



Audio describing foreign language films

Agnieszka Szarkowska

University of Warsaw

a.szarkowska@uw.edu.pl

OUTLINE

1. Polish AD landscape
2. Methods of audio describing foreign films
3. New method: text-to-speech AD

AUDIO DESCRIPTION IN POLAND

1990s - 'Typhlofilms'

- over 30 films
- Polish and foreign (AD + voice-over)

2006

- Cinema screenings with live AD

2007

- Polish TV series & feature films available online
- www.tvp.pl/dostepnosc/audiodeskrypcja
- ca. 80 hours

2008 – first DVD with AD

Polish
&
dubbed
films
only

AUDIO DESCRIBING FOREIGN FILMS

- AD + audio-subtitling
- AD + voice-over

AD + AUDIO SUBTITLING

1. multilingual films
2. foreign language films

Who reads audio subtitles?

- Audio describer?
- Another voice talent/actor?



Londyńczycy, episode 1

AD + AUDIO SUBTITLING



Volver

AD + VOICE-OVER



The Magnificent Seven

AD + AUDIO SUBTITLING vs. VOICE-OVER

- Common goal: to make foreign films accessible to visually impaired spectators
- The translation of original dialogue in a foreign language
- The original sound in the background
- Oral discourse
- Can visually impaired audience distinguish between AS & VO?

Merging
modalities

A diagram consisting of three blue arrows pointing from the list items to the text 'Merging modalities'. The top arrow points from 'The translation of original dialogue in a foreign language' to 'Merging modalities'. The middle arrow points from 'The original sound in the background' to 'Merging modalities'. The bottom arrow points from 'Oral discourse' to 'Merging modalities'.

AD + AS/VO PROBLEMS

- Synchronising AD
 - with voice-over/audio-subtitles?
 - or with source language dialogue?
- Time-consuming
- High production costs
 - Writing the AD script
 - Recording it
 - Mixing with the original soundtrack

TEXT-TO-SPEECH AUDIO DESCRIPTION

- Audio description read by speech synthesis (text-to-speech) software
- Combined with voice-over or subtitling to audio describe foreign films
 - One synthetic voice (AD + VO)
 - Two synthetic voices (AD + AS)

Advantages of TTS AD

- AD production
 - Cost-effectiveness
 - Precise synchronisation
 - A selection of high quality voices
 - Creation of AD templates
- Target audience
 - Familiar with TTS software
 - Rural visually impaired population with no access to (live) AD in cinemas

AUDIOVISUAL
PROGRAMME

AD SCRIPT

SYNCHRONISING AD
SCRIPT WITH AV
PROGRAMME

TEXT FILE
CONTAINING AD SCRIPT
WITH TIME CODES

FILM PLAYER

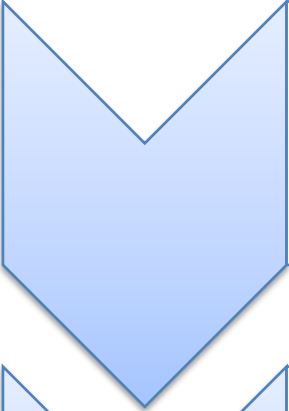
TEXT-TO-SPEECH
SYNTHESIZER

TEXT-TO-SPEECH AUDIO DESCRIPTION

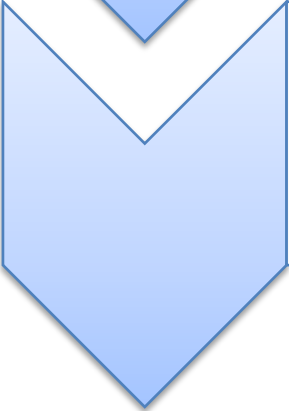
TTS AD + VOICE-OVER

- *Volver*

Text-to-speech AD

- 
- Cheaper and more easily available alternative to traditional pre-recorded AD

- 
- Increasing the total AD output

- 
- More audiovisual products accessible to the visually impaired

Questions and comments?

a.szarkowska@uw.edu.pl