of how philosophical, psychological, and cognitive concepts can enhance the visitor experience at tactile museums finds practical application in the Anteros museum in Ancona. This study may help bridge the gap in art perception between visually impaired and sighted individuals.

The chapters in Part III centre on specific types of AD for productions such as plays (explored by Remael and Reviers), opera and dance performances (discussed by Snyder), film and series (presented by Valero Gisbert), and museums (examined by Taylor and Perego, Fineman and Cock, and Hutchinson and Eardley). As a novelty, Pacinotti's contribution addresses AD in churches as examples of craftsmanship and works of art. Given the particularity of churches as cultural heritage sites and architectural spaces, the author aims to provide guidelines or templates to inform practice, considering factors such as the interior and exterior of churches, whether traditional or modern (pp. 250–253).

In Part IV, contributors' attention shifts to the variety of stakeholders that are commonly involved in AD practices. Discussions include the profiling of audio describers across three continents (discussed by Perego) as well as that of businesses offering AVT and/or media accessibility services (explored by Hermosa-Ramírez). The contribution by Saerens et al. is noteworthy not only for offering an inside view of AD business operations, such as costs and time pressures, but also for shedding light on the (oftentimes) challenging interactions with clients (p. 279). This further underscores the misconceptions surrounding AD, AVT, and translation as professional practices. The section concludes with insights into research in AD (presented by Perego), which seek to bridge the gap between theory and praxis.

Part VI focuses on analysing and discussing specific AD practices. A captivating discussion focuses on audio introductions, which offer general information about the audiovisual products that often accompany AD or are sometimes offered independently (explored by Romero Fresco, p. 423). Audio subtitling, which consists of orally rendering written subtitles, is discussed by Matamala (p. 433), who explains how written text can be made accessible to BVI audiences when, for example, a film is only subtitled (and not voiced over or dubbed), or in multilingual films (e.g. scenes are subtitled, as they are not in the main language of the film). Interestingly, when multilingualism is used for comedic purposes and audio subtitling is absent, the BVI audience may miss out on an essential element of the audiovisual product itself (Dore 2019,

p. 275–276). Audio subtitling can also extend to banners and on-screen text messages displayed on mobile phones. While artificial intelligence (AI) may generate audio subtitling, its combination with AD is typically performed by humans (Matamala, this volume, p. 440), which underscores the need for human input. This section concludes with a discussion of AD for non-blind individuals (explored by Starr), including those with atypical cognitive frameworks such as autism or learning difficulties. As Starr explains, though, some non-blind audiences may choose AD to access audiovisual content while multitasking (e.g., during domestic chores) or for language learning purposes (p. 478). Regarding the latter, significant literature has been produced over the last three decades (see Lertola 2019 for a book-length overview of the use of AVT, including AD, in language learning contexts (p. 47-60), and more recently, Talaván et al. 2024).

Part VII consists of only two contributions, resulting in a slight imbalance. Nonetheless, both chapters concentrate on important practical aspects. The first chapter emphasises the significance and effectiveness of university training in AD, drawing on results gathered by the author (Chmiel) through a survey. The second chapter examines two courses offered by the German public broadcaster Bayerischer Rundfunk in Munich, Germany. The author highlights the distinctions between the course designed for beginners and the one for experienced audio describers. The former ensures that participants grasp the theoretical foundations of AD, supplemented with examples, while the latter focuses on training describers to handle various genres (Benecke). It is worth noting that AD professional training is often neglected, even in publications of this calibre. More attention to it would be beneficial and will hopefully feature in future editions of this volume or in other future studies.

Part VIII brings this handbook to a close by assembling contributions that examine AD in several countries, namely, the USA (Snyder), Canada (Singh), Australia (Seeleyen), Russia (Borshchevsky and Kozulyaev), Brazil (Franco and Santiago Araújo), and Slovenia (Vodeb and Rot). Given that many chapters in the previous sections primarily focus on the European context, acknowledging AD in these diverse and distant contexts enhances the value of this volume. Nonetheless, apart from Brazil, the Global South appears regrettably underrepresented and is deserving of exposure to become better known and understood.

As a whole, *The Routledge Handbook of Audio Description* proves to be a valuable resource, offering insights into various aspects of the multifaceted AD profession. However, it is worth noting that the editors claim in their introduction that this handbook covers “virtually everything one needs to know about the world of audio description” (p. 1). Yet, it is surprising to find

that certain areas remain unexplored. For instance, a quick search for the term “humour” (or “humor”) or related terms (e.g. comic, comedic, etc.) in this Handbook yields no results, despite Benecke (p. 522) mentioning the intricacies connected to audio describing slapstick comedy. This seems to confirm the general lack of attention to the AD of humour thus far (remarked upon by Martínez-Sierra, 2009, 2010, 2020; Dore, 2019, Chapter 6). Similarly, taboo subjects have largely been overlooked in AD, with discussions about the description of sex scenes only briefly touched upon by Franco and Santiago Araújo (p. 603) and Fresno (p. 312), despite being of significant interest to the BVI audience (Fryer, 2016, pp. 146–148; Dore, 2019, p. 267; Rojo Lopez et al., 2021). Also, topics such as equality, diversity and inclusion values and outreach with younger audience members are worth investigating in the future.

In terms of my own access to the book, I used a digital version provided through the publisher’s cloud-based reading platform, VitalSource Bookshelf, which occasionally does not function properly, causing sections in the index to overlap or appear blurry. However, it is important to mention that VitalSource Bookshelf offers a read-aloud feature that works for both the main body text and content within tables. Yet, it is surprising to note that a handbook of this kind does not have supplementary material such as an audio introduction by the editors. Finally, while acknowledging the high production costs associated with handbooks, it is disappointing that the publisher did not offer a physical copy of the book, especially when specifically requested on multiple occasions.

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