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The Abbey Theatre as inclusive theatre: an analysis of the audio description of *Waiting for Godot*

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“The most important thing in life is not happiness but meaning”

(John M. Hull)

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to investigate inclusivity and accessibility within the area of theatrical performances by referring to the recently implemented accessibility service of audio description (AD) for the sight-impaired audience. The thesis analyses as a case study the play *Waiting for Godot* performed at the Abbey Theatre in Ireland on 20 May 2017 by the Druid Theatre Company.

The work is divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents an overview of the concept of accessibility by focussing on the issues related to its definition and the identification of the potential target users. Then, the challenges that people with disabilities face daily, are discussed with a focus on theatre performances.

The second chapter provides an overview of AD, focusing on its linguistic and prosodic aspects. Furthermore, the chapter provides an overview and a comparison of the principal guidelines implemented in the European and Anglo-American contexts.

In the third chapter, a method based on linguistic and stylistic aspects related to AD is presented. Then, a multimodal analysis of the script and the video recording of the second act of the audio described performance of the play is carried out.

Eventually, in the fourth chapter, the results of the multimodal analysis are discussed in comparison to the Irish Guidelines on AD.

The study also includes a brief interview with Máirín Harte, the audio describer who offered the AD script of the theatrical performance under analysis.

ABSTRACT

L'obiettivo della mia tesi è quello di trattare l'inclusività e l'accessibilità nell'ambito teatrale facendo riferimento al recente servizio di audiodescrizione per gli utenti ipovedenti. La tesi analizza come caso di studio lo spettacolo *Waiting for Godot* (Aspettando Godot) prodotto dalla compagnia teatrale Druid Theatre Company che ha avuto luogo il 20 maggio 2017 nel teatro irlandese Abbey Theatre.

L'elaborato si dividerà in quattro capitoli. Il primo capitolo presenterà una panoramica del concetto di accessibilità focalizzandosi sulle problematiche relative alla sua definizione e all'identificazione dei potenziali utenti. Successivamente, si farà riferimento alle sfide che le persone affette da disabilità affrontano quotidianamente, con uno sguardo all'ambito teatrale. Il secondo capitolo presenterà il tema dell'audiodescrizione concentrandosi sui suoi aspetti linguistici e prosodici. Il capitolo, inoltre, prenderà in rassegna e comparerà le principali linee guida introdotte nel contesto europeo e angloamericano. Nel terzo capitolo, si esporrà un metodo basato sugli aspetti linguistici e stilistici relativi all'audiodescrizione. In seguito, si svolgerà un'analisi multimodale del copione di audiodescrizione e della videoregistrazione del secondo atto dello spettacolo. Infine, nel quarto capitolo si discuteranno i risultati raccolti in seguito all'analisi comparandoli alle linee guida irlandesi per l'audiodescrizione.

L'elaborato includerà una breve intervista a Máirín Harte, l'audiodescrittrice che ha prodotto il copione di audiodescrizione della rappresentazione teatrale oggetto di analisi.

INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, accessibility and inclusivity have progressively become a matter of concern to content creators due to the increasing number of people affected by different types of disabilities. Consequently, the urgent need to provide accessibility has revolutionised the product creation process since accessibility is implemented from the earlier stage rather than having a pre-existent product adapted to the new norms.

Innovations in the fields of technology, computer science and Audio-visual Translation have thus extended multimedia products and live cultural events to an even greater number of blind and partially sighted people. The proliferation of advanced devices to guarantee accessibility paved the way for the development of new practices, among them audio description. Audio description is a verbal commentary providing visual details regarding media, which may be included during performances and delivered live in theatres and, cinemas, or which may be pre-recorded and inserted in movies or museum tours.

This thesis focuses on audio description for theatrical events by presenting as a case study the audio described performance of the play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, produced by the Druid Theatre Company and performed at the Abbey Theatre in Ireland. The thesis is divided into four chapters. In chapter 1 a theoretical framework on the concept of accessibility reveals the main challenges involved as we take into consideration the variety of social and personal needs within the same group of target users. Chapter 2 narrows the field of theatre accessibility to the service of audio description by presenting the four pillars to an effective audio described product (what to write, when to include the audio description, how to write, how detailed the text should be), the profile of the audio describer and script delivery. Later on in the chapter, an overview of the standards on audio description proves that although audio description is still a relatively recent field, certain guidelines have already been established. More specifically, a distinction between guidelines for pre-recorded cultural events and live performances is carried out. Furthermore, the chapter includes a comparative analysis of the standards implemented in the USA, the UK, Ireland and Europe.

On a more practical note, the third and fourth chapters are dedicated to the multimodal analysis of the audio description of the second act of the audio described performance

chosen as a case study. Firstly, an overview of the play *Waiting for Godot* introduces the main themes running through the play, identifies the characters' main features and analyses briefly the language and style employed by the author. Secondly, the data and the methodology are presented in order to carry out the multimodal analysis. Finally, the conclusions and final remarks are provided with particular reference to the Standards regulating audio description drafted by the Broadcast Authority of Ireland.

CHAPTER 1

TOWARD A NEW DEFINITION OF ACCESSIBILITY

1. Accessibility: changing the paradigm

When employing the word "accessibility", the most common notion has long since highlighted the spatial aspect of the term and the world of physical barriers and sensory impairments (Greco 2017). Indeed, one of the meanings for *accessibility* refers to "the ability to reach or enter a place or building" as defined by the Cambridge dictionary[1]. In this regard, accessibility is related to the elimination of any kind of physical barrier, e.g., structural obstacles which hinder safe access to services and the fruition of performing arts and cultural heritage. However, the notion of accessibility goes beyond physicality as it leads to a different hue in meaning. On a cognitive level, accessibility means that everyone has the right to easily and thoroughly understand products and services provided by the community. Therefore, accessibility needs to be conceived on a much broader scope that includes tackling language, cultural and communication constraints as well.

Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits[2]". By extension, accessibility becomes a mean to grant the right to equality, freedom and inclusion for all human beings.

A step further in the notion of accessibility is represented by inclusion, which allows to recognise, welcome and value diversity so that people who have been historically excluded are treated fairly and equally. Nevertheless, when addressing inclusion, it is implicitly assumed that someone does not belong to a group because he/she has either been excluded or forgotten. Such negative connotation of the word inclusion results from a lack of instruments that would ensure complete independence and equal treatment. Therefore, accessibility should also be intended as the starting point of an ever-evolving process in which technology and legislation are the main actors of this revolution.

[1] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/ (last accessed 08/08/2021).
[2] https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights (last accessed 15/08/2021).

As theorised by Greco (2017: 11-13), the "cultural revolution of accessibility" allows us to change our attitude towards the motor and sensory disabilities by finding solutions that comprise everyone.

Most of the time, attitudes represent the real disability since we tend to focus on individuals rather than the context where interaction takes place. As a consequence, according to this standpoint, people with disabilities are the ones who need to fit into a certain context. In the event of failure to adapt to the social context, these individuals will be excluded. This is the case of integration, an intermediate stage in the evolution towards inclusion, which provides individuals with the opportunity to join a pre-established context. However, such an environment may not meet everyone's needs, especially when it was not designed to follow an inclusive approach.

On the other hand, inclusion first operates on the social, physical and cultural environment and then on individuals. Therefore, people with disabilities will not need to adapt to a pre-determined background since they will find solutions and opportunities which best suit them. In order to include everyone successfully, goods and service design need to be approached from the perspective of people with disabilities. In this regard, Waller and Clarkson (2010) theorised the concept of *inclusive design*, in which they underlined the importance for people with different abilities and of all ages to be included in every stage of the goods and service's development process. Inclusive design is based upon five pivotal points: people, diversity, choice, flexibility and conveniency[3]. Engaging with people's diversity and requirements enables designers to create bespoke goods and services rather than the one-size-fits-all solution typical of an integration approach.

Nevertheless, being the recipients of these services, cultural activities and information so diversified, meeting as many people's needs as possible could be challenging. Therefore, solutions need to be devised by empathizing with the final receivers, knowing the user's characteristics and understanding the services and information's purpose. A crucial prerequisite of this process is the ability to adapt the offer to the ever-changing nature of the demand. Moreover, the second precondition of inclusive design consists in providing comfortable and intuitive solutions so as to make everyone feel independent and self-confident. Practically speaking, in order to provide a more comprehensive

[3] https://projects.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/about_ud/udprinciplestext.htm (last accessed 13/09/2021).

experience, the five principles of inclusive design should be applied to the creation of accessibility resources. Subtitling, translation and interpreting are implemented when language discrepancies occur, while audio description and Braille translations help blind and visually impaired people understand information belonging to the visual and non-verbal communication channels. Urban and building design should cater to the needs of people with motor disabilities by equipping structures and buildings with ramps instead of steps, providing access for wheelchair users and replacing manual doors with automatic ones.

Furthermore, designing an accessible environment means also considering the atmosphere in which individuals benefit from goods and services. For instance, at the theatre, people with intellectual disabilities and sensory sensitivity prefer attending relaxed performances, which are particular shows in which noise and movement are allowed in the auditorium, rather than the typical theatrical event. Accessibility for people with mental and cognitive disabilities is also provided through the use of explicatory images, text-to-speech technology and easily displayed information[4]. Closed captioning and sign language interpreting accommodate deaf and hard-of-hearing people with information transmitted through aural communication.

Being accessibility resources so differentiated makes them versatile and apt for multiple occasions: from cinema to theatre, to museum, to sporting events, to conferences, to literature, just to name a few. The multifaceted nature of accessibility resources reflects, therefore, the call for a more holistic approach when designing goods and services.

Such a comprehensive approach is called "universalist account of access" by Greco (2017: 11-13), in which access, "[…] previously thought to concern exclusively or mainly specific groups of people, […] is now understood to concern all human beings". In other words, accessibility is no longer considered as a problem regarding people with disabilities only, but it is becoming a concern of an increasingly wider range of groups.

As mentioned earlier in this section, when designing goods and services, users' active involvement is a crucial premise for successful inclusion. Traditionally, the prevailing attitude followed a *maker-centred* approach, in which the maker's expertise overruled the

[4] https://www.w3.org/TR/coga-usable/ (last accessed 15/08/2021).

recipients' needs. It goes without saying that this approach contributed to the widening of the gap between the makers and the users which, in turn, decreased accessibility (in Ashok & Jacko 2009, quoted in Greco 2018). Actively including users, therefore, means adopting a *proactive* approach that aims at incorporating accessibility into a product or service right from the beginning of the design process. Hence, the need to consider accessibility as an instrument for inclusion.

2. Accessibility resources for end users: key issues

With the aim of creating and then providing adequate accessibility resources, it is essential to outline the characteristics and the needs of the end users by considering the implied challenges of disability. To meet the purpose of this thesis, people with vision impairments and people with hearing impairments will be the subject of study in this part of the research.

The dynamic and ever-changing world of technology has led, through innovation and progress, to the rise of new consumption habits. The latter is also the result of new requirements caused by an increase in the number of people with disabilities.

As reported by the European Blind Union (EBU): "there are estimated to be over 30 million blind and partially sighted persons in geographical Europe", among which 90 percent of visually impaired individuals are over the age of 65[5]. In Italy alone, there are 1,603,096 people with vision impairment, of whom 1,383,922 people are affected by low vision and 219,174 people are blind[6].

Regarding people with hearing impairments, the World report of Hearing issued by the WHO claims that, in Europe, 196 million people have some degree of hearing loss and 57.3 million have a moderate, severe or profound level of hearing loss[7]. Moreover, according to the Italian Ministry of Health, in Italy there are 7 million people with hearing loss, among which one individual out of three is over 65 years old[8].

When addressing disability, on the one hand, there is a broad tendency to generalisation, namely the use of an umbrella term that covers different concepts: impairment, mobility and participation restrictions. Such tendency can also be observed

[5] http://www.euroblind.org/ (last accessed 20/08/2021).
[6] https://www.iapb.it/about-us/?lang=en (last accessed 20/08/2021).
[7] https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/world-report-on-hearing (last accessed 20/08/2021).
[8] https://www.censis.it/ (last accessed 13/09/2021).

in the definition of persons with disabilities presented by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006):

> Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others[9].

On the other hand, another customary framework is represented by the adoption either of the *medical model* or of the *social model*[10]. In the former, disability is exclusively characterised by the individuals' physical or mental impairment. Social and environmental constrictions are, therefore, the result of their medical condition. Conversely, the *social model* deems disability as the social context's reaction to certain physical and mental features, which leads to exclusion and ghettoization. Although the two models are viewed as antithetical, a more comprehensive approach including both the medical and the social model should be adopted. In this respect, the WHO established a framework called the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) with the aim of measuring health and disability in terms of individuals and population[11]. This *bio-psycho-social model* considers disability to originate from the interplay between health conditions and the context, namely environmental and personal factors. Health conditions are represented by disorders, diseases and injuries, while environmental factors are identified with products, services, policies and attitudes. The degree of participation in society depends on personal factors which are motivation and self-esteem. In other words, disability arises when people experience difficulties from the interaction between their health conditions and the context. Such difficulties belong to any or all the following three areas: 1) impairments, which are problems regarding body structure and functions; 2) activity limitations that hinder action execution; 3) participation restrictions, namely limitations concerning any aspect of life.

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[9] https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html (last accessed 20/08/2021).
[10] https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241564182 (last accessed 18-02-2022).
[11] https://www.who.int/standards/classifications/international-classification-of-functioning-disability-and-health (last accessed 15/09/2021).

One of the main risks of adopting a tendency to generalisation is creating fixed, standard categories to which people have to conform; conversely, disability should be considered as a spectrum composed of varying degrees. According to the WHO, there are five degrees of vision impairment measured on the basis of visual acuity. Distance vision impairment can be mild, moderate, severe or ranging to blindness, while near vision impairment is "[…] worse than N6 or M.08 at 40cm[12]". Moreover, vision loss can be permanent or treatable with vision aids such as glasses or surgery, as specified by the Vision Loss Expert Group (VLEG), an international group of ophthalmologists and optometrists operating across the globe.

Globally, the main causes of eye conditions are aging, genetics, medical conditions and negative health-related behaviours such as smoking, nutrient deficiencies and infections provoked by poor sanitation and low access to safe water. The WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health (WHO 2010: 43) asserts that poor living conditions and inequality are the principal causes of disability since they can have a negative impact on physical or mental health. Visual impairments that are generally preventable in developed countries, in low-income and middle-income developing countries lead to serious eye conditions or blindness due to limited access to health care. The primary cause of blindness in children is a case in point because lesions of the optic nerve and higher visual pathways are leading causes in high-income developed countries. Conversely, corneal scarring from measles, vitamin A deficiency and harmful traditional eye remedies are the major causes in low-income countries (Alswailmi 2018). As far as hearing impairments are concerned, a similar scenario shows that approximately 80% of people with hearing loss belong to low and middle-income developing countries[13]. Furthermore, most of the causes of hearing loss, such as genetic factors, chronic ear infections, sensorineural hearing loss, nutritional deficiencies, exposure to loud noises to mention a few, if not addressed adequately from their earliest stages, may evolve into severe hearing loss or deafness. There are seven degrees of hearing loss depending on the

[12] Visual acuity is measured by referring to physical print size letters *N* and *M*, which correspond to *Near* and Sloan's *M-unit* respectively. As stated in the International Classification of Diseases 11 (2018), when at a distance of 40 cm, near vision acuity is worse than "normal" near vision, namely N6, the person has a near vision impairment. The same applies to a near vision acuity below M.08 in Louis Sloan's Reading Card. https://www.iapb.org/learn/vision-atlas/about/definitions/ (last accessed 17/08/2021).
[13] https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/deafness-and-hearing-loss (last accessed 20/08/2021).

number of Decibels necessary for a sound to be audible: normal, slight, mild, moderate, moderately severe, severe and profound (Clark 1981: 493-500).

Although hearing loss and vision impairments are the most common sensory impairments, they are also defined as invisible disabilities or hidden disabilities since they may not be perceived by the onlooker. Conversely, motor and physical impairments are much more evident (in Arma 2014, quoted in Perego 2014: 59). As a consequence, the observer's attitude changes since a motor disability can be easier to notice while an invisible disability may lead to misunderstanding, judgements, preconceptions and stigmatization. Most of the time it is the onlooker's attitude to be disabling because it triggers a mechanism of internalisation of the negative social values related to disability which then results in an emotional burden people with disabilities have to carry (Thomas 1999). This negative attitude called *internalised oppression* is also the result of the paradoxical nature of the first impression of disability. As Finkelstein's (1980: 11) definition of the paradox of disability points out:

> […] on the one hand there is the appearance that disability implies a personal tragedy, passivity and dependency. On the other hand, disability can be seen as a form of group discrimination, involving constant struggles and independent action.

In other words, disabled people are constantly being patronized by a sort of invalidating gaze which leaves them feeling fragile as it tends to highlight their disabilities instead of their abilities (Reeve 2002). Conversely, it is also true that disability is the result of a negative interaction between the individual with a physical or mental impairment and the environment. Therefore, a process of attitude change and call to action is needed. In order for a shift in perspective to occur, it is pivotal to first outline the difficulties people with sensory impairments face daily.

2.1. The challenges people with sensory disabilities face daily

Contemporary society requires people to be able to perform activities that allow them to live autonomously in a community, namely the basic activities of daily living (BADL), the instrumental activities of daily living (IADL) and the recreational activities of daily living (RADL). The BADL include ambulating, feeding, dressing, personal hygiene,

continence and toileting. Conversely, the IADL require more complex thinking skills and comprise transportation and shopping, managing finances, meal preparation, house cleaning and home maintenance, managing communication with others and medications (Edemekong et al. 2021). Although defining the RADL is complicated because of their ethnical, social and chronological variations among different groups of people (in Aguiar, Hurst; Marshall et al., quoted in Linden et al. 2009), reading, going to the theatre or cinema and watching tv, to a name few, belong to this category.

A BADL-related hardship people with sensory impairments confront daily concerns the field of mobility and orientation. Sight and hearing, along with smell, are called distance senses since they contribute greatly to the process of space perception[14]. Unlike touch and taste, which gather information through direct contact with the external environment, sight, hearing and smell convey information placed at distant areas. Therefore, navigating around places and perceiving obstacles become an arduous and unsafe task especially for visually impaired individuals. Research has shown that there is a relationship between vision impairments and injuries deriving from falls especially among elderly people (in Crew et al. 2016, quoted in Welp et al. 2016). Indeed, one of the health-related consequences of vision impairments is a higher risk of hip fractures due to poor visual acuity (Felson et al. 1989). Environment may be dangerous for hearing-impaired as well. Despite their ability to perceive obstacles and get oriented, people with a hearing impairment could find it difficult to recognise certain sounds or distinguish speech sounds from ambient sounds (in Hirsh et al.; Mathers et al., quoted in Ohlenforst et al. 2017). Hearing aid users, for instance, report speech recognition difficulties when exposed to a noisy environment since hearing aids amplify background ambient sounds indistinctly (Palmer, Bentler, Mueller 2006). As a consequence, the cognitive efforts to identify sounds and comprehend the message and the cognitive load referred to information retention and selective attention use are higher in hearing-impaired individuals than in hearing people.

Another difficulty people with sensory impairments face daily, which belongs to the IADL area, is communication. Human beings connect with the external world through the information they receive from the environment, which then is processed by the brain.

[14] https://www.britannica.com/science/space-perception/Visual-factors-in-space-perception (last accessed 27/08/2021).

Among the sensory faculties, sight is the sense absorbing the greatest amount of information, namely eighty percent of the information deriving from the immediate environment (Willetts 1997). The major complexities people with vision impairments may encounter concern the communication field. At the basis of the communication process, there are eight key components: source, message, channel, receiver, feedback, environment, context and interference (McLean 2005: 10-11). Generally speaking, communication starts when an individual, called source, processes information in his/her brain and conveys it in the form of a message. The message is addressed to a receiver who analyses and interprets its content both in its intentional and unintentional meaning. The physical and psychological environment in which communication occurs and the context of interaction affect communication itself. There are three occasions in which communication may be hindered or unsuccessful. First, when an interference occurs, namely a noise coming from the environment which may block the message or change the meaning conveyed by the source. Second, if the individuals involved in the conversation do not meet the expectations implied in the context, as for instance, being dressed inadequately in a business meeting where people are expected to stick to a smart dress code. Third, when the message conveyed by the source receives no feedback from the receiver, as in the case of a lack of understanding due to language and cultural barriers, disinterest in the topic or inability to pick up verbal or non-verbal signals. The latter case concerns people with visual or hearing impairments, since the way in which a message is conveyed, also called communication channel, may be inaccessible to them. As a consequence, verbal signals which are transmitted orally cannot be understood by hearing-impaired people, while non-verbal signs are not accessible to visually impaired individuals. In other words, people with hearing impairments cannot receive verbal oral communication, which is made up of the meaning conveyed through words, and paralanguage, namely the way in which meaning is expressed in terms of voice tone, intonation, pauses and voice pitch. Conversely, people with visual impairments do not have access to facial expressions, gestures, the speakers' physical appearance and eye contact. Paralanguage and body language belong to non-verbal communication and perform pragmatic functions by expressing intentions, emotions, thoughts (La Varvera 2014). According to Abercrombie (1968), "we speak with our vocal organs, but we converse with our entire bodies", meaning that verbal and non-verbal signals are

complementary aspects in the communication process (Cozzolino 2003). When part of this process is inaccessible, the interaction with the sender might go unnoticed and the message is misinterpreted.

The challenges people with sensory impairments respond to daily affect their quality of life (QOL), as studies show that QOL starts lowering at vision loss onset and diminishes abruptly when visual field problems increase (Rein et al. 2007). Furthermore, QOL is also linked to disability's nature of dependency since the former declines according to the increase of the latter. In this regard, everyday self-care activities such as eating, dressing but also doing the shopping and participating in cultural activities are limited for people with visual impairments (Brown et al. 2014). Therefore, when a visual or hearing impairment affects one's ability to function in the community, the individual is more likely to experience social isolation, poor mental health-related issues and cognitive deficits. In order to mitigate the condition of social isolation and provide cognitive and psychological benefits, people with sensory impairments' participation in recreational activities of daily living should be contemplated, considering culture's pivotal role in personal growth. Nevertheless, the third type of hardships people with sensory impairments face daily concerns the RADL area.

2.2. Media Accessibility: a challenge for end users and media producers

Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, previously mentioned in this chapter, acknowledges the benefits of the arts and the scientific advancement for the quality of life of each individual. In other words, the quality of life is strictly related to the individual's capacity to participate in cultural life and keep pace with technological progress. However, in order to do so, people should benefit from equal starting conditions. Since the starting point is not equivalent between abled and disabled people, an additional difficulty that people with sensory impairments face daily is partaking in cultural events and being included in the addressees of development. Therefore, the main difficulties associated with recreational activities of daily living concern the field of accessibility, hence the need to discuss Media Accessibility (MA).

When referring to Media Accessibility (Greco 2019: 18), one designates:

> [the] access to media and non-media objects, services and environments through media solutions, for any person who cannot or would not be able to, either partially or completely, access them in their original form.

Starting from this definition, it is paramount to underline the aspect of universality and comprehensiveness when determining Media Accessibility's addressees. More specifically, in the definition of Media Accessibility, Greco includes different people who cannot access media, services or places because of any kind or degree of impairment, being physical, mental or cognitive, age or language barriers. Therefore, for instance, Media Accessibility benefits not only people who find it difficult to watch or comprehend a movie due to cognitive or sensory impairments, as in the case of elderly people, but also people who cannot watch it in its original language. Originally, Media Accessibility was meant for individuals with sensory disabilities only, since it included modalities of subtitles for the deaf or hard-of-hearing (SDH), audio description (AD), audio subtitling (AST) and sign language interpreting. However, deriving from the area of Translation Studies, in particular Audio-visual Translation (AVT), Media Accessibility was extended to foreign language speakers as well. Moreover, accessibility issues are differentiated and multifaceted since their solutions can be found in the methods and techniques employed in domains such as engineering, architecture, computing, psychology, performing arts, transportation, to mention a few. For these reasons, Media Accessibility is not to be merely intended as a subsection of Translation Studies, but "it is a broader, interdisciplinary area, that criss-crosses many well-established fields, including translation studies and AVT" (Greco 2018: 218). A clear example of the blurred boundaries of the Media Accessibility field can be found in the creation of accessible movies. In order to implement accessible resources in movies, services such as audio descriptions, close captioning and subtitling need to be included in the frames during the filmmaking process. Linguistic and translation skills are required in the processes of screenplay translation and audio description script draft, while, at the same time, technological expertise and sound editing are essential to synchronise subtitles or audio description with movie dialogues and scenes.

An increasing Media Accessibility implementation arises from the ever-growing importance that this new field is gaining among the goals in the agenda of many

international organisations. In 2010, the European Commission presented the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 with the aim of emancipating people with disabilities by focussing on the elimination of barriers, ensuring that they can enjoy their full rights and participate in the economic and social life of the EU. In this regard, one of the eight main areas for action determined by the European Commission is accessibility related to goods, services, public services and assistive technologies (European Commission 2010). The Audio-visual Media Services Directive entered into force in 2010, as a revision to the 2007 Directive, established the close connection between the social and cultural participation and inclusion of people with disabilities and elderly with accessible audio-visual media services supply. In other words, the Directive underlines the fundamental role of audio-visual media services both culturally and economically since they guarantee media pluralism and freedom of information and opinion[15].

According to the Council of the European Union directive, adopted in 2018 and amending the Directive 2010/13/EU, the Member States of the EU commit to ensuring that:

> […] without undue delay, […] services provided by media service providers under their jurisdiction are made continuously and progressively more accessible to persons with disabilities through proportionate measures[16].

In the 2019 European accessibility act, besides expressing the need to make audio-visual content accessible, the directive adds State members' duty to provide accessible mechanisms which allow people with disabilities to use their assistive technologies. However, as stated in the European accessibility act, in order for products and services to be accessible, the general accessibility requirements should be met. The necessary conditions products and services designers must comply with affect information provision, instructions for use, installation and maintenance, product design and interface, support services. Information and instructions regarding the use of products and services should be presented in an understandable way, thus allowing people to perceive them via more than one sensory channel, or proposing alternatives to vision, auditory, tactile and

[15] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=celex%3A32010L0013 (last accessed 01/09/2021).
[16] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2018/1808/oj (last accessed 30/08/2021).

speech components. More specifically, instructions should contain alternative formats and descriptions of the functionality and interface of products. Moreover, written information should be displayed in adequate font sizes, acceptable contrast and shape, and adaptable spacing between letters, paragraphs and lines. In reference to services for the access to audio-visual media services, including subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing and spoken subtitles, sign language interpretation and audio description, individuals should be able to use them independently by dint of thorough quality display and sound and video synchronization.

For what concerns people with sensory impairments, the functional performance criteria, established in the 2019 European accessibility act, address the more specific needs of the blind and people with low vision and colour perception deficiencies, the deaf and the hard-of-hearing. When the use of sight or hearing is required, product design and production, and the provision of services should offer alternative modes of operation to the visual or auditory channel. In this regard, the accessibility act provides non-binding solutions including offering electronic files compatible with the computer using screen readers or Braille printed information for people with visual impairments. Low vision users should be able to enlarge images and text and increase the contrast in order to distinguish foreground images from the background. Moreover, information related to instructions should be accompanied with subtitles or translated into images for hearing-impaired people. Products and services should facilitate communication among people with hearing impairments by enabling them to use sign language or interaction with hearing people through written messages to be displayed in a video[17]. Such a comprehensive approach, which considers disability as a spectrum, was also adopted by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which entered into force in 2008. The Convention advocates for the protection of all human rights and freedom of people with all types of disabilities by considering them active members of society. Specifically, article 21 declares the State Parties' commitment to guaranteeing the right to freedom of expression and opinion by offering information in accessible formats and technologies that can be easily used by people with all kinds of disabilities with no extra charge. Furthermore, this section together with article 30, emphasises on

[17] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019L0882 (last accessed 01/09/2021).

the implementation of services that recognise sign languages and Braille, so as to facilitate communication and understanding for people with disabilities and encourage the preservation of their cultural and linguistic identity. In order for the cultural and linguistic identity to survive, it is vital to foster its expression by promoting recreational activities of daily living. With this regard, article 30 of the Convention asserts people with disabilities' right to participate equally in the cultural and recreational life, leisure and sporting activities. Moreover, the article states people with disabilities' entitlement to accessible cultural material, audio-visual media, tourism services, cinema screenings, plays, libraries, sights and museum tours[18]. Article 30 of the Convention will be assessed by the European Commission within the framework of the current Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 to increase people with disabilities' involvement and assistance in cultural and recreational activities. One of the goals the European Commission intends to achieve by 2023 is accessibility enhancement of audio-visual communication and graphic design services by employing sign language interpretation and *easy-to-read* texts when suitable[19].

Generally speaking, the key role of media is to convey information to as many people as possible through communication. When dealing with media, it is possible to distinguish between two types: print media and audio-visual media. Print media comprehend any written or artistic discourse created mechanically or electronically by using printing, photocopying or digitally, e.g., books, journals, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, to name a few[20]. Given the channel employed in print media, the accessibility level is low, especially for visually impaired individuals. Conversely, audio-visual media are electronic products that include a visual and aural channel such as broadcasting media, namely movies, tv and radio programs, and internet media as in the case of social networks, podcasts, websites and online forums. Because of the more elaborate nature of audio-visual media, the degree of accessibility is minimal both for sight-impaired and hearing-impaired users.

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[18] https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html (last accessed 02/09/2021).
[19] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3e1e2228-7c97-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1/language-en (last accessed 02/09/2021).
[20] https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100346392 (last accessed 30/08/2021).

While audio-visual media inherently merge channels perceived by a greater variety of sensory faculties, print media originally employ a single channel, that is visual. However, in order for print media to be accessible for visually impaired people, the tactile and aural channels are to be included in the form of Braille language and spoken-word audio respectively. Therefore, in this case, print media convert into multimodal media, namely a combination and integration of diverse semiotic modes, more specifically, linguistic, aural, gestural, visual and spatial systems (van Leeuwen 1999). An example of print media rendered into multimodal media resources through the conversion of written texts into MP3 files accompanied by videos, images and sounds is the digital accessible information system (DAISY). By employing human or synthesized voice, DAISY is an international technical standard that provides access to books, encyclopaedias, magazines for visually impaired people and dyslexics[21].

Whilst print media by means of written texts, images, diagrams and drawings convey information merely through the visual channel, one of the highest expressions of multimodality can be found in the field of performing arts.

The world of art forms is heterogeneous due to the use of different means of expression which give shape to varied artistic products enjoyable everywhere. However, the wide range of art forms can be classed into four main groups: the visual arts, the literary arts, the media arts and the performing arts (McCarthy et al. 2001: 7). According to McCarthy's classification, visual arts comprise painting, sculpture and crafts while literary arts include fiction and poetry. The performing arts which comprehend theatre, music, dance and opera were originally staged in front of a live audience, but the coming of the digital era allowed these arts to be also enjoyed on television, radio, video, recordings and the Internet. Moreover, technological innovations led to the development of media arts such as installation arts, films and digital arts.

While in art performances with a live audience the content experience is more direct, since the users and producers share the same environment, in non-live art performances the formal distance between producers and end users is greater. Consequently, there is little opportunity to have a direct experience when users enjoy the content of performing arts via technological devices. Even though in the case of people with visual impairments

[21] http://www.euroblind.org/publications-and-resources/making-information-accessible-all (last accessed 03/09/2021).

the content experience is partially direct because they understand the visual elements on stage thanks to devices in which an audio description is transmitted, they still experience the actors' voices and the stage sounds in person. Similarly, people with hearing impairments visually perceive first-hand the actions on stage as well as the audience's reactions to the play. However, they gather aural information via closed captions. Among all the recreational activities, theatrical performances are initially written in the form of scripts. Then, on stage, they are translated into oral verbal and non-verbal language. Therefore, multimodality characterises, in different degrees, each and every phase of the theatrical production from the script draft to the actual stage performance. In *Semiotics of Theatrical Performance* (Eco 1977), Tadeusz Kowzan, a major theatre semiotician, identified thirteen semiotic modes employed in a theatrical performance: words and voice inflection, gesture and facial mimicry, body movement, costume and accessory, makeup, headdress, stage design and lighting, music and noise. Thus, it may seem that the greater the multimodality, the higher the possibility to have access to the content of the play. As a matter of fact, in the event that people with visual impairments are attending a show, the channel conversion is more complex since all the visual information deriving from gestures, body language, light, scenography and stage clothes, need to be converted into both tactile and aural experiences, more specifically touch tours and audio description respectively. Diversely, when there are deaf and hearing-impaired people among the audience, the soundscape will have to be rendered into captions or interpreted simultaneously in sign language.

3. Theatre accessibility

The relatively recent attention given to theatre inclusivity both on and off stage has led to a slow implementation of accessibility services and resources since there is still a long way to go before the creation of fully-accessible shows. VocalEyes, a charity organisation founded in 1998 and active across the United Kingdom, issued a report stating that around three out of ten theatres in the United Kingdom provide access services for upcoming productions[22]. Moreover, only 20% of theatres offer a service of audio description and approximately the same percentage provide performances accompanied by British Sign

[22] https://vocaleyes.co.uk/state-of-theatre-access-2019/ (last accessed 06/09/2021).

Language interpreting and closed captioning[23]. In Italy, the majority of accessibility services are supplied by organisations such as the Blindsight Project, the Isiviù association, the Occhi Parlanti association and the Cooperativa Senza Barriere Onlus in Trento. These organisations work together with theatres and festivals in order to meet the diverse needs of theatregoers. One of the most renowned events accessible to visually and hearing-impaired people is the Macerata Opera Festival, within the InclusivOpera project founded by Accessibilità Lingue Inclusione (ALI), during which English and Italian audio descriptions of the opera shows are provided to users of all ages. Moreover, pre-show sensory tours, especially touch tours for visually impaired people and inclusive tours organised by Italian Sign Language interpreters for people with hearing impairments, allow for a greater understanding of the opera plot and setting. Regarding theatrical performances, the show *Laura per tutti*, written by the Blindsight Project, a volunteer organisation, is accessible to both sight and hearing-impaired people thanks to subtitles and audio description provided by the CulturAbile association.

Despite the associations' commitment, in Italy the degree of accessibility regarding media and live performances is lower than in other countries; in fact, accessibility is not often dealt with during legislation or parliamentary questions (in Arma 2014, quoted in Perego 2014). In order to implement accessibility and therefore aim for theatre inclusivity, three fundamental levels of accessibility should be made more user-friendly having a special consideration for sensory impaired people. The first level includes users' first approach with the theatre to gather details about the show, e.g., the showtime, the theatre location and how to get there with public transport, the tickets' price and possible discounted admissions on the theatre's website. Website information should be presented by using a direct, inclusive and easy-to-read language by including images when needed. Information about the theatre's location, for instance, should comprise the travel time and the descriptive directions to get to the theatre by car or public transport. In case of arrival by car, the website should provide details about the parking fees, its booking procedures and location which should be near the most accessible entrance. Furthermore, websites adding videos for theatre presentation should provide subtitles, especially open captions, along with the spoken word audio. Brochures about upcoming shows, in which all the

[23] Ibid. (last accessed 06/09/2021).

visual details regarding the set, the costumes, the props and the characters help visually impaired people to get a foretaste of the production, should be easily downloadable and available also in audio version. Since theatregoers will be using access services during the show, booking procedures and instructions for use of the devices should be clearly outlined on the website. Eventually, contact details should be handy, in case users require personal support.

Secondly, the physical accessibility concerning all interior and exterior areas of the venue, from the entrance to the foyer and the orchestra or galleries. The theatre entrance should be equipped with ramps or alternative routes to steps. Then, once sensory impaired people enter the theatre, lifts and hearing loops should assist them while moving around the venue. The front rows should be reserved for people with low vision or hearing loss so that the former better perceive stage movements and details while the latter read captions displayed on LED caption units positioned above or on both sides of the stage. Moreover, some productions provide Sign Language interpreters who stand close to the stage or in an interpretation booth, therefore hearing-impaired people should be seated in the first eight rows. In the event that blind theatregoers use service animals such as guide dogs to move around the venue, an adequate sitting area should be provided by theatre staff members.

Thirdly, content accessibility refers to two phases: the pre-show rundown and the actual performance.

3.1. Pre-show content accessibility: touch tours

According to blind and visually impaired people, the first-hand experiences they have before the show's opening are essential for the understanding of the plot and specific details perceivable only by sight. In this regard, tactile experiences planned by the theatre in agreement with cast members and stage managers, represent a way for patrons to enjoy a more immersive experience by using touch, a secondary communication channel. Before the opening of the show, blind and visually impaired theatregoers have the opportunity to get familiar with the theatre facility by visiting the auditorium, the stage, and in some cases, the backstage. During the thirty-minute touch tours, users can feel the texture of costumes as well as figure out the stage size, the shape of the scenography and the setting. Moreover, a touch tour is an opportunity for patrons to handle properties or

props, namely objects that are not attached to the stage walls or floors (Sanders 2018). Throughout the performance, actors may interact repeatedly with the props, hence their relevance in tactile tours. Cast members usually participate in touch tours; therefore, this experience allows blind and visually impaired people to activate not only tactile working memory but also echoic memory, since they can associate the actor's voice to the character while introducing himself/herself.

Even though the indications provided by the association Art Beyond Sight apply to visual arts only, specifically paintings, sculptures in art galleries and museums, some guidelines are also effective for theatre tactile tours. Art Beyond Sights suggests providing users with a verbal introduction of the area they are visiting by informing them of their exact position for spatial orientation. As they gradually move around the stage, theatre staff members should describe verbally the areas that blind and visually impaired people pass through so as to encourage spatial memory. Furthermore, dialogue and questions should be welcomed as they are a tool for users to clear up any doubts and for theatre staff members to become aware of possible accessibility issues[24]. An experiment carried out in 2015 and 2016 during the Macerata Opera Festival on a group of sixteen blind and partially sighted people aged between 18 to 63 years old, showed that users ask for more clarification when touching the main sets, tactile materials and 3D models than when touching the props. Consequently, the time patrons spend exploring the main sets or the stage, and touching materials and models is longer than the time spent examining the props (Di Giovanni 2018).

At the end of every touch tour, theatre staff members should make sure theatregoers know where to find and how to use the devices which will be employed during the performance, namely headsets for listening to the audio description or smart caption glasses to read the characters' dialogues transcripts.

3.2. Pre-show content accessibility: audio introductions

Once the touch tour is over, theatregoers can find their seats in the theatre, turn their headsets on and listen to the introductory notes before the beginning of the performance. This pre-show rundown, which lasts from ten to fifteen minutes, is often delivered fifteen

[24] http://www.artbeyondsight.org/handbook/acs-touchtools.shtml (last accessed 08/09/2021).

minutes before the curtain goes up. Introductory notes, also called audio introduction, can be downloaded from the theatre website or made available on CD. However, in the case of live performances, audio introductions are read out in person to the audience. According to the ADLAB guidelines for audio description (Remael et al. 2014), 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.

Audio introductions to films often include background ambient sounds and confirmatory effects to enhance the narration and increase the audience involvement, while, during theatre live performances, the narration relies on the audio describers' voices only. However, in the case of pre-recorded audio descriptions, musical extracts, characters or crew members' quotations from past interviews are inserted to divide different sections.

Content-wise, audio introductions generally provide information about the plot of the story, the setting and the scenography, the characters' physical appearance and stage costumes. Including these general details before the beginning of the show, supports information retention and comprehension. Moreover, given the limited time to provide information during audio description, audio introductions serve the purpose of spreading information acquisition. Accordingly, audio introductions fulfil two crucial functions: the informative and foreshadowing functions. Introductory notes are informative texts because they serve as an aural version of the information that the sighted audience has, namely the synopsis, the author, the genre, the cast and the director. Audio introductions set the scene and introduce the characters to the blind and visually impaired audience by anticipating the visual information which would not fit into the audio description, hence their foreshadowing function. Furthermore, they clarify any intertextual or visual references that otherwise would not be understood by the target audience. Nevertheless, while drafting audio introductions, it is essential to refrain from revealing the plot or turning points of the story.

This pre-show rundown is used to disclose theatrical techniques employed during the performance, although patrons might not be entirely familiar with theatre jargon and procedures. The fourth function of audio introductions is to instruct blind and visually impaired theatregoers on any technical issues such as the characters' names or nicknames, the meaning of widely used words and props or locations referred to in the audio description. Furthermore, practical directions inform on the number and location of bathrooms, ticket counters and bars, and when and how to increase or decrease the headsets' volume during the show. Most of the time, such practical information can be found on the theatre website. However, since the target audience may find it difficult to gather details about the performance, the oral version is provided during audio introductions. From a technical point of view, audio introductions help the audio describer to introduce himself or herself at the beginning of the speech, so that the audience starts familiarising with his or her voice. At the beginning of the audio introduction, factual information is provided, while descriptive elements are placed in the middle and technical and practical information at the end of the speech. Even though audio introductions are delivered before audio descriptions during the show, the former are usually drafted next to the latter in order to make sure that no main components are omitted. Both audio introductions and audio descriptions are written by the same author or authors after watching the production rehearsals on DVD or live, receiving a copy of the script and the program brochure, and doing some research on the theatre website. Due to the recent implementation of audio introduction and audio description services, clear directives and guidelines have not been outlined yet, therefore, the responsibility lies with the describers (Reviers et al. 2021). Nevertheless, audio introductions need to be drafted according to the specific performance and audience they are catering for, since "[audio introductions] for the performing arts are all about tailor-made solutions, adapting the chosen strategy to fit the requirements of the context of a given situation" (in Fryer 2019, quoted in Reviers et al. 2021).

As far as the style of audio introductions is concerned, short and simple sentences linked by conjunctions and a clear, easy to follow writing style create an engaging text which keeps the audience's attention high.

3.3. Show accessibility: captioned performances

During the performance deaf and hard-of-hearing people have access to the aural content of the play, namely the characters' verbal dialogues or monologues, the sound effects, pre-recorded or live music and the audience reactions by means of captioning. The translation into words of the aural elements is displayed on LED caption units located above the stage or at the back of the set. In doing so, theatregoers should be able to read the captions without the interference of smoke effects or stage lighting glare. Thus, for optimal viewing, the seats placed near the caption units should be reserved for deaf and hearing-impaired users. Unlike closed captioning, which patrons can activate individually when is needed, open captioning is available to the entire audience. Moreover, open captioning differs from surtitling, i.e., the translation of dialogues and lyrics in the audience's language during opera or musical performances, since information about the soundscape is not provided in surtitles.

Captioners have two main tasks: drafting the captioning script and streaming it on the caption units simultaneously with the actors' speech and stage sounds. The script draft takes approximately sixty hours since captioners first upload the production script to the captioning software, then they match the captions with the play by using the video recording of the show on DVD[25]. Captioners need to do at least two script checks by watching live performances of the show. Consequently, events for people with hearing impairments are usually scheduled towards the end of a play's run. Similarly to audio introduction, the authors and captioners serve technical functions because they make sure captions run smoothly on the screen and are displayed concurrently with the aural elements. In this regard, timing is an essential component to bear in mind as captions should not lag behind or be displayed in advance especially during gags or punchlines.

However, technological advances in the field of performing arts have led to a more practical way to enjoy a show thanks to the invention of smart caption glasses, namely devices, through which users are able to see the characters' dialogues and sound transcriptions as displayed on the lenses[26]. Indeed, smart caption glasses allow theatregoers to avoid averting their eyes while following the performance. Moreover, these devices are adaptable to the theatre's ever-changing light conditions, since the

[25] http://www.accessibletheatre.org.uk/ (last accessed 10/09/2021).
[26] https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/ (last accessed 11/09/2021).

captions' position, colour, brightness, size and display are adjustable to meet the users' requirements[27].

Smart caption glasses were first introduced by the National Theatre in 2019 after a four-year collaboration with Stagetext, a culture accessibility service for deaf and hearing-impaired people, and Accenture, a company that deals with IT services and management consulting. Contrarily to smart caption glasses and closed captions, which give patrons the chance to enjoy a more personal and unobtrusive experience, integrated captions are open captions projected on the walls or the actors onstage. Thus, integrated captions not only cater to accessibility needs but also serve an aesthetic function, since they perfectly merge with the scenography by conferring dynamism to the scene.

3.4. Show accessibility: Sign Language interpreted performances

A further accessibility service for deaf and hearing-impaired theatregoers which can also be intended as an artistic component of the performance is the sign language interpreting of the play. In other words, the interpreter, by means of his or her gestural movements, blends in with the actors performing on stage. However, this occurs only in the event that the interpreter is positioned close to the actors or alternatively, he or she is part of the *dramatis personae* or list of the characters. In the first case, also called the integrated approach, the interpreter dresses as a character of the play while shadowing the actors. If the number of characters performing is considerable or the scene shifts from one place to another, team interpreting occurs. The interpreters then stand next to the actors according to the genre, the age and the physical appearance of the characters. Conversely, if a conventional approach is followed, the interpreter is positioned at the side of the stage facing the group of deaf and hearing-impaired people[28]. In this case, suitable stage lighting is required to ensure good and clear visibility of the interpreter without obstructing the view or hindering the attention of the rest of the audience.

Analogously to authors and captioners of audio introductions, sign language interpreters prepare for the performance by studying the script, watching the DVD of the show rehearsals and attending the live performance at least twice.

[27] https://www.disabilityartsinternational.org/ (last accessed 11/09/2021).
[28] http://www.accessibletheatre.org.uk/ (last accessed 11/09/2021).

When addressing deaf and hard-of-hearing theatregoers, certain recommendations regarding behaviour should be followed. The guidelines about theatre accessibility drawn up by the *See a voice project* and created by the Arts Council England and the Stagetext and VocalEyes charities represent a valuable tool to facilitate communication with deaf and hearing-impaired people. Therefore, according to the above-mentioned guidelines, the staff of the theatre should interact with deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons clearly and concisely to facilitate lipreading. Accordingly, staff members should avoid covering their mouths while speaking or starting to talk when theatregoers are not facing them. In the event of verbal communication failures, staff members may opt for a rephrasing of concepts or the use of gestures and fingerspelling. Alternatively, writing things down may be a more efficient and practical solution. During the show, if any announcement is necessary, front-of-house staff should inform deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons by tapping them on the shoulder or catching their visual attention[29].

Sign language interpreters transpose the characters' dialogues and song lyrics from the oral channel to the hand, face and body gestures typical of sign language. However, contrarily to sign language interpretation, when actions and gestures occurring on stage are to be transposed aurally for a visually impaired audience during the show, an audio description is provided.

For the purpose of this research, in the following chapter audio descriptions will be discussed from a theoretical point of view, by illustrating their technical and prosodic aspects. Further on in the chapter, an overview of the specific guidelines referring to audio descriptions will be carried out in preparation for a practical analysis of an audio description script regarding the play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, which will be provided in the third chapter.

[29] Ibid. (last accessed 12/09/2021).

CHAPTER 2

AN INSTRUMENT FOR THEATRE INCLUSION: AUDIO DESCRIPTION

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return[30].

Since Ancient Greece, describing art has been a practice followed mainly by poets, prose writers, and essayists. However, during modern times, visual artists such as painters, sculptors, and architects started pursuing it as well, each with their own form of expression. By employing a medium that differs from the one used in the represented item, art generally describes itself through verbal communication. Nevertheless, the artistic content may be rendered into other formats such as sculpture, painting, dance, and performance. This rhetorical strategy, called *ekphrasis*, refers to "an account in detail, visible as they say, bringing before one's eyes what is to be shown" (in Baldwin 1959, quoted in D'Angelo 1998: 439-447). In this regard, the word ekphrasis (ἔκφρασις) comes from the combination of the Greek prefix "ex", meaning "out", and the verb "phrazein", that in English corresponds to the act of pointing out or explaining[31]. In classical education, ekphrasis belonged to the *progymnasmata*, or preliminary rhetorical exercises that young male students of rhetoric had to perform in order to master the art of public speaking. Indeed, ekphrasis is not to be intended as a genre, but as a technique of persuasion adopted in a discourse (D'Angelo 1998). Even though during the classical period greater recognition was granted to the reaction of the listening audience to the discourse rather than the subject of description[32], "ekphrasis originated […] as a rhetorical mode of praising and describing people, places, buildings and works of art" (Alpers 1960:

[30] *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, John Keats (1819).
[31] https://www.merriam-webster.com/ (last accessed 14/09/2021).
[32] https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.2365 (last accessed 14/09/2021).

190-215). For this reason, one of the characteristics of ekphrasis is its ability to provide vivid visual images in order to move the hearer (Bartsch 1989). In fact, "by penetrating the visual imagination of the listener and involving him in the subject of the speech, the orator [could] persuade more effectively than through logical argument alone" (in Web and Weller 1993, quoted in D'Angelo 1998: 439-447). Despite the ideal uphold by the rhetoric of pursuing a realistic and faithful description (in Nadeau 1952, quoted in D'Angelo 1998), the thing being described, which may be vivid in the reader's mind, may not exist. In fact, in describing visual arts, artists often mixed reality with imagination as in the case of John Keats's ekphrastic poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, featuring the description of an urn with some engravings portraying a pagan sacrifice. In the fourth stanza of the poem, Keats, through the use of rhetorical questions, describes what he sees on the urn, namely a peaceful, desolate town and a heifer adorned with garlands moving towards the pagan priest during a religious ceremony. However, the author's conjecture, "Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies", has readers realising that the subject of the description does not exist, nor does it allude to a definite urn. Therefore, when addressing ekphrasis, the artists' mastery comes from their ability to persuade the audience to believe in the verisimilitude of the text (in Smith 1995, quoted in D'Angelo 1998).

The third role of ekphrasis is praising or blaming the work of art that is being described (D'Angelo 1998) since the product of this rhetorical strategy tends to compete with the subject of description by demonstrating the superiority of words over visual art. Moreover, poets and prose writers who chose to follow the art of ekphrasis committed to the idea of describing works of art for non-specialists, or people who could not see them in person. Not only did the artists interpret the meaning behind the described art, but they also glorified it and even tried to outdo it.

Nevertheless, in the wake of the Grand Tour and encouraged by the public demand, writers felt the need to start publishing more vivid and accurate descriptions of old and contemporary art. Therefore, the reader became a participant in the visual experience. Even though writers did not intend to compete with the described item, the original persuasive role of ekphrasis was still present, namely offering the readers a description that was as convincing as possible. In this regard, a representative example is John Ruskin's highly detailed description of the Venetian statues and architectures as well as the faithful reproduction of light effects on the Venetian Lagoon.

1. The evolution of ekphrasis: audio description

The dynamic procedure of describing reality for those who could not observe it or did not have the adequate knowledge to understand the meaning behind a work of art, evolved into a practice which nowadays is called audio description. Even though today, audio description has mainly acquired a technical role in the accessibility field, according to one of its greatest representatives, Joel Snyder, audio description is a literary art form (Snyder 2014). The pioneer in the field of audio description compares the art by which the visual is made verbal, aural, and oral, namely audio description, to a haiku, a concise unrhymed poem. In fact, similarly to haikus, in which evocative images are recreated by employing as few words as possible, audio description aims at making visual information accessible to blind and sight-impaired people by means of succinct, vivid, and imaginative words (Snyder 2010). Therefore, audio description shares with ekphrasis the artistic nature of the description's product as well as the succinctness of sentences and the vividness of lexicon. However, although audio description maintained its ekphrastic essence, it abandoned the idea of competing with the work of art being described since the audio description is a subordinate component of works of art or media products, may they be films, TV series or theatre, musical, opera, dance performances, sports events. Furthermore, while ekphrastic authors referred to fictional works of art or included their own allusions when observing art, in audio description objectivity, accuracy and faithfulness are key.

Analogously to Snyder's viewpoint, Gregory Frazier defined audio description as the art of describing the arts and media for blind and visually impaired people by stressing its artistic aspect and opposing it to craft (in Hardy, quoted in Perego 2017: 208).

From a technical point of view, according to ADLAB (Remael et al. 2014) audio description (AD), also called video description or described video, is:

> a service for the blind and visually impaired that renders Visual Arts and Media accessible to this target group [and] […] offers a verbal description of the relevant (visual) components of a work of art or media product, so that blind and visually impaired patrons can fully grasp its form and content.

Audio description is a valuable resource that applies to different contexts. When the service aims at making visual art such as paintings and sculptures in museums and exhibitions accessible to sight-impaired people, a static audio description occurs. Conversely, when audio-visual media, e.g., films and series on television or live performances in theatres, are converted into audio, the audio description is dynamic (Braun 2008). In the case of static audio description, the discourse may be delivered live by a tour guide or recorded and then included in an audio guide. Similarly, a dynamic audio description may be a pre-recorded track included in movies and programs on television, or it may be delivered live to an audience during performances in theatres.

1.1. The fundamental aspects of audio description

Deciding when to insert the description, the amount of information required in the description, what to include in an AD, and how to describe the scene are the four key aspects to an effective AD (Perego 2014).

In both live and pre-recorded audio-visual and purely visual products, AD is inserted during the natural pauses of interaction or narration that are insignificant to the plot (Audio Description Coalition 2007). In other words, AD should not interfere with straightforwardly interpretable dialogues, informative aspects of the play, meaningful music, sounds, and noises or silences (Perego 2014). However, there are no common guidelines shared by all countries, and directions are highly differentiated. Indeed, certain guidelines allow AD to be inserted simultaneously with subtitled or irrelevant lines of the character, unless they require the full attention of the listener as with punchlines or sound effects which are crucial to the plot (Broadcasting Authority of Ireland 2019). Moreover, audio descriptions are not running commentaries of a play, therefore the audio describer should avoid inserting the description in every break between dialogues, so that the audience is enabled to perceive the emotions conveyed by the characters on stage.

Indeed, there are two key aspects on when to insert AD: silences and synchronism. During a play, the complete absence of noise or background music is rare since “there may be sound effects, music or simply ambient sound, all of which adds to our understanding of the scene – all the more so, perhaps, for a person who is blind or partially sighted” (Fryer 2010: 205). Nevertheless, when it does occur, silence contributes to setting a particular mood, helping memory retention, or giving the audience food for

thoughts. Dramatic silences, for instance, draw the audience's attention to the performed scene because they may increase tension and the feeling of uncertainty regarding the course of events. Most of the time, silences are accompanied by stillness and a static setting. Therefore, in this event AD should preserve silence, being it is intentionally part of the performance. Despite that, in the case of an audio described performance, it should be made explicit, without providing any interpretation, that silence was placed on purpose between dialogues. Otherwise, the sight-impaired audience may not understand it and attribute the silence to technical issues or mistakes.

Generally speaking, since AD replaces the visual elements of the performance, theoretically it should coincide with the action being described. However, realistically, pauses between dialogues are not always available or long enough so as to include an AD. For this reason, guidelines suggest providing the audience with AD either before the element that requires description or after it. In the first case, AD facilitates sound or noise recognition and preserves the audience's attention as listeners do not have to infer what or who caused the sound, though the suspense and the element of surprise may be spoiled. On the contrary, placing AD after sound effects or noises encourages dramatic effect preservation (Chmiel 2015) and it may reinforce the idea listeners have pictured in their minds as the performance unfolds or confute the conclusions they had previously drawn.

Considering time constraints and the immediate nature of interaction during theatre performances, the AD should provide theatregoers with the main elements concisely and effectively, without lingering on every visual aspect of the performance since listeners may obtain information from dialogues or sound effects. As Snyder (2014) points out, AD should let the blind and visually impaired audience make their own judgment regarding the play by avoiding overexplaining: "perhaps their eyes don't work so well, but their brains and their interpretative skills are intact" (Snyder 2014: 164). On the one hand, if the AD was extremely detailed and verbose, it would overlap the characters' dialogues, sound effects, and meaningful soundtracks; the AD serves an assistive function and, therefore, it should not stand out or replace the performance. In this regard, the American Council of the Blind, reminds that the audio describer should not be the focus of the performance. Therefore, he or she "should not attempt to project him- or herself into the performance as another performer" (American Council of the Blind 2009: 20).

On the other hand, in the event that information functional to the audience's understanding was omitted, the blind and visually impaired theatregoers would not enjoy the performance in the same way as the sighted audience. Conversely, details about the plot and the actions on stage should be available equally between sighted people and non-sighted individuals; however, the audio describer should always leave the audience room for interpretation (Braun 2007).

Given the fact that audio describers write for a broad audience, perception regarding information load differs among theatregoers according to their knowledge on the matter, their cultural and social background, memory development, and the degree of involvement and interest in the performance. As Di Giovanni (2018) points out, the dynamic nature of audiences makes any attempt to clearly define the specific target user of theatrical performances fruitless, since being "as diverse as any sighted audience" (Fryer 2016: 42), sight-impaired patrons change over time.

Therefore, the audience's way of creating meaning out of the aural elements they gather from listening is as subjective as the process of story-reconstruction carried out by the audio describer. According to ADLAB (Remael et al. 2014), "different audio describers produce different audio descriptions", meaning that the AD is the result of the audio describer's point of view about the performance and his or her own interpretation of the original product. Consequently, deciding what to include in an AD varies according to the audio describer's personal perception of the show, something which reflects the lack of universal guidelines. Indeed, guidelines' suggestions differ from one country to another. The AD guidelines of the American Council of the Blind recommend describing only the most essential elements which allow the audience to easily follow the performance, therefore, supporting the "less is more" philosophy which applies to AD as well. The renowned "what you see is what you say" (W.Y.S.I.W.Y.S.), namely the "first rule of audio description" (Snyder 2014: 164), translates the actions on stage into a verbal discourse without explaining or interpreting the characters' motivations or intentions. On the contrary, the Spanish guidelines for AD suggest converting the visual part of any message into a verbal discourse (in AENOR, quoted in Perego 2014). On the one hand, this practice caters to disambiguation since it makes a part of the soundscape which otherwise would have been misleading, understandable for visually impaired people. However, on the other hand, providing the audience with such a description may be

redundant and, considering time and space constraints, it may replace more meaningful information which might be then omitted.

Similarly to the American Council of the Blind guidelines, the Irish guidelines for accessibility recommend avoiding dwelling on details or providing an extensive description, since it may spoil the mood set in the scene or be exhausting (Broadcasting Authority of Ireland 2019). In a similar way, the Italian AD guidelines deem that the description should employ "essential, simple and clear terminology, so as to leave suitable room for [the users'] personal interpretation and emotional involvement" (in Arma 2012, quoted in Fryer 2016).

The description process requires making choices (Snyder 2014) since many channels of communication occur simultaneously through speech, acting and design, therefore, there is greater room for encoding and decoding mistakes. However, meaningful elements of the plot, actions performed by the characters and their physical appearance, the props, shifts in setting, and visual or aural intertextual references which are not easily retrievable from the dialogues should generally be included in an AD.

Even though details about the physical characteristics of the characters, namely any gestures or facial mimicry they use frequently, or stage clothes and scenography have already been provided in the audio introduction, bringing this kind of information to the audience's mind through the AD, facilitates characters' identification.

As far as the last aspect is concerned, that is how to describe the scene, objectivity, authenticity, and accuracy are part of an approach that American and European guidelines always pursue (Perego 2014). Thus, the audio describer acts as a "verbal camera lens" (Snyder 2014: 163) reporting the visual elements of a play in an objective, impartial manner. Concretely, audio describers, for instance, should not employ adjectives or adverbs which may lead to value judgments and when referring to sizes, they should provide the audience with exact numbers so as to leave no room for the audio describers' personal interpretation (Audio Description Coalition 2009).

As regards style and lexis, audio descriptions are characterised by a simple, straightforward language unburdened by specific technical jargon referred to the genre or the means of communication which otherwise would decrease the audience's attention and involvement. Moreover, the AD should stimulate the creation of images in the audience's minds as they try visualising what happens on stage. In order to do so, vivid

language, the use of colourful evocative adjectives, adverbs, similes, metaphors, and references to everyday objects or practices contribute to information processing and visualization. In this regard, the most frequently used adjectival categories in an AD refer to colour, location, direction, size, age, quantity, material, textiles, movement and stillness, weather and temperature, and physical appearance (in Arma 2014, quoted in Perego 2014: 68). While adjectives and nouns help defining the characters, setting, and costumes of the scene, verbs, and adverbs cater for movements and actions descriptions. Snyder (2014: 297-302) identifies four categories within the verbs indicating locomotion: 1) verbs denoting specific body actions, e.g., "jump", "run" 2) verbs referring to movement dynamics such as "flow", "accelerate", "crash" or "follow" 3) verbs designating spatial directions and pathways, e.g., "navigate", "enter" 4) verbs related to body shape and attitude such as "shake" or "crawl". Guidelines suggest varying verb choices in order to let theatregoers better visualise the actions performed on stage. Furthermore, given the immediateness of actions that are performed live in front of an audience, the use of present tense and active voice verbs is required. Verbs are also accompanied by third-person pronouns or the characters' names or nicknames since audio describers could be intended as narrators who never intervene in the story or provide personal interpretations. Although the audio describer acts as an omniscient heterodiegetic narrator, he or she replaces the viewers' eyes and thus takes on their point of view to such an extent that he or she merges with the audience. Indeed, when actors break the fourth wall, audience is always referred to with the second-person plural object pronoun "us" or the possessive pronoun "our" in the AD, as for instance in "turning to us" or "to our left". A less frequent alternative to the use of pronouns is the expression "the audience", as in the case of "looking at the audience". Nevertheless, it contributes to increasing the formal distance between theatregoers and the audio describer as well as reducing the audience's involvement.

Movement is also conveyed by including directional information in the AD so as to facilitate information organisation and make the audience aware of where the scene is taking place. By employing prepositional phrases, adverbial locutions, circumstantial clauses, and verbs referring to sight, people with low vision can easily focus on the portion/s of the stage in which actions occur.

The brevity and succinctness of AD imposed by time constraints, results in several short sentences, since AD has a propensity to group information into blocks (Remael et al. 2014). Therefore, the syntax is characterised by parataxis and asyndetic coordination, something in line with the low-context style of the English language and culture (Perego 2014) which tends to focus more on directness. When mirroring time and spatial settings, sentences often consist of single noun phrases, such as "Venice, 1890", while when referring to actions, AD prefers using one or more verb phrases, e.g., "pacing". Although AD sentences lack subordination due to limitations in terms of time, conjunctions such as "while" and "as" help counterpose or relate different simultaneous actions.

Information organisation in a sentence affects comprehension and determines the audience's focus of attention as well as information processing. Indeed, audio describers often employ a strategy called fronting, by which a noun phrase normally following a verb is placed at the beginning of a sentence in order to draw the audience's attention to the emphasised element, as in the following example: "with a gun in her hand, she walks up to him" instead of saying "she walks up to him with a gun in her hand".

1.2. The audio describer as a mediator

One of the challenges about drafting an AD script for a sight-impaired audience refers to the mere act of describing, since: "the meaning to be conveyed does not lie so much in the separate actions the character undertakes as in his/her overall presence" (Roofthooft et al. 2018: 242). In other words, a theatre performance is the harmonious combination of not only the characters' lines and stage directions they follow but also their voice, sound effects and noises, gestures, body language, clothes, and their physical appearance, which all need to be conveyed while following a strict time schedule. Therefore, actions do not only occur on stage or in the audience, but as Rudolf Laban puts it, within the "magnetic current between both these poles" (Laban 2011: 5); betwixt these two pivots stands the audio describer functioning as a mediator. Indeed, while translators mediate between the source and the target text, or the author and the final reader by providing language accessibility, audio describers intervene in the performance and involve a wider audience by offering visual accessibility.

According to Pilar Orero (2012), AD and language translation work parallelly, since both the audio describer and the translator convert a source text written in a specific

linguistic code or channel into a text in another target code or channel. Moreover, as previously mentioned, AD depends on the audio describer's interpretation of the source text, something that occurs also during the translation process. The first phase of the translation procedure is the reading of the text, followed by the translator's interpretation. Unveiling the meanings enclosed in the source text is a culturally influenced procedure as the translator may refer to his/her cultural background and literary experience when tackling translation issues. Similarly, audio describers, after watching the live performance at least once and scanning the play script, draft the AD script and convey the meanings of the source text by relying on their interpretation. The higher degree of subjectivity in AD interpretation is attributable to the multimodal nature of both the source text and the target text (Braun 2008).

A further analogy with language translation is to be found in the type of transposition that occurs in an AD.

At the beginning of the 1960s, Roman Jakobson finalised the formulation of the triad of intralingual translation, composed of intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic translations. While in the first translation type verbal signs are interpreted by means of other signs of the same language, in interlingual translation verbal signs are interpreted by using signs belonging to a different language. Eventually, the third translation type is "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign system" (Jakobson 1959: 261). Although AD could refer to the third kind of translation, since the transposition occurs between two different channels of communication, it works in the opposite direction: non-verbal elements are made verbal (Perego 2014). Therefore, besides being an intersemiotic translation, AD could also be defined as "a practice rooted in intermodal mediation" (Braun 2008: 14) since the source text is made accessible to the target audience by means of multiple channels such as aural and tactile when experiencing the usage of AD, audio introduction and touch tours.

The third similarity between language translation and AD involves the skills required to carry out a transposition, whether it be interlinguistic or intersemiotic. Most of the time, audio describers working on a playscript and translators find themselves dealing with time pressure and constraints which highly affect the results of their performance. Incoming deadlines as in the case of translation assignments, or short breaks between dialogues and improvisation as it occurs during theatre performances force translators and

audio describers to develop quick thinking and intuition. The growing experience in the field, however, allows the audio describer to adopt a working method that seems to be as intuitive and automatic as it is solving a translation problem for translators.

In this regard, Díaz Cintas (2007: 52) discussed the skills that the audio describer needs to develop in order to provide a successful accessibility service by grouping them into four categories: linguistic skills, thematic and content skills, technological and applied skills, general and personal attitudes. These same skills can also be found in the curriculum of a language translator or interpreter. Linguistic skills include extensive knowledge of the phonetic, morphological, lexical, orthographic, grammatical, and syntactic aspects of the translator or audio describer's mother tongue so as to convey written or visual information as precisely and evocatively as possible. Furthermore, the translator or the audio describer should know the target audience's needs so as to provide the right amount of information without revealing the plot or bewildering the audience. The audio describer should have also acquired the technological know-how referred to audio described theatre performances as for instance, the use of microphones and headsets or editing skills in case of filmic AD. Moreover, the audio describer should have extensive knowledge of the AD practice, more specifically the draft of an AD script, the guidelines ruling in the target audience's country, and general information about theatre and art. Analogously to the translator's profession, developing general and personal attitudes, including autonomous learning, analytic and synthetic abilities, problem solving, planning, and organising skills contribute to the audio describer's formal qualification.

Nevertheless, while translators work mainly on a written level, audio describers need to develop and constantly improve their vocal, hearing, and observation skills.

1.3. The prosody of audio description and common recording faults in vocal delivery

Despite being neutral and not projected, the audio describer's voice is a crucial tool that affects the performance's usability and enjoyment, even more so because the audience only relies on the aural components of the show. Studies have shown that blind and visually impaired people prefer a human voice over a synthetised voice delivering AD, since the latter requires a greater level of attention and effort in order to understand and attribute meaning to what is being heard. Moreover, synthetised voices may lack emotions and interpretation and may affect the overall performance, especially when

fiction is to be preserved (in Freeman, quoted in Fryer 2014). Therefore, the audio describer who voices the AD script, also called voicer, should adapt his or her prosody to the nature of the source text he or she is dealing with. Since "we make meaning with our voices" (Snyder 2014: 176), the audio describer should take particular care when dealing with prosody, especially stress, tone, volume, pauses, pace, tempo, and fluency.

Stressing specific words or phrases helps convey meaning to the discourse. If different parts of a sentence were emphasised without any word change, that same sentence would acquire distinct meanings according to stress variations. In AD, stress is used by the describer in order to focus the audience's attention on setting shifts or new characters making their entrance on stage. Meaning is also affected by tone, since listeners distinguish statements from questions, exclamations, requests, or commands by perceiving fluctuations in the characters' or the audio describer's voice. A sentence ending with a rising intonation denotes a request or a general question, while a more firm, flat, and declining intonation suggests orders, instructions, or directions. Closing an affirmative sentence with a rising intonation, on the one hand, may create suspense and tension as the listeners usually expect a downward intonation. However, on the other hand, it might be perceived as a sign of hesitation and insecurity. An unconfident, stumbling voice may result in the audience losing faith in the audio describer. Moreover, the AD tone generally matches with the scene being described, otherwise, a discrepancy between the soundtracks or the characters' intentions and the audio describer's voice may confuse the audience. However, this discordance may be deliberately included in the audio described performance in order to convey a hint of irony to the scene or elicit particular emotions.

Voice volume regards the loudness of the characters or the audio describer's voice, which contributes to the creation of meaning, besides conveying dynamism to the audio describer's delivery. In order to avoid exhausting the audience, the audio describer should not deliver a monotonous discourse; however, at the same time his or her voice volume should not overwhelm the characters' dialogues. Therefore, the audio describer's voice volume will increase when comprehension is more paramount than a soundtrack or sound effect which may still remain audible in the background. On the contrary, when sound effects, music, or the characters' dialogues are crucial to the plot, the audio describer's voice will sink to a whisper or turn into silence.

A further component that generates dynamism in an AD is the pace of delivery or the number of words pronounced per minute by the audio describer. According to Snyder (2014), 160 wpm (words per minute) represents an adequate and easy-to-follow pace, although there may be some exceptions, especially during audio described plays or live performances in general. Indeed, when time constraints allow it, a slower pace coincides with greater stress on an emphasised element of an utterance. Conversely, a more rapid pace is employed when breaks between dialogues are short or minimal in terms of duration and frequency respectively. Nevertheless, a higher speed may lead to miscalling a character or mispronouncing words. In this regard, Louise Fryer (2016) compiled a list of common recording faults related to pronunciation, breathing, emphasis, pace, and background noises. Stumbling upon words, lacking clarity in pronunciation, or miscalling the characters' names may bewilder the audience or provoke an involuntary humorous effect. Mispronunciation may happen at a morphological or syntactic level. Audible lip-smacking or distortion in consonant pronunciation, as in the case of plosive consonants, may sound particularly unpleasant and distracting. Moreover, emphasising words or parts of a sentence inadequately may imply erroneous meanings and therefore, lead to inaccurate interpretations of the characters' dialogues and intentions.

When the pace of delivery increases, audible breaths placed inappropriately, or interruptions of the word flow may occur especially among novice audio describers. Furthermore, keeping an unnecessarily fast pace may reduce the performance's intelligibility and fruition, while, on the other hand adopting a too relaxed and slow pace might affect the show's enjoyability and the audience's involvement.

Eventually, technical issues such as turning off the microphone too late may lead to involuntary background noises, e.g., audible page turn, clanking jewellery, squeaky chairs that may take the audience's attention away from the performance. Conversely, turning the microphone on too late may leave the audience with an undescribed part of the performance which, in turn, affects timing and delays the following available slot for AD.

In the event that the audio describer muted the microphone too soon, theatregoers would be left hanging waiting for the AD to resume and therefore, lose track of the performance and miss crucial details of the plot.

The aforementioned faults may be avoided by rehearsing the AD script multiple times before the scheduled show, which then enhances the smoothness and fluency of the

delivery. This especially applies to live performances, since there is no editing or post-production audio correction as with films, documentaries, or TV shows to mention a few. Moreover, as Fryer (2016) underlines, in pre-recorded and live AD faults may raise the production costs and add more time to the rearrangement of the target text.

2. An introduction to audio description guidelines

As the American AD trailblazer Margaret Pfanstiehl (1985: 92) states: "audio-description is as old as sighted people telling visually impaired people about visual events happening in the world around them". Even though AD was formally implemented at the beginning of 1980, it owes its origins to the ancient rhetorical exercise of ekphrasis which found fertile ground mainly in the cultural and artistic fields. Indeed, one of the pioneers of AD, Gregory Frazier, first experimented with this descriptive practice while watching a movie with a blind friend. At the friend's request of recounting the actions and scenes, Frazier provided a quick oral description by inserting it during the pauses between dialogues. Moreover, following in Frazier's footsteps, Margaret Pfanstiehl applied the AD method for the first time in 1981 at the Arena stage theatre in Washington (Fryer 2016: 16). Therefore, AD functions predominantly in the areas of entertainment, culture, and education, given the pivotal role that recreational events perform in personal development and social inclusion. At a practical level, AD serves as an assistive service for sight-impaired people in multiple cultural events due to the increasing use of visual components in live shows (Fryer 2016). More specifically, cultural events are performances delivered in front of an audience comprehending music, art, literature, theatre, cinema, technical activities to mention a few. On the one hand, art exhibitions, festivals, and street shows, for instance, are artistic events that, despite being performed in different contexts, namely art galleries, museums, or open-air venues, aim at reaching a wider audience by providing an art-related product able to entertain and generate interest. On the other hand, educational events address a more restricted audience made of professionals, academics, or enthusiasts who look at these events as a way to broaden their knowledge and discuss topics they are already familiar with. Congresses, forums, conventions, and seminars are examples of this category.

In order to provide adequate usability and fruition of cultural events, certain guidelines should be followed. However, contrarily to what occurs in pre-recorded cultural events

broadcasted on TV or streamed in cinemas and platforms, in which audio describers stick to definite guidelines, live events lack specific official standards. This is probably due to the absence of an entity supervising AD delivery and the lack of clarity around responsibility for AD provision, as Fryer (2016: 42) affirms in *An introduction to audio description*. Despite that, a common modus operandi should be outlined. According to the ADLAB project (Remael et al. 2014), an AD generally involves the following phases:

- determining the source text's elements of the narration to insert in the AD;
- identifying the silent pauses of the source text and their length so as to pinpoint the amount of AD to be included;
- distinguishing merely visual elements from details that play both a visual and aural role in order to avoid describing information easily accessible through other senses;
- deciding when to describe or omit specific elements so as to avoid redundancy or misunderstandings;
- determining an adequate strategy to be adopted during the drafting of the AD with particular attention to time constraints and formulation[33].

In spite of it being a general method, AD does not universally fit into all cultural events. Indeed, in certain formats AD would be inappropriate, as in the case of TV programs that highly rely on aural cues. According to sight-impaired people, AD is more essential in dramas and films than in quiz programs, lectures, or parliamentary sessions since, in the latter, the content of the oral delivery, which is the programs' focal point, is easily retrievable by listening (Fryer 2016: 103). Moreover, AD should adapt to the genre of the source text which is being considered, since the language of communication adopted by each cultural event differs in style and techniques. The language and strategies employed in theatrical performances, for instance, are dissimilar to the techniques used in movies or documentaries streamed on television. Indeed, being delivered live, theatrical productions refer to a pre-arranged script that will be then voiced by the same audio describer who drafted it. Conversely, the recorded voice of the AD included in movies may not belong to the audio describer writing the AD script. A second difference refers to an additional tool for comprehension, namely audio introduction, which often

[33] http://www.adlabproject.eu/Docs/adlab%20book/#intro (last accessed 21/10/2021).

precedes AD in live performances only. Furthermore, regarding the techniques related to the mise-en-scène, sound and lighting in movies are diegetic since they can be found within the realistic elements that belong to the story. In plays, contrariwise, sound effects and lights are extradiegetic because they represent components that cannot be displayed on stage and contribute to setting a particular mood or recalling settings distant in time or space (Remael et al. 2014).

Consequently, determining the source text genre allows audio describers to figure out how to draft the AD script while also bearing in mind the audience's expectations of the cultural event. The macro category of cultural events can be divided into two subcategories: pre-recorded performances and live performances. Within the class of pre-recorded cultural events, there are serials and movies, which are in turn differentiated into romance, drama, horror, comedy, action, adventure, crime, historical, and fantasy according to their genre. Furthermore, even though they are characterised by a greater educational function if compared to films, documentaries and children's TV programs belong to this class. The subcategory of live performances, instead, comprises musicals, dance performances, concerts, sporting events, art exhibitions, and theatrical performances.

2.1. Cultural events: guidelines for AD in pre-recorded performances

In the process of creation and insertion of AD in pre-recorded performances, aside from audio describers, technicians, voice actors and editors are essential components to deliver a successful and effective service. Making AD for this type of cultural event is a lengthy procedure that involves four phases (Remael et al. 2014). Firstly, an analysis of the source text is needed in order to familiarise with the content, language, and style of the product requiring AD. At this stage, involving blind and visually impaired users is a crucial prerequisite before starting to write the AD script, since they will help distinguish what is necessary for the understanding of the plot from what may sound redundant. During the drafting of the AD script, the audio describer should verify that the script matches the timing of the scenes without overlapping the dialogues or significant sound effects. Afterwards, the voice actors rehearse the AD script and review it when necessary. The third and fourth phases apply to pre-recorded events only, since they refer to the processes of recording and mixing the AD script with the source text's soundtrack.

Although from a technical point of view the AD drafting and addition procedures remain the same throughout all the different genres of pre-recorded events, content-wise, the AD script should blend with the mood and style of the source text. In order to do so, some basic distinctions among the genres related to films and TV programs need to be drawn. More specifically, film genres include romance, action, horror, and history, while TV programs comprise news, documentaries, TV series, soaps, comedies, and children's TV programs.

While in romantic movies longer sentences cater for the description of evocative and multi-detailed scenes, in action movies the AD script should be brief and incisive. Time constraints could be a challenging aspect in the description of action movies, since actions may occur consecutively, leaving no time for the audio describer to include the AD. Moreover, the process of information selection may also be challenging as the description should focus more on the dynamics between characters rather than providing accurate details about them.

In horror movies, for instance, the AD should recreate truthfully the spatio-temporal setting of the source text so as to evoke the main idea behind this genre, that is the feeling of anguish and the inability to escape from a frightening situation. Therefore, suggestive words and clever use of pauses will contribute to build up the suspense. Another genre in which the common thread is a faithful spatial and temporal representation of facts occurs when historical events are depicted in movies. The main difficulties of AD scriptwriting for historical films are terminological accuracy and culture-specific references. In order to carry out their task, audio describers need to conduct further research on the topic covered in the source text. By doing so, audio describers will show cultural and historical coherence when describing the style and jargon of the movie and establish what Braun calls "connectivity in discourse" (Braun 2007: 365).

As regards news and programs about current affairs, the great amount of information provided to the audience makes it challenging to include an AD. Moreover, another issue concerns objectivity, since there is a high risk of revealing personal judgements and opinions when dealing with politics and social topics, especially during live programs.

Another genre in which specialized terminology is employed profusely throughout the narrative discourse is documentaries. As it occurs for historical films, the audio describer should acquire extensive technical knowledge with the aim of making the source text's

narration thoroughly accessible. In this regard, the ITC guidelines recommend employing technical vocabulary attentively as the audience may not be familiar with scientific lexicon[34]. Therefore, strategies including omission, explicitation, and explication will cater for content accessibility (Fryer 2016: 110). Furthermore, guidelines on AD for documentaries suggest comparing dimensions and shapes to day-to-day objects in the form of analogies, metaphors, similes, and the use of human metrics. Fryer (2016: 110) highlights the importance of involving other senses such as hearing and touch, to create the idea of weight and texture in the sight-impaired person's mind. The soundtrack and aural effects, especially ambient and confirmatory sounds, contribute to recreating habitats and increasing the emotional charge of the documentary's narration. During an animal fight, for instance, tense music with increasing tempo warns the sight-impaired audience of the imminent arrival of the predator. Thus, the audio describer should preserve the natural effects of the original soundtrack without stepping in with the AD. On the one hand, the slow pace of nature documentaries allows for accurate and detailed descriptions, while, on the other hand, it may lead the audio describer to include unnecessary information which may result repetitive. While in documentaries there may only be one narrator in a voice-over commenting on the scenes, programs such as TV series and soap operas include a larger list of characters. However, by elapsing over a longer period of time, serials and soaps allow sight-impaired people to memorise characters by associating their voices to their names and physical appearance descriptions, which audio describers provide at the beginning of the first episode. The major challenge regarding AD for these genres relates to consistency in style and content. The ITC guidelines (in Ofcom 2000, quoted in Fryer 2016: 113) recommend using the same audio describer for the entire series since the AD service is not a program's extra. Instead, it is a necessary tool which complements the original product.

Eventually soap operas may feature fast-paced dialogues or few merely visual scenes that might reduce the length of silences between the characters' lines. Therefore, the audio describer should insert fleeting and telegraphic descriptions only comprising the crucial elements. A genre in which pauses are key factors that help convey meaning to the story is comedy. In comedies, the audio describer should be able to distinguish between

[34] http://audiodescription.co.uk/uploads/general/itcguide_sds_audio_desc_word3.pdf (last accessed 22/10/2021).

meaningful pauses and breaks that simply contribute to the rhythm of the narration as well as decide the most appropriate time span to include AD without spoiling the humorous effect. Indeed, timing is an essential component of comedies, since, if the description were placed after a visual joke, it would overlap the canned laughter and therefore reduce the comic effect of certain punchlines or "dad jokes". Consequently, the audience "[…] may feel robbed of the natural audience response [and] instead of joining in with the general laughter following a joke, they have to concentrate on listening to the audio description of something that is happening or about to happen, which will lessen their enjoyment" (Ofcom 2000: 30). The ITC guidelines recommend the use of playful and amusing terms or syntactic structures that keep the audience's attention high, as for instance, "The man's foot catches a banana skin, he flips into the air and flops to the ground" instead of saying "The man slips on a banana skin and falls to the ground" (Ibid.).

The last class included in pre-recorded cultural events are TV programs designed for children. When addressing a sight-impaired audience especially at a young age, it is important to differentiate between children who have been blind from birth and children who recently lost their sight. In the first case, the main difficulty is related to the fact that children who have been blind since birth never had a visual experience of the outside world. Therefore, certain references in the TV program might get lost. In the second case, instead, children might not have developed good memory yet, hence the need for more detailed descriptions which do not rely extensively on prior knowledge. Indeed, elements such as information repetitions, confirmatory sounds, evocative sound effects, and play on words allow for the creation of cross-modal associations (Fryer 2016: 114). However, when instrumental passages represent the only opportunity to insert AD, the ITC guidelines identify repetitions in the song or the song portion right after the first verse as the most advisable time span for including descriptions (Ofcom 2000: 29). Moreover, particular care must be taken with such audience, being it sensitive and easily impressionable. Therefore, the audio describer should always opt for an adequate vocabulary and style of the description.

2.2 Cultural events: guidelines for AD in live performances

Unlike AD for pre-recorded cultural events, which requires the additional processes of recording and mixing the audio describer's voice with the original soundtrack, in live cultural events, the audio describer's delivery occurs concurrently with the musical, sport, dance, and art performance. Even though the audio describer has the opportunity to rehearse the script during the production's first shows, preparing the AD delivery requires less time than drafting a recorded script. Moreover, the margin of error in live performances is lower than in pre-recorded cultural events since the audience will immediately notice technical issues or mistakes in the delivery, which will then affect the overall enjoyment of the performance. Conversely, in taped performances inaccuracies due to mispronunciations or incorrect timing can be edited during the mixing procedure. Furthermore, the unpredictability of live performances due to improvisation, unanticipated changes, and unplanned events which may occur during the show precludes the possibility of providing an accurate timing of the description (Remael et al. 2014). As the delivery of the source text may follow a fast-paced rhythm, ADLAB guidelines suggest combining crucial information in short sentences that will be placed subsequently to the action performed on stage (Ibid.). Contrariwise, since the source text in pre-recorded performances is a finished product, there is little room left for sudden changes, as the audio describer knows what information will be included in the AD and the exact duration of the characters' lines and pauses.

In this regard, according to the ITC guidelines, live performances involving music and scenic arts such as musicals, represent a huge challenge for audio describers, especially when considering the short time available for AD (Ofcom 2000: 24). In movies or theatre performances, music creates atmosphere, foreshadows events, identifies a character's emotions, and increases the scene's dramatic effect, besides occasionally accompanying the narration of events. In musicals, instead, vocal performances and songs are the core elements of the genre. A choir performing in between the characters' lines or even an entire dialogue acted as if it were choral music, will not be considered as interludes reducing the narrative pace, but rather sequences of equal importance with respect to spoken dialogues. For this reason, deciding the time span of intervention or choosing when to remain silent represent two pivotal components that audio describers should never forget. Therefore, the audio describer, when possible, should signal a song by

providing a concise description of the essential elements on stage, such as movements and costumes. A further complication regarding the AD for musicals is the description of dance sequences. According to Snyder (2010: 32), the audio describer should firstly find the "story" behind a choreography as well as the main ideas the producer intends to convey to the audience. By doing so, the AD will not merely focus on every step performed by the dancers on stage but will rather provide an involving narration including movements that, together with sound effects, contribute to the creation of an overall picture in the audience's minds. Moreover, dance performances strictly involve visual language, that is body language, which is used to convey a variety of different aspects: the mood of the scene, the story's plot, its structure, and its main themes. Being dance language composed of complex technical terminology, the audio describer should provide the audience with a glossary of the specific dance moves that will be performed during the show in the introductory notes voiced before the curtain goes up. When describing movements, the Audio Description Coalition (ADC) Standards (2009) recommend considering the body parts involved in the movement, the forms that the body assumes, the gradation of energy dancers show, and how the performers use the space on stage[35]. Therefore, brief, precise, and clear descriptions will replace the suggestive images produced by dance movements. However, when more than one dancer is performing on stage, different dance moves may occur simultaneously and in opposite stage locations, making the AD task even more challenging. In this respect, the ADC Standards for AD suggest contemplating which are the movements that "[…] communicate the gist of dance's visual imagery" (Ibid.).

Another genre presenting specialised terminology and requiring remarkable timing skills is related to sporting events such as matches, racings, ceremonial events to name a few. For this type of events, AD is almost unfeasible due to the constant presence of the commentator whose speech is not easily predictable. Generally, a separate AD commentary accessible to the sight-impaired audience is provided by dissolving the event's original audio. However, by silencing the commentator's voice, the blind and partially sighted will not have access to the reaction of the crowd attending the event as well, therefore, decreasing significantly the degree of involvement. Even in pre-recorded

[35] https://www.perkinselearning.org/sites/elearning.perkinsdev1.org/files/adc_standards.pdf (last accessed 25/10/2021).

sporting events, inserting AD seems to be a particularly demanding task, considering the amount of essential visual information needing a description and the scarce time available for preparation (Ofcom 2000).

The last genre related to live cultural events is art exhibitions held in museums or art galleries. Museums and exhibits often showcase visual elements such as paintings, drawings, maps, videos, artifacts, and sculptures. If an AD service were not provided to visually impaired users, art would be almost entirely inaccessible to this type of audience. Therefore, verbally guiding visually impaired people in the exploration of artifacts, and offering, whenever possible, a tactile tour contributes to creating a more interactive and entertaining experience. As stated in the ADC Standards (2009: 14), audio describers should present art pieces in a concise, detailed manner, focusing only on the items that the visually impaired audience is interested in. Furthermore, it is advisable to take on the observer's point of view by first indicating where the user should stand in order to provide a more authentic experience of both the artifacts and the surroundings. Then, items will be orally depicted in order of appearance and, more specifically, from the general to the particular, so as to facilitate content understanding and orientation. When providing information about the appearance of an item, e.g., size, décor, key features, it is preferable to use round-off measurements and metaphors evoking familiar objects or shapes as in the following expressions: "L-shaped", "the size and shape of an egg". Eventually, the audio describer should pay particular attention when using colour names, since there could be people who have been blind from birth among the audience. However, while mentioning colours to people with low vision may help them localise the object of description, in the case of blind people, this allows them to establish a connection between the colour and its emotional/ intellectual meaning (Audio Description Coalition 2009).

In the next section, AD for theatrical cultural events will be discussed by providing an overview of the principal guidelines implemented in the European and Anglo-American contexts, followed by a comparative analysis of a selected group of guidelines, namely the ITC Guidance on Standards for Audio Description issued by Ofcom, the Standards for Audio Description drafted by the Audio Description Coalition, the Audio Description Guidelines and Best Practices from the American Council of the Blind's Audio Description Project, the Audio Description Guidelines published by ADLAB, and the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) Access Rules.

2.3. Cultural events: guidelines for theatre performances

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, even in developed countries there is no unique set of international guidelines on AD. For this reason, after having provided an overall theoretical framework on AD in paragraphs 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3, the following section will focus on the most common guidelines from USA, United Kingdom, Europe, and Ireland.

Furthermore, being dissonant in reference to certain linguistic and stylistic aspects, these guidelines will be then compared.

3. Data

What follows is a comprehensive framework of the selected group of guidelines divided by country:

- USA: the Standards for Audio Description and Code of Professional Conduct for Describers compiled and written by the founders of the Audio Description Coalition (ADC), Deborah Lewis and Bill Patterson, who started writing these AD best practices from the Standards for Audio Description of the California Audio Describers Alliance in 2006. They issued three editions: the first in August 2007, the second in August 2008, and the last one in June 2009[36].
- USA: the Audio Description Guidelines and Best Practices provided by the American Council of the Blind (ACB), an organisation comprising approximately 70 State members in the USA and headed by its President, Dan Spoone. The ACB is mostly composed of sight-impaired people who together with the organisation's affiliates represent a wide range of groups belonging to the blind community[37]. The first draft of the Best Practices was presented in June 2009 and discussed more in detail the following month during the Audio Description Project Conference in Orlando. The final version, reviewed by Joel Snyder, the founder of the Audio Description Project, was published in 2010[38].
- United Kingdom: the Independent Television Commission (ITC) Guidance on Standards for Audio Description published in May 2000, after the 1996 Broadcasting Act's request to draw up official standards so as to enhance the

[36] https://audiodescriptionsolutions.com/audio-description-coalition/ (last accessed 26/10/2021).
[37] https://www.acb.org/history (last accessed 26/10/2021).
[38] http://www.acb.org/adp/docs/ADP_Standards.doc (last accessed 26/10/2021).

enjoyment of programs by blind and partially sighted people. These guidelines are the result of the exhaustive studies conducted by the European Audetel consortium from April 1992 to December 1995. In order to create the ITC guidelines, information was gathered by dint of questionnaires on sight-impaired people's television habits, experimental viewing sessions during which the opinions on audio described media of two hundred blind and partially sighted people were gathered, critiques on AD for programs by an Audetel focus group and a five-month trial carried out in 1994 in which 100 visually impaired people were interviewed on BBC described programming.

- Europe: "Pictures painted in words. Audio Description Guidelines", offered by the "Audio Description: Lifelong Access for the Blind (ADLAB)", a scheme designed between 2011 and 2014 and funded by the European Union under the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). ADLAB guidelines represent the first reliable and official standards for AD practice within the European framework. Aiming at promoting art and media accessibility through a research-based project, these guidelines are intended for professionals, students, and people having contact with AD professionally or in their personal life. Moreover, ADLAB guidelines explore the practice of AD from a theoretical, technical, and practical point of view, as well as presenting other forms of AD, particularly text on screen, audio subtitling, and descriptive guides.
- Ireland: the Access Rules submitted by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), outlined in response to the 2009 Broadcasting Act's obligation to draft and revise the rules on accessibility with the aim of improving the enjoyment of programs by both the visually and hearing impaired audiences. The Irish guidelines, published in January 2019, were an update of the two previous editions, namely the BAI Access Rules presented in 2005 and the May 2012 Access Rules on Subtitling, Sign Language, and Audio Description.

3.1. Comparative analysis

After the data overview presented in the previous section, a comparative analysis based on macro and micro levels will be carried out in the next section. More specifically, macro-level analysis will cover four aspects: the extent of the guidelines' document, the

structure, the general approach, and the preferred AD categories. On the other hand, the micro-level analysis will narrow down the comparative approach to theatrical performances, by concentrating on the content of the guidelines related to the following linguistic aspects: grammar, syntax, and lexis. Furthermore, the guidelines will be compared in reference to the four main aspects of AD: what to describe, when to describe, how much information should be included, and how to describe.

As regards the first macro level's criterion, the extent of the guidelines, the longest texts are the ACB guidelines and the BAI Access Rules with 98 and 62 pages respectively. Conversely, the European, British guidelines and the American ADC's Standards, present an average length of about 30 to 40 pages. For what concerns structure, it is worth noting that all documents provide a preface or introduction including the guidelines' aims, who the guidelines are intended to as well as an introduction to the authors contributing to the drafting of the guidelines and particular references to previous editions. However, it is necessary to make some distinctions. While the British and Irish guidelines give the reader a legislative background as a way to explain what led to the designing of specific standards, both the American and European guidelines do not delve into this topic. Furthermore, some guidelines provide the users with a glossary concerning the central terms employed when dealing with AD, more specifically the ACB guidelines, the BAI guidelines, and ADLAB guidelines. Although the British guidelines are the most comprehensive in terms of AD literature, since they provide an exhaustive definition of AD as well as an explanation of the AD production process, there is no dedicated section on specialised terminology.

The ADC's Standards, after introducing the general basics of AD, specialise into different categories: live description, dance description, opera description, film and video description, and museum and exhibit description. The document ends with a brief and schematic history of AD in the USA. Similarly, the ACB Standards first provide a brief glossary of the technical terms referred to AD, such as "audio describer", "voicer", "consultant". Then, an overview on the core skills and the basics of AD is given, before distinguishing among three types of cultural events: performing arts (theatre, dance, opera), media, and visual art/exhibitions. The ITC guidelines, instead, initially illustrate the history and development of AD, then explain who the AD target user is and finally outline the preparation phases of an AD script. The second section of the British

guidelines provides a detailed insight on a wide range of program categories such as films, soap operas, documentaries, and live events.

The European guidelines, compared to the previously analysed documents, present a different structure. The ADLAB document gathers contributions from different authors who theorised on a specific topic related to AD. The first chapter focuses on the definition of AD and its production process by highlighting the differences in the procedure of the source text's story reconstruction, e.g., identifying the characters, spatial and temporal settings, between the author of the story and the audience. Then, each chapter tackles a specific challenging issue regarding AD drafting such as how to identify the main aspects regarding the characters and actions, the spatio-temporal settings, the language employed in the source text, the presence of sound effects and music, the source text's genre, possible intertextual references, the source text's style and wording, cohesion, and technical issues. The ADLAB guidelines' structure allows the user to reflect on the core elements of a story and how to translate them into an efficient target text. However, while the previously analysed guidelines offered a wider range of programs and live performances, the ADLAB guidelines identifies four types of programs: films, TV programs, theatre performances, and descriptive guides.

As far as the last set of guidelines is concerned, after introducing the BAI Access Rules' scope and jurisdiction as well as defining the practices of Subtitling, Captioning, Sign Language interpreting, and AD, the Standards outline the general rules applying to the provision of accessibility services. Even though the Irish guidelines do not concentrate purely on AD, they offer an interesting insight on the timeframes and targets applied to AD for the years ahead. Regarding the chapter on AD, the document firstly presents a brief introduction on the legislative background leading to the creation of these Standards, then it focuses on the practical side of AD (what to describe, when to describe, what not to describe, the source text's sounds and AD recording, grammar, and language). Next, the BAI guidelines on AD refer to particular cultural events, namely soap operas, documentaries, sporting and live events, and children's programming.

The only guidelines presenting an example of AD excerpts in the "Appendixes" section are ADLAB and, the ACB; while the ITC guidelines include short passages or sentences following a theoretical paragraph so as to promote intelligibility.

Concerning the third criterion, which is the general approach adopted in each document, it is interesting to note that the majority of guidelines follow a general to particular order, starting from the "big picture" and then gradually diversifying into different program categories and live cultural events. ADLAB, on the contrary, is based on an antithetical structure, in which, firstly, a topic is presented; then, the same topic is examined according to the main aspects of the source text. Once the user comes up with the right questions about the topic, the next section, which discusses the target text, offers effective strategies to be pursued in the scriptwriting of AD.

Furthermore, while the general focus adopted by the American and British guidelines is mainly based on AD standards, the Irish guidelines focus more on the legislative aspect of AD, while the European guidelines reflect their research-based nature.

Variations were also found within each document in reference to the preferred AD categories. The BAI Access Rules and the ITC guidelines focus mostly on TV since the former presents three sections on TV programs, namely soap operas, current affairs documentaries, and children's programs, and only one paragraph on sporting live events. The latter includes nine sections on TV programs and two modules on cultural live events such as sporting events and musicals. This is due to the fact that the British and Irish guidelines were issued by television and broadcasting commissions respectively. Conversely, the ACB guidelines and the ADC Standards for AD delve more into live events, more specifically theatre, dance performances, and opera, since in the USA AD was originally a tool to make theatre performances accessible. Moreover, the American guidelines also include a chapter commenting on media, although with no classification in terms of program type.

Similarly to the British and Irish guidelines, ADLAB concentrates on media, especially films, by discussing cinematic language, techniques, and style. Although the European guidelines do not distinguish between films and other TV programs, they inserted a chapter on standards regarding theatrical performances and descriptive guides. Unlike the British and Irish guidelines, ADLAB and ADC are the only standards offering an insight on museums, cultural events, heritage sites, and exhibits.

At a micro-level, considering the linguistic aspects of grammar, lexis, and syntax, a minor disagreement was noticed among all the guidelines taken into consideration in this paragraph. From a grammatical point of view, guidelines recommend delivering AD in

the present tense and in the active voice, since the description is "a commentary [that] tells the viewer what is happening at a given moment" (Ofcom 2000: 12), while, when referring to on-going actions, the present continuous tense is more preferable. However, the ADC Standards is the only document that does not explicitly mention this information.

In general, all guidelines, except the Irish Rules, suggest varying verb choice in order to provide a more accurate and vivid image of the actions performed on stage. For instance, instead of using the verb "walk", the audio describer should employ more specific terms such as "stroll", "hobble" to name a few.

Concerning pronouns, it is important to note the degree of attention paid to this linguistic component, given the high level of ambiguity that pronouns may lead to, especially when the object of reference cannot be perceived visually. Accordingly, guidelines recommend using pronouns only when it is comprehensible to whom or what the pronoun relates; otherwise, proper names represent a valuable solution. References can also be expressed with definite and indefinite articles. In this regard, only two documents, namely the ITC guidelines and the ACB guidelines, suggest choosing a definite article when there is only one object on stage and it has already been introduced to the audience thus leaving no room for misunderstandings. On the contrary, if the subject or object was never mentioned before, an indefinite article constitutes a more appropriate solution.

Since the description must be as objective as possible, guidelines underline the importance of selecting adjectives and adverbs that do not reveal the audio describer's interpretation of the story or personal judgments. In this regard, the AD should avoid referring to the character's particular emotions, as for instance in "Harry is angry". Instead, it should give the audience details about gestures and facial expressions which lead to that conclusion, as in "Harry is clenching his fist".

As far as conjunctions are concerned, only the American and European guidelines offer recommendations on what are the best options for joining sentences. Therefore, according to the above-mentioned Standards, the use of "while" and "as" is preferred only when connecting two correlated actions.

From a lexical perspective, all guidelines stress the importance of providing a clear and concise description by using comprehensible and precise terminology. Generally, audio describers should prefer "everyday" words over technical jargon and avoid using

slang, colloquialisms, and regional terms which may hinder comprehension, especially among non-specialists unless adequate to the context. Furthermore, guidelines agree on employing a language that is consistent with the source text's content and genre; this is true especially for children's programs as stated in the ITC guidelines, the ADC Standards, and the BAI Access Rules. Unlike ADLAB guidelines, which suggest employing "colourful adjectives and adverbs or adverbial phrases" (Remael et al. 2014) in order to deliver a more precise description, the Irish, British and American guidelines follow a "less is more" philosophy, more concretely, "[avoiding] colourful imagery or elegant turns of phrase except where such language complements the style of program" (Broadcast Authority of Ireland 2019: 57). However, in the case of metaphors and similes, the American and European guidelines allow the use of comparative structures only when the object of reference is immediately recognizable by the audience and when such expressions comply with the source text's genre, style, and spatio-temporal setting (Remael et al. 2014). The British and Irish guidelines do not hint at this lexical aspect.

Moreover, it is interesting to notice that four documents mention the aspect of "colours" in the section related to lexis, namely the ADC guidelines, the ITC Standards, the ACB guidelines, and to a lesser degree, ADLAB guidelines. Describing colours may be a thorny issue, since dealing with visually impaired people frequently raises the question of whether audio describers should mention colours in their script. Furthermore, being the audience composed of a wide variety of people, e.g., people who have been blind from birth or from an early age and people with low vision, their degree of knowledge of the world may change significantly. All guidelines concur on the usefulness of employing phrases or terms to express specific colours as it helps partially sighted people to locate what is being described, and blind people to "[…] understand the significance of a particular colour by its association" (Ofcom 2000: 21). Colours may be mentioned when describing the characters' physical appearance or clothes, but only in the case of long breaks between the dialogues or during meaningless silences. Nevertheless, while all AD guidelines from the Anglo-American context mention colours in order to tackle ethnicity issues, ADLAB guidelines allow colour references as a way to help the partially sighted audience identify certain visual cues.

From a syntactic viewpoint, guidelines differ in terms of provided details. In this regard, the ACB, the ADC, and the ITC guidelines underline the importance of clear,

concise, and correct sentences in the AD script; however, they do not delve into specific sentence order. ADLAB guidelines, instead, stress cohesion and allow for different syntactic structures as, for instance, parataxis, subject-verb-object standard word order, passive constructions, or sentences headed by prepositional or adverbial clauses. A major discrepancy was found among the European, Irish guidelines and the ADC Standards. In fact, while the former recommends using full sentences as much as possible, even by only grouping the most essential elements, the latter suggests avoiding talking in paragraphs or forming elaborate sentences (Audio Description Coalition 2009: 4).

The most substantial differences among the guidelines considered in this paragraph are related to the four key aspects of AD. However, regarding the first aspect, that is what to describe, there is wide general agreement. The American guidelines share the motto "WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU SAY" (W.Y.S.I.W.Y.S), meaning that the audio describer should not include his/her own inferences about the plot. Even though they do not mention this rule, the BAI Access Rules and the ITC guidelines state that describers should never reveal the plot or describe the motivations behind a character's action. Additionally, all guidelines emphasise the importance of letting the audience assume what is happening on stage by relying on sound effects, background knowledge, and dialogues. More specifically, ADC standards and ADLAB guidelines advise audio describers never to condescend or patronise the audience when providing explanations; while the Irish and British standards recommend avoiding stating the obvious, since most of the times theatregoers can imply such information from the context.

Generally speaking, all guidelines agree on prioritising certain information, namely characters, locations and time, unknown sound sources, actions, objects, movements, facial expressions, and gestures. More specifically, description is included when shifts in setting or characters' physical appearance occur. In this regard, guidelines recommend focusing only on "the features that are the most unique about the character" (Remael et al. 2014). The American guidelines follow a "general-to-specific" approach, firstly describing the essential elements in order to provide general background, and then, when time permits, dwelling on details. However, as the ITC guidelines point out: "too much detail can become fragmented in the listener/viewer's mind rather than giving a strong overall impression" (Ofcom 2000: 14).

Concerning the second basic element of AD, or when to describe, some dissimilarities were noticed. The ADC and ACB guidelines are the only documents drawing attention to pauses: "description should not fill every available pause. […] Audio description is not a running commentary. Listeners should be allowed to hear the emotion in [the] actors' voices and in the tension of the silences between characters" (Audio Description Coalition 2009: 2) and "[…] even the silences are telling the story and must be experienced" (American Council of the Blind 2010: 25). Moreover, the ACB guidelines allow audio describers to intervene even when a significant background music or soundtrack is playing, as the first aim of AD is to make a performance understandable. By contrast, the ADC standards allow to describe over background music, dialogues or noise only when they are not essential to the story. In the event that the audio describer had to speak over significant aural elements, it would be permissible, if the description was vital. The BAI Access rules, instead, discourage audio describers from including AD concurrently with mainstream dialogues, critical background music, and sound effects.

With regard to AD timing, the ITC guidelines recommend mirroring the action occurring on stage or "signposting" it especially when there is no adequate place to include AD, therefore allowing possible timing discrepancies. Conversely, the European guidelines strongly suggest describing the actions after they have happened on stage since actors may improvise or hesitate. However, an action may be described before it occurs on stage only when the audio describer is fully certain that the same action is about to happen exactly in the same way he/she prepared it.

As far as the third aspect is concerned, there is little variation across the guidelines under examination. The ADC guidelines shed light on the different opinions regarding the amount of information that should be provided in the AD. In other words, people who have been blind from birth may not necessarily need to know all the visual elements related to the scene, while theatregoers who lost their sight later on in life may prefer a more detailed description. However, despite the wide range of preferences that vary according to the different degrees of blindness, ADC standards suggest "[including] the visual information that is inaccessible to people who are blind or have low vision without filling every available pause" (Audio Description Coalition 2009: 5). By contrast, the ACB, ITC, and BAI guidelines recommend keeping the description as essential as possible, hence refraining from overwhelming the audience with too much detail, since

“[…] too much description can be exhausting, […] irritating, [or it] can dilute the mood of a scene” (Ofcom 2000: 14-15).

Eventually, according to the ADLAB guidelines, when providing AD in theatrical performances, audio describers tend to group details into long descriptions because it facilitates the processing of information, as the audience does not necessarily have to switch from the headphones’ sounds to the stage sounds. Nevertheless, ADLAB guidelines specify that, when time is tight, the AD should be mainly composed of short sentences. Contrariwise, when the pace of the performance slows down, longer descriptions may be included.

Concerning the fourth basic element of AD, or how to describe, there is a common thread among the considered guidelines, namely factuality and objectivity. Indeed, all standards agree that audio describers should deliver objective descriptions by omitting personal interpretations or qualitative judgments. Furthermore, guidelines underline the importance of appropriate timing, especially during sight gags, evocative sound effects, or whenever the author intends to surprise the audience, in order to avoid revealing unexpected events or having listeners reacting separately from the sighted audience. However, while the American guidelines are more stringent when it comes to revealing certain details, the British standards seem to be more flexible.

As regards the narrative perspective, all guidelines, except for ADLAB, discuss this issue. The American standards suggest using the “[…] "first-person" point of view as a means of including the audience” (Audio Description Coalition 2009: 3), as in “he turns to us” instead of “he turns to the audience”. By contrast, the British and Irish guidelines advise that audio describers should refrain from using expressions such as “we see…” or “in front of us…”, with the exception of children’s programs.

A further criterion that all guidelines take into consideration is vocal delivery. All standards focus on voice’s neutrality and clarity, meaning that a “good audio description should be unobtrusive and neutral” (Ofcom 2000: 10), and again “the describer should not attempt to project him- or herself into the performance as another performer” (Audio Description Coalition 2009: 8). However, as the American guidelines point out, the AD should “match vocal delivery to the pace, energy and volume of the material” (Ibid.) so as not to result in a monotonous or lifeless delivery. The ACB guidelines is the only document that specifies the enunciation rate by considering 160 wpm (words per minute)

an adequate pace in order for the description to "flow casually" (American Council of the Blind 2009: 12). Similarly, the BAI Access Rules point out that "the description […] must not be hurried; every word should be clear, audible and timed carefully so that it does not sit uncomfortably close to incoming dialogue" (Broadcast Authority of Ireland 2019: 55).

The comparative analysis of the AD guidelines has demonstrated that there is a strong connection between standards belonging to the European and Anglo-American contexts, besides revealing a few differences regarding certain aspects. Despite relying on a common theoretical framework, all guidelines issue rules and recommendations according to the general approach they adopted. Guidelines underline their non-binding nature by claiming that the documents are the result of the best practices which have been gathered during many years of experience with AD in a variety of contexts. However, while the European guidelines are the result of a project conducted by professionals and academics, the ACB guidelines do not rely on scientific research, but "[…] are based on many years of experience with audio description in a wide range of contexts" (American Council of the Blind 2010: 4). Moreover, although the ADC standards specify the ever-changing nature of AD in terms of material and technology on the proviso that "in reading and practicing these standards, words like "never" and "always" must be applied with common sense" (Audio Description Coalition 2009: 1), they also show less flexibility when referring to the most basic principles of AD: "the most basic principles or "rules" of audio description should not change" (Ibid.).

By contrast, the ACB, ITC guidelines, as well as the BAI Access Rules, point out that guidelines "[…] may be changed from time to time, as deemed appropriate" (Broadcast Authority of Ireland 2019: 52) or that they may be reviewed "in the light of experience gained with [the AD] service" (Ofcom 2000: 3).

In the next chapter, AD will be discussed from a practical point of view by presenting a multimodal analysis of an AD script for a theatrical performance. After a brief overview of Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*, the data regarding the study will be presented. Once having explained the methodology adopted in the analysis, a multimodal study of the AD playscript will be carried out.

CHAPTER 3

A MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF THE AUDIO DESCRIPTION SCRIPT

1. An overview of the play *Waiting for Godot*

Waiting for Godot, an English translation of the French original title *En attendand Godot*, is a play composed by Irish writer Samuel Beckett towards the end of 1948 and then published in 1952. In 1953 the tragicomedy was premiered in its original language at the Théâtre de Babylone in Paris, while in 1955 the English version debuted at the London's Art Theatre. *Waiting for Godot* is the utmost expression of the Theatre of the Absurd, an artistic and literary movement which developed between 1940 and 1960, and which found its roots in Existentialism. Thus, the themes running through the play relate to the hopelessness of humankind stemming from the constant struggle to find a purpose in life as well as the inability to control its fate. According to a pessimistic view of life, misery and angst are inherent components of the human condition and throughout the two-act play are represented by the main characters: Vladimir and Estragon. The duo speculates on life in a desolate landscape where time seems to have frozen and nothing happens. As the title suggests it, the characters are waiting for the arrival of the elusive Godot, who repeatedly promises to show up but who never does. Therefore, this stasis is a double-edged sword since, on the one hand, it represents hope and the chance to enlightenment enhanced by the perpetual communications brought by Godot's messenger; on the other hand, instead, it forces the characters to never leave, thus binding them into inability to move.

The two acts could be considered symmetrical in terms of the events occurring on scene: Vladimir and Estragon always meet by a tree, they discuss different issues and then two other characters join them, Pozzo and his slave Lucky. Next, when Pozzo and Lucky leave, a boy enters the scene to inform Vladimir and Estragon that Godot would not be arriving that night and that the following day he surely would. Therefore, the two protagonists decide to leave, however, they seem unable to move, as the last lines and the

stage direction demonstrate: "[…] VLADIMIR: Well? Shall we go? ESTRAGON: Yes, let's go. *They do not move*. [emphasis added]"[39].

The personal traits of the duo, despite being dissimilar, contribute to creating a complete framework of their existence. While Vladimir contemplates metaphysical and weighty matters, Estragon worries more about himself and his physical health. These specific characteristics reflect the actions they perform as well as their behaviour, gestures, and posture. Vladimir is nearly always upright pacing across the stage, whereas Estragon frequently sits on a stone weary and complaining about his physical pain. Moreover, their posture communicates their attitudes towards life: Vladimir keeps his back straight and keeps his head up, Estragon, instead, is always hunching and slouching with his arms folded. As regards their behaviour, Vladimir is more responsive and agile both physically and mentally and, on most occasions, he acts as the character who brings Estragon back to reality by asking him multiple questions, since the latter tends to forget certain events or even the reason why they are there. Furthermore, Estragon is more emotional, shy, and subdued as he tends to get easily carried away by events that foster his anxiety and desire to leave. By contrast, Vladimir is more caring, watchful, reliable, and positive, given his insistence on pursuing their illusory goal in life.

Although Beckett never described the characters' stage clothes or gave any particular information on how they should look, there are some props[40] such as bowler hats and a pair of boots, which not only are a sign of elegance and finesse but also hide a symbolic meaning. More specifically, the bowler hat is an allegory for thoughts and reasoning, hence Vladimir's close attachment to it, while the boots represent the physical world and life on earth, which are more in line with Estragon's approach towards existence.

From a stylistic point of view, *Waiting for Godot* reflects the unconventionality of the Theatre of the Absurd that tends to deconstruct language, genre and even the play's characters and plot. Everything is reduced to the basics, from the setting to stage clothes, the scenes, the characters in the story and the language they employ. However, essentiality does not always mean clarity or intelligibility, since Beckett depicts an absurd scenario in which the characters' language does not obey logical rules. Indeed, the

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[39] https://resources.saylor.org/wwwresources/archived/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Waiting-for-Godot.pdf (last accessed 02/11/2021).

[40] In the field of performing arts a *prop* is "a small object such as a book, weapon etc, used by actors in a play or film". https://www.ldoceonline.com/ (last accessed 09/02/2022).

characters converse about different unconnected topics which makes it difficult to predict what a character will be replying next or which event will be discussed. In this vein, short sentences, repartees and frequent pauses help convey the idea of an obscure and often allegorical language besides creating a sense of expectation in the audience's mind. More specifically, silence helps to convey meaning by breaking the characters' natural communication flow and, consequently, by giving the audience time to assimilate information and then meditate upon the profound meaning of words. Moreover, the unpredictability of the characters' actions and dialogues hinder any attempt to clearly understand the reason behind their behaviours or obtain more details about them, such as what kind of relationship exists between the duo or their age. Even though Beckett's characters may constantly leave the audience bewildered because of the feeling of absurdity with whom the author shaped them, they do not lack personality or temper. The author intentionally mirrors reality through the grotesque personalities of the protagonists, thus generating a humorous effect typical of tragicomedy and black humour. Therefore, the audience laughs in response to the characters' attitude towards their existence, which is emphasised also by non-verbal language and gestures. Non-verbal cues merge with the characters' dialogues and monologues during which misinterpretations, contradictions, linguistic ambiguities and frequent syntactic and content repetitions reiterate the protagonists' inability to find effective means of communication. Language inefficacy is also expressed by the conflicting relationship between the characters' words and the actions they perform through body language and gestures. A case in point is the duo's ending exchange during which Estragon proposes to leave the place and Vladimir answers affirmatively, but eventually the couple does not leave. Moreover, the characters repeatedly intend to hang themselves from the tree, however, since the only available objects are a short rope and a belt, they decide to postpone this violent act to the next day unless Godot comes. Furthermore, the characters employ scientific terms and religious references only because they sound grandiose or pleasing to the ear rather than a means to show rational thinking or state facts.

After this overall introduction of the literary source text which will be part of the research's material, the next paragraph will focus on the data collected for the study and the methodology adopted for the analysis.

1.1. The study: data and methodology

In order to begin analysing the AD script, it is necessary to look into the data collected during the interview with the audio describer in charge of making the performance accessible to blind and visually impaired people.

The show under analysis was performed on 20 May 2017 at 2 pm at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, Ireland. The show was directed by Garry Hynes and produced by the Druid Theatre Company starring Marty Rea as Vladimir, Aaron Monaghan as Estragon, Rory Nolan as Pozzo, and Garrett Lombard as Lucky.

The performance lasted for two hours and forty minutes with a twenty-minute interval. At the beginning of the show, introductory notes were read aloud by Máirín Harte, the audio describer who also voiced the AD script for the second part of the play. This section of the audio described performance was extremely important since it allowed to detect minor technical issues regarding the headsets or the streaming channel. Indeed, from a practical point of view, particular care has to be taken with visually impaired theatregoers, since more time is needed to find their seats or put the headsets on at the start of the show or after the interval. The audio introduction to the performance was also available on the Arts & Disability Ireland website prior to the date of the show[41]. Moreover, the Programme Notes were presented on the website both in the form of Word file and audio recording. The online audio introductory notes were created by the same audio describer who would then deliver them during the live show. By doing so, the audience could familiarise themselves with the tone, speech rate and accent of the audio describer's voice, besides having a taste of the phrasing, vocabulary and style that would be adopted in the AD.

The audience was mainly composed of sighted members and approximately less than 30 people were visually impaired.

The preparation of the AD script took approximately 45 hours and comprised mainly the following tasks: watching the recording of the performance, finding the right words to be included in the script, and carrying out a run-through before the show to check for technical issues.

[41] https://adiarts.ie/ (last accessed 30/11/2021).

With the object of following the framework of multimodal analysis, data were gathered from the recording of the theatrical performance and the written AD script. The recording includes two videos corresponding to the first and second act of the play, while the AD script refers to *Waiting for Godot*'s second act. Each video lasts about one hour and fifteen minutes, and one hour and eight minutes respectively. The play was recorded at a distance and under good lighting, which facilitated the analysis of the visual cues of the performance. From an aural point of view, the recording audio was clear and since data refer to the recording of an actual show performed in front of an audience, it was possible to hear the audience's reaction to the actors' jokes, punchlines, or gags. The AD file consists of the script followed by the actors on stage along with the written narration of the visual cues voiced by the audio describer.

Being multimodality defined as "the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event" (in Kress & van Leeuwen 2001:20), the multimodal study will involve three modes, or sign systems: the written linguistic system, the aural system and the gestural system. The first mode will include grammar, syntax and the vocabulary used in the script, while the second mode will refer to the soundscape, namely prosody and sounds. The last mode will focus on non-verbal language.

As far as grammar is concerned, the AD script will be analysed by examining the basic parts of the speech, namely adjectives, adverbs, verbs, and pronouns. Each word class will be investigated in terms of morphological variations, then, according to the word's related meaning, terms will be classed into semantic categories. In order to identify the most recurrent semantic group in the script, lexical density will be determined by calculating the Type Token Ratio (TTR), which is obtained by dividing the total number of different words appearing in a text, named "types", by the overall number of words in the text, which are called "tokens". As a countercheck, the number of times a word occurs in the text, namely word frequency, will be counted. Adopting this approach will allow us to identify the main traits that outline the genre of audio description.

In regard to syntax, the analysis will be based on two levels. On a broader level, the text will be examined in terms of how information is organised in the text and the use of punctuation, while on a granular level, the identification of specific patterns in the text will allow the classification of sentence structures presenting the same syntactic characteristics into groups.

Eventually, regarding the vocabulary employed in the script, lexicon will be divided into four distinct semantic fields: space, sight, mimicry, and body motion. Then, in each semantic field, words will be subdivided according to their main semantic traits.

With the aim of determining what is the most recurring semantic field in the script, word frequency was counted across the entire text. In the last step of the lexical analysis, word frequency will be calculated with respect to terms belonging to the same semantic field.

The second mode will focus on the soundscape, which is a composite semiotic system made up of speech, music and sounds (van Leeuwen 1999). Drawing on van Leeuwen's model, the audio described theatrical performance will be analysed according to five parameters:

- Perspective, namely the relative loudness of concurrent sounds, music and dialogues, e.g., speech and sound effects or, the AD and the characters' dialogues, which hierarchically organises them in three zones according to their distance from the speaker;
- Time and rhythm, i.e., the speed of music or sounds;
- Interaction of voices, that is the way in which the different voices included in the soundscape enlace;
- Melody, that is the intonation of the speech, which involves pitch movement, pitch range and pitch level. Pitch modulation contributes to emotion communication;
- Voice quality, or what characterises voice in terms of roughness, breathiness, loudness, the degrees of tension, pitch register and vibrato.

Furthermore, the section dedicated to time and rhythm will also focus on the function, position, and duration of pauses in the AD.

As regards sounds, the soundscape analysis will draw from the classification presented by Crook (1999), which divides sounds into six types (in Crook, quoted in Fryer 2010: 30):

- the realistic, confirmatory effects, which include sounds and noises that amplify the information conveyed through speech;
- the realistic, evocative effects, which involve narration-unrelated sounds;
- the symbolic, evocative effects, which include sounds that reflect the characters' feelings or state of mind;

- the conventionalised effects, namely easily recognisable sounds that may recall particular contexts or events;
- the impressionistic effects, which comprise effects applied to sounds or voices so as to convey particular emotions or recreate settings that may not be accessible at the time of speaking;
- music as an effect, which "[…] plays a key role in conveying the atmosphere and energy of a performance, and often enriches [other] effects" (Fryer 2010).

The third mode, or the gestural system, involves classifying the description of non-verbal language into four categories depending on the body parts involved in the movement: posture, mimicry, facial expressions and body language. In the last two categories, common patterns regarding description will be identified, namely direction of movement, how movement is performed, and intensity of movement. However, since posture and facial expressions may not necessarily be expressed through movement, another distinction will be needed, hence the criteria of action/inaction characterising these two categories. Once non-verbal language is classified according to what body parts are involved in movement, further differentiation based on the role played by non-verbal language during the performance will be presented.

The approach being used refers to Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), which discusses how different semiotic systems are used, combined, and integrated into the performance of *Waiting for Godot*.

2. AD analysis

The AD analysis will be divided into three sections. The first section will focus on the linguistic elements of the play, i.e., adjectives, adverbs, verbs and pronouns. The following section instead will analyse the soundscape, i.e., prosody and sounds. Eventually, the third section will be dedicated to the gestural system.

The linguistic analysis will refer to the written script of the AD, whereas in order to carry out the analysis of the soundscape, we will refer to the interview with the audio describer and the video recordings of the show[42]. Since no recordings of the delivery of the AD script were available, the section dedicated to the soundscape analysis will include

[42] See Appendix A and Appendix B.

excerpts of the interview. During the meeting with Máirín Harte, the following topics were discussed: the type of audiences attending the show, the prosody of the AD speech delivery, the preparation for the show in terms of hours of work, tasks division and coordination, technical issues and equipment used during the AD. Furthermore, the interview was a valuable opportunity to comment on certain aspects related to the world of AD, the possibility to include evaluation questionnaires after audio described shows and AD future perspectives.

As for the analysis of the gestural system, reference to the video recordings of the performance will be made.

2.1. Adjectives

Generally speaking, the language employed in AD tends to be extremely descriptive since it "[…] deepens in objects, colours, shapes, and gestures… because it is the iconic information, which needs to be conveyed into words to allow the understanding of the audiovisual work" (in Hernàndez, Mendiluce, quoted in Arma 2011: 153).

Since the principal goal of adjectives is to add more details about the noun they refer to, in an AD they play a critical role in making the audience visualise the object of description. However, given time and space constraints, adjectives should be direct, accurate but also evocative, as even with a single word the audio describer is able to create a specific atmosphere or a more thorough scenery. Indeed, considering the audio describer's neutral point of view in the description, adjectives should be as objective as possible allowing the audience to interpret the plot personally.

From a morphological perspective, it is worth noticing that in the AD script adjectives tend to be compound modifiers, namely adjectives composed of more than one attributive word, such as for instance "barefoot" or, "asleep". Furthermore, the AD script presents derivative adjectives containing the suffixes "-able", "-ive", "-ent", "-esque" or, "-less", as in the case of "silent", "different", "grotesque", "emotionless". When expressing comparison between two elements on stage as in "furthest leaf" and "lowest leaf", adjectives acquire the typical suffixes of the superlative and comparative forms "-est/-st" and "-er/-r" respectively. By contrast, non-finite verb forms "-ed", "-ing" are used as adjectives when qualities, emotional or physical conditions are to be conveyed, as in the

following expressions: “hands clasped”, “furrowed brow”, “sleeping ear”, “clasping hands”.

With regard to lexical density, the TTR is calculated by dividing the total number of specific words belonging to a specific speech category, in this case adjectives, by the overall number of words in the text. Considering the total number of tokens, which is 1,184, and the overall number of types, i.e., 38, the TTR amounts to 3.2%. This means that 1 word out of 3 is an adjective.

Once having determined lexical density in reference to adjectives, it is paramount to classify them according to the semantic categories. The main categories of adjectives employed to provide details about the characters and setting are colour, position, direction, size, age, quantity, container-contained relation, material, texture, quietness/movement, weather-related conditions, physical appearance and physical conditions (in Arma, quoted in Perego 2014: 68). The most recurrent semantic categories in the AD script of *Waiting for Godot* relate to position/direction, quantity, physical condition, movement, size and colour.

With regard to the first category, that is position/direction (2), the adjectives “right” and “left” always pair up with nouns referring to body parts such as in “right leg” or “left hand”. Quantity (5) is expressed with definite cardinal numbers, which occur in combination with nouns indicating props, as in “three leaves”. Adjectives describing physical conditions (1) are the most refined and evocative because of the complexity and multiplicity of elements that contribute to expressing meaning. For example, the adjective “barefoot”, which is referred to Gogo’s entrance on stage at the beginning of the second act, accomplishes not only a descriptive function, but also implies specific assumptions by the audience. Indeed, the audience may make two assumptions: 1) the boots referred to at the beginning of the AD may belong to Gogo, and 2) Gogo, having no shoes on, may look wretched and desperate.

The fourth category, that is movement (3), includes adjectives such as “standing” and “rapid”, which always refer to the characters performing actions or experiencing particular physical or emotional conditions, as in “Didi gets up softly, takes off his coat, placing it across Gogo’s shoulders, *standing*, tugs his waistcoat [emphasis added]” and, “The whole exchange is *rapid* and uninterrupted [emphasis added]”.

Although to a lesser extent, adjectives belonging to the fifth and sixth categories, namely size and colour (4,7), mainly describe body parts as in “little finger” and changes in the scenography such as “peachy gold” referred to the stage lights recreating the setting of the sun.

Expectedly, in terms of word frequency, the category of adjectives characterised by the highest number of occurrences is related to adjectives expressing possession (6) as in the following cases: “his leg”, “his head”, “his face”, “their watch”, “our right”. All the possessive adjectives included in the AD script always combine with a noun sharing the same semantic fields, namely body parts and directions. This tendency is certainly due to the systemic features of the English language. The adjectives concerning position/direction and physical/emotional condition (1,2) are the second most used with regard to word frequency, while those describing size and colour occur far less frequently. Table 1 shows the TTR for each category:

Table 1. Classification of adjectives according to category and Type-Token Ratio (TTR)

CATEGORY	TYPE	TYPE-TOKEN RATIO (TTR)
PHYSICAL/ EMOTIONAL CONDITION (1)	beaming, furrowed, barefoot, emotionless, agape, confused, asleep, stiff, warm, stupefied, closed, laden down, clasping, sleeping	1.2%
POSITION/ DIRECTION (2)	furthest, left, closer, right, lowest, back	0.5%
MOVEMENT (3)	clasped, bowed, standing, rapid, uninterrupted, doubled, splayed	0.5%
SIZE (4)	wide, little, great, whole	0.3%
QUANTITY (5)	three, one, empty	0.2%
POSSESSIVE (6)	his, our, their	0.2%
COLOUR (7)	peachy	0.08%

Looking at the bale, we may assume that details describing the characters and props' position on stage and the characters' physical/emotional condition assume a pivotal role during a performance accessible to a blind and sight-impaired audience. Indeed as said before, while the high frequency of possessive adjectives can be attributed to grammatical matters, adjectives of position/direction and physical/emotional condition certainly serve a lexical and descriptive function.

There are some adjectives that behave similarly to the ones listed above; however, they cannot be included in the categories mentioned previously because they belong to different semantic fields. More specifically, the adjectives "same" and "other", which occur in the text thrice and once respectively, always combine with nouns referring to body parts as in the case of "same pose", "same leg", "other foot", and props as in "same size". From a logical and semantic perspective, the use of these adjectives implies that the antecedent was mentioned explicitly, and clearly understood by the audience.

> […] Lowering his head, gazes off to his right...takes a closer look. Raises his left hand to shield his eyes as he kicks his right leg back.... stands upright turns walking passed the tree, noticing the leaves he halts, circles the tree to take a closer look. Reaches up to touch the lowest leaf. Hand to chin. Looks off to the left of the landscape. Takes a closer look, repeats *the same pose*, looking off…. [emphasis added] […]

In this passage, the antecedent is represented by the description of the characters' posture and position of the hand and leg, while the expression "the same pose" is the anaphor. Since the distance between the antecedent and the anaphor is short, the audience can clearly comprehend the action occurring on stage.

> […] **VLADIMIR**: (Impatiently) Yes yes, we're magicians. But let us persevere in what we have resolved, before we forget. (picks up the left boot). Come on, give me your foot. (Gogo raises *his right foot*.) The other, hog! (Gogo raises *the other foot*.) [emphasis added] […]

The same also applies to this second case, in which "his right foot" functions as antecedent, whereas "the other foot" is the anaphor. Given that the anaphor is specified

immediately after the antecedent, blind and partially sighted theatregoers can straightforwardly infer the referring element of the expression “the other foot”.

Moreover, even though the adjective “grotesque”, occurring only in “[…] Gogo takes LUCKY’s hat. DIDI adjusts GOGO’s hat on his head. Grotesque disparity” does not appear close to a noun of props or body parts, concept-wise it was employed to highlight the noticeable dissimilarity between Estragon and Vladimir’s hats resulting then in a comical scene. By contrast, the adjectives “different” and “either” in the expressions “They return from different sides of the stage” and “The pair stand on either side of the landscape looking off simultaneously” are the only qualifiers that pair up with a noun describing the characters’ entrances or position on stage.

2.2. Adverbs

The second category of modifiers serving a descriptive function in the text is represented by adverbs. Compared to adjectives, adverbs present a less varied morphological suffixation, which is mainly composed of the suffixes “-ly”, “-wise” and “-ward” as in the following examples: “deeply”, “defensively”, “clockwise”, “anticlockwise”, “skyward”, “upwards”[43]. A further type of adverbs consists of modifiers including from two to three words such as “to-and-fro”, “back and forth” and “in unison”.

The function that adverbs perform in the text varies according to the semantic category to which they belong. Depending on their semantic function adverbs can be subdivided into seven categories: manner, degree, time, place, probability, purpose, frequency. In the script under examination, adverbs refer to all the aforementioned categories, except for the one designating purpose. The reason for this might be that the main function of such, is to indicate the cause or aim of an action. Therefore, since the audio describer’s role is not that of explaining the motives behind an action for reasons regarding objectivity and neutrality, no occurrences were found in reference to this group of adverbs. (see Table 2).

[43] However, the vast majority of adverbs are ending particles of phrasal verbs, as in the case of “looks off”, “put them back”, “holds out”, “turns away”, “walks away”.

Table 2. Classification of adverbs according to category and Type-Token Ratio (TTR)

CATEGORY	TYPE	TYPE-TOKEN RATIO (TTR)
MANNER (1)	upright, deeply, suddenly, slowly, defensively, out, in unison, stoically, quickly, forward, backwards, forwards, over, anticlockwise, clockwise, about, softly, off, by, back, coquettishly, back and forth, on, simultaneously, apart, quizzically, as, after, side by side	2.4%
PLACE (2)	skyward, off, back, up, across, away, towards, out, forward, on, down, to-and-fro, skywards, closer, upwards, forwards, into	1.4%
TIME (3)	before	0.08%
PROBABILITY (4)	perhaps	0.08%
DEGREE (5)	roughly	0.08%
FREQUENCY (6)	again	0.08%

Regarding the first category, that is adverbs of manner (1), modifiers always combine with a verb indicating motion or quietness, as for example in "Lights up on Vladimir standing right of the tree with his back to us *looking skyward* [emphasis added]", "Takes a closer look, repeats the same pose, *looking off* [emphasis added]", "Gogo, barefoot, head bowed appears from our right, *moving slowly* across [emphasis added]" and, "Suddenly *stands upright*, feet like a penguin, shoulders back, hands clasped [emphasis added]".

Adverbs of place (2) follow a common pattern since they mainly appear close to verbs designating sight, as in "They *look forward*. Didi smiles, Gogo grimaces [emphasis added]", "Lowering his head, *gazes off* to his right...takes a closer look. [emphasis added]"; and motion verbs such as in "DIDI *STEPS AWAY*. GOGO SHUFFLES PASSED DIDI", "Side by side in unison they *take a step towards* [emphasis added]", "Facing each other. Didi *walks away* [emphasis added]" and, "LUCKY *puts* everything *down, puts* end of rope *into* POZZO's hand, takes up everything again [emphasis added]". In both structures, adverbs of place provide information about the spatial system, e.g., proximity, how characters interact with the space around them as well as relate with the props on stage.

In terms of proximity, Vladimir and Estragon stand close to each other when they meditate on important matters or because of their camaraderie. This is reflected in AD through the expression "Together they turn to us, *step forward* […] [emphasis added]", in which a motion verb combines with an adverb of place:

> […] **ESTRAGON**: That's the idea, let's ask each other questions.
> **VLADIMIR**: What do you mean, at least there's that?
> **ESTRAGON**: That much less misery.
> **VLADIMIR**: True.
> **ESTRAGON**: Well? If we gave thanks for our mercies?
> **VLADIMIR**: What is terrible is to have thought.
> **ESTRAGON**: But did that ever happen to us? *Together they turn to us, step forward* [emphasis added] […]

As confirmed by the video recording of the show, in this repartee Vladimir and Estragon, standing side by side in the middle of the stage, move in unison and adopt the same grave facial expression, as well as a similar stiff, upright posture.

Another visual cue that the audience cannot have access to is the characters' interaction with the landscape:

> […] Lights up on Vladimir standing right of the tree with his back to us *looking skyward*, perhaps at the furthest leaf. [emphasis added] […]

In the AD, the expression “looking skyward” contains all the visual elements that can be observed in the video recording of the performance, i.e., the character, who is standing close to the tree, turns his head up.

In regard to adverbs of probability (4), the only occurrence in the text corresponds to the term “perhaps” which was employed in “Lights up on Vladimir standing right of the tree with his back to us looking skyward, *perhaps* at the furthest leaf [emphasis added]”. “Perhaps” expresses probability as well as assumption; however, it preserves the audio describer’s neutrality by acquiring an assertive and indirect tone. Indeed, the use of this adverb contributes to building up suspense as well as piquing the audience’s curiosity.

Conversely, the adverb of frequency (6) “again”, occurring seven times in the text, highlights the repetitiveness of the characters’ actions during the play, which is a recurring theme in Beckett’s play.

In terms of lexical density, the TTR related to adverbs, which is 4.2%, is slightly higher than the adjectives’ ratio, meaning that 1 in 4 words is an adverb. Similar to adjectives, in terms of word frequency, the most recurrent adverbs express place/direction and manner. However, they are function words, which means that in order to convey meaning they need to combine with a verb resulting then in a phrasal verb.

2.3. Verbs

The third part of the speech, namely verbs, conveys information about the actions performed on stage, the characters’ body language, gestures and facial mimicry or variations in the scenography. As concerns morphology, verbs tend to acquire the suffixes of the third person singular of the present simple, “-s/-es”, and the “-ing” suffix of the present continuous form because the audio described narration is in third person. Verbs follow a common pattern: the present simple is used whenever there are brief, consecutive actions or descriptions as in the cases of “*Looks off* to the left of the landscape [emphasis added]” or “*relaxes* stance, *clears* throat [emphasis added]”, while the progressive form appears whenever there are more prolonged actions such as “Lights up on Vladimir standing right of the tree with his back to us *looking skyward*, perhaps at the furthest leaf [emphasis added]” or “studying the audience”.

In terms of position that verbs occupy in a sentence, verbs are preceded by the character’s nickname only when disambiguation is needed since all characters are male.

However, due to time and space constraints, when the audience can easily understand that the same character is performing a series of actions, his nickname is not made explicit. Furthermore, there are several cases in which verbs referring to the sequence of rapid actions of the same character are grouped to form a list, as in "Takes a closer look, repeats the same pose, looking off.....*stands, turns***,** *notices* Gogo's boots, hurries to pick them up, examine, smells deeply, lowering the boots, his face beaming.... put them back [emphasis added]".

In order to determine what verbal class presents the widest lexical density, verbs were first subdivided into five semantic categories: motion/ quietness, verbs expressing different ways of walking, verbs of vision, the lexical verbs to be and to have as main verbs, and verbs describing mimicry (see *Table 3*).

Table 3. Classification of verbs according to category and Type-Token Ratio (TTR)

CATEGORY	TYPE	TYPE-TOKEN RATIO (TTR)
MOTION/ QUIETNESS (1)	standing, lowering, raises his left hand, shield, kicks, turns walking, turns, turns his head, turns a peachy gold, halts, reaches up, touch, hurries, pick them up, smells, put, relaxing, resumes, tilts, appears, moving, throws up, goes, embrace, holds, past, scrunches, rubs chin, nods, rests, lowers, faulters, throws, points to, snaps, facing, turns away, listening, reaching out, joins, pauses, give, freezes, lifting, throws it down, pulls, hunches over, rummages, converge on, picks up, flips over, is facing,	8.8%

	succeeds, getting, sit, point to, rocks, gets up, takes off, placing, tugs, rubs, keep warm, startles, takes by hand, puts on, adjusts, hands to, peers into it, sagging, sways, shakes, attempts, has left, return, move apart, fainting, embracing, staggering, brandishing, hide, appear, bumps into, fall to, rise, go towards, moves, rolling, preparing, swing, pointing upwards, go, help, let, move away, raising, takes, finds, takes up, jerks the rope, leave, tries, holds out	
VISION (2)	looking, gazes off, takes a closer look, noticing, looks off, examine, studying, gazing, gaze out, looks skyward, eyes searching, look down, staring, looks away, looking about, stare out, looks at, look at each other, resume their watch, watches, gazing upwards, looks for, looks over, gazes after	2.2%
VERBS EXPRESSING DIFFERENT WAYS OF WALKING (3)	walking, walks away, takes a step towards, runs, paces, walk backwards and forwards, creeps towards, takes wide steps, jogs, runs on, running	1.8%

	off, walk towards, taking steps, waltz, hops, step closer, walks slowly, runs to, circles, steps, shuffles, takes a step forwards	
MIMICRY (4)	gesturing, grimaces, frowns, smiles, miming, imitates, minces, feigns, does the tree, repeats the same pose	0.8%
VERBS TO BE/TO HAVE AS MAIN VERBS (5)	has, is	0.2%

As regards the first category, verbs of motion and quietness (1) include phrasal verbs and verb phrases. When describing the characters' action or inaction an extensive range of synonyms stresses the accuracy in the research of the precise expression that best describe even the slightest movements. However, when time is short and actions occur rapidly, there is a tendency to employ the same verb, as in the following example:

> […] He *puts* it *on* with his left hand in place of his own which he *hands* to GOGO Gogo *takes* DIDI's hat with his right hand. GOGO *adjusts* LUCKY's hat on his head. It *is* roughly the same size as his. GOGO *puts on* DIDI's hat with his right hand in place of his own which he *hands* to DIDI with his left hand. DIDI *takes* GOGO's hat. Gogo *adjusts* DIDI's hat on his head. There *is* a great disparity of size. [emphasis added] […]

Similar to verbs of motion/inaction, verbs depicting how characters walk on stage (3) are characterised by a substantial lexical variety and detail. More specifically, verbs denote changes in movement and direction such as in "Facing each other. Didi *walks away* [emphasis added]", "VLADIMIR: (Paces mid stage, fidgeting.) Wait…*walks backwards and forwards* we embraced… we were happy… happy… what do we do now that we're happy… [emphasis added]", "POZZO and LUCKY LEAVE. Didi LOOKS OVER TO HIS FRIEND, *RUNS TO* HIM"; and in terms of movement intensity and speed as for example in "Gogo asleep, Didi gets up softly, takes off his coat, placing it across Gogo's shoulders standing tugs his waistcoat…stands stiff…rubs arms, *jogs*, swinging his arms to keep warm… [emphasis added]", "Gogo *paces* [emphasis added]", "Gogo

freezes, staring at the boots *creeps* towards them, slowly lifting one and studying it [emphasis added]".

As far as the third category is concerned, that is verbs expressing vision (2), an analogous distinction was carried out. Verbs describing sight differ in relation to gaze direction, for example "Lowering his head, *gazes off to his right*... [emphasis added]", "[they] *look at each other*... resume their watch [emphasis added]" or, "Didi *looks skyward* [emphasis added]", and the intensity of the gaze, for example "They *gaze out* stoically [emphasis added]", "[Didi] *noticing* the leaves he halts, circles the tree to take a closer look [emphasis added]", "*studying* the audience [emphasis added]", "Takes a closer look, repeats the same pose, looking off.....stands, turns, notices Gogo's boots, hurries to pick them up, *examine*, smells deeply, lowering the boots, his face beaming....put them back [emphasis added]".

The fourth category refers to the verbs "be" and "have" employed as lexical verbs rather than auxiliaries (5). In the script the verb "to be" always precedes an adjective that modifies a noun as in "there is a great disparity", or an adverb modifying an adjectival phrase, as in "it is roughly the same size", thus appearing in a predicative verb structure. The full verb "to have", occurring only once in the text, has a descriptive function since it provides details about an element of the scenography, namely the tree, as in "The tree has three leaves".

As far as verbs of mimicry (4) are concerned, gestures, facial expressions and the imitation of specific elements on stage, for example the tree in "Didi does the tree", represent the main lexical content related to this group. Considering time constraints, the conciseness of AD as well as the complexity of details to be described when mentioning body language and gestures, verbs of mimicry tend to be more generic, although they recreate an exact image in the audience's mind.

By analysing the text as a whole, the TTR amounts to 13.5%, meaning that 1 word out of 13 is a verb. At a more granular level, verbs describing motion/quietness and verbs expressing vision present the highest percentage in terms of lexical density. This is also visible in word frequency, since verbs such as "look" and "walk" were the most recurrent in the script, with 16 and 6 occurrences respectively.

2.4. Pronouns

The last part of the speech to be analysed is pronouns. In the script there are two types of subject pronouns, namely "he" and, "they" and their equivalent object pronouns "him" and, "them". When the audio describer refers to a specific character, the pronoun "he" appears in the text, while when both characters are on stage, they are addressed with the pronoun "they" or the expressions "the two" and "the pair" as in "*the two* hide behind the stone [emphasis added]" and "*the pair* stand on either side of the landscape [emphasis added]". Moreover, the third person singular subject pronoun is employed only if the character's name was introduced before, otherwise, the risk of ambiguity may increase considerably since both characters are male. Conversely, when a new character enters the stage or when the actions are performed by a different character, the subject becomes a proper noun. Accordingly, characters are referred to by a shorter form of their names, or the nicknames "Didi" which stands for "Vladimir", and "Gogo" short for "Estragon". As for Lucky and Pozzo, no short forms were employed since their names are already brief and easy-to-read. In AD nicknames constitute a valuable strategy to optimise time, however, the audience should be informed beforehand about the use of alternative versions to the characters' full names. Therefore, in the introductory notes delivered before the starting of the performance, details about possible changes in the source text were provided.

It is worth mentioning that the second person plural object pronoun "us" is used whenever the characters turn towards the audience, as in "together they turn to *us* [emphasis added]" or "gesturing towards *us* [emphasis added]". Alternatively, the noun phrase "the audience" as in "studying *the audience* [emphasis added]" replaces the more involving and comprehensive pronominal structure. Indeed, including the audio describer as part of the audience "[...] is considered more immersive and inclusive, such that the users are more likely to feel themselves to be members of the same audience as their sighted peers, thereby increasing their sense of social inclusion" (Fryer 2016: 65). Thus, in terms of word frequency, the pronoun "us" presents a higher number of occurrences (4), whereas the expression "the audience" was employed only once.

2.5. Syntax

From a syntactic point of view, the AD script of *Waiting for Godot* is characterised by short, simple sentences intercut by the natural pauses in the characters' dialogues or pauses reflecting punctuation. Generally speaking, there are two main syntactic constructions: asyndeton and parataxis. The first structure allows for the use of punctuation, specifically commas, full stops and ellipsis by omitting conjunctions, as in "halts, frowns, tilts his head", "they turn, move apart, turn again, face each other", "[…] looking off.....stands, turns, notices Gogo's boots". Parataxis, instead, juxtaposes clauses or phrases by using coordinating conjunctions or punctuation as in "DIDI hands GOGO's hat back to GOGO who takes it *and* hands it back to DIDI who takes it *and* hands it back to GOGO [...] [emphasis added]". The conciseness of sentences, on the one hand, facilitates information retention especially when the characters' repartee is particularly quick, while on the other hand, it preserves meaningful silences.

The text presents the syntactic structures illustrated in Table 4:

Table 4. Syntactic structures

SYNTACTIC PATTERN	EXAMPLE
subject - verb - object (SVO) (1)	• The tree has three leaves • Gogo gives the same leg • Gogo raises his right foot
asyndetic list of verbs (2)	• Halts, frowns… resumes • miming… halts • stands, turns, notices [Gogo's boots]
sentences made up of a single verb (3)	• (No subject) Pacing • (No subject) Nods • (No subject) Turns away
subject - intransitive verb sentences (4)	• Didi turns • Gogo sits • Didi runs
subject/object - position (5)	• Didi's boots front centre

	• Lucky's hat to the left of the landscape
subject - verb - position (6)	• They converge on the boots • The pair stand on either side of the landscape • Pozzo and Lucky splayed on the floor
subject ellipsis (7)	• relaxes stance, clears throat • gazing upwards • holds out a hand
subject - subject attribute (8)	• Gogo asleep • An empty stage • Confused looks • Three leaves
subject - subject attribute - verb (9)	• Mouths agape listening • Gogo, barefoot, head bowed appears from our right • Lucky, laden down, takes his place before Pozzo

The most recurrent syntactic structures in the script are the SVO (1), the subject ellipsis (7), the asyndetic list of verbs (2) and the subject followed by an intransitive verb (4). Conversely, monoverbal clauses (3) occur far less frequently in the text.

The SVO (1) is the simplest yet most comprehensible construction since it allows the audience to fully understand the scene. In the script it always involves three main semantic components: the agent of an action, the action being performed and the action's recipient. Generally, the "doers" of the actions denoted by the predicate are the characters on stage, however, there are specific cases in which the participant of an action or the theme denoted by the predicate is distinguished by non-human traits, as in "misery rests on his face" and "the tree has three leaves". In both cases, AD plays a fundamental role

in facilitating the audience's comprehension since it provides visual details that, otherwise, a blind and visually impaired audience would not have access to.

Sentences characterised by subject ellipsis (7) such as "Takes a closer look, repeats the same pose, looking off…", and asyndetic coordination, as in "stands, turns, notices Gogo's boots" represent an effective solution to time constraints and an adequate syntactic form to the pursuit of brevity and directness typical of AD. However, such constructions may lead to misunderstandings and raise doubts in the audience's minds, especially among sight-impaired theatregoers, hence the need to preserve semantic and logical coherence.

The last group of syntactic structures is sentences composed of the agent or experiencer of an event and the action itself. Since this construction involves an intransitive verb, the theme or patient related to the action is not expressed. Accordingly, these sentences feature phrasal and prepositional verbs that cannot bear a direct object, as in "Didi runs", "Gogo halts" or, "Gogo paces".

2.6. Vocabulary and register

As concerns the vocabulary used in the script, the text does not present a convoluted or intricate language since it addresses a non-specialist audience of all ages. In other words, the play can be enjoyed by both children and adults without any previous preparation on the topic because an informal register is preferred over a high formal register composed of technical terminology. Moreover, when referring to shifts in the setting or the characters' proxemics on stage no references to theatrical jargon were included. Nevertheless, as Marchesi points out, British AD favours a refined, unusual vocabulary in which a picturesque language replaces a more conversational everyday language (in Salway et al., quoted in Perego 2014: 94).

In the script of *Waiting for Godot* non ordinary terms such as the adverbs "quizzically", "stoically", "coquettishly" or the verb "brandishing" show the level of detail in the translation of body language into spoken speech. Content-wise, however, with the aim of making visually impaired theatregoers picture events in their minds and thoroughly understand stage dynamics, the AD script should include references to

everyday objects or familiar analogies with common shapes, as Guidelines suggest[44]. Indeed, in order to describe the characters' rotations while Vladimir is taking Estragon's shoe off, the AD script employs the following expression: "anticlockwise in a half-round". Further examples are descriptions of Vladimir's feet position and posture in which metaphors such as "like a penguin" and "like a mannequin" provide the audience with a straightforward verbal definition of the characters' attitude and kinesics.

At a broader level, the vocabulary employed in the AD script of the play can be differentiated into four different semantic fields: space, sight, mimicry, body motion (see *Table 5*).

Table 5. Vocabulary: semantic categories

SEMANTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLE
SPACE (1)	• Vladimir standing right of the tree (*b*) • taking steps towards each other (*a*) • The pair stand on either side of the landscape (*b*)
SIGHT (2)	• looking skyward (*c*) • They gaze out stoically (*d*) • look quickly at the tree (*c*)
MIMICRY (3)	• Didi does the tree • Didi feings fainting • Didi smiles, Gogo grimaces
BODY MOTION (4)	• They go towards Pozzo (*e*) • Walks slowly to Lucky (*f*) • holds out his arms defensively (*g*)

The first category stands for the characters' position on stage (1), which varies during the performance, and the spatial relationship between the characters and the stage props or scenography. While the duo constantly moves across the stage and interacts with the

[44]"[…] common comparisons that should be recognized by most listeners are acceptable as a means of saving time" https://audiodescriptionsolutions.com/the-standards/ (last accessed 12/02/2022).

environment, no shifts in stage sets were noticed, except for the transition from daylight to nightfall. The lexicon referred to space presents two main traits, namely direction (*Table 5, a*) and position (*Table 5, b*). The former includes details about where a character is heading to or his gaze direction, while the latter indicates the characters' location with respect to the other elements on stage, such as the tree, the boots, or the stone. The lexicon comprised in this category is grammatically marked by adverbs and prepositional phrases.

The second group refers to verbs and nouns designating sight (2), which are characterised by two traits: gaze direction (*Table 5, c*) and intensity of sight (*Table 5, d*). The first trait determines what Vladimir and Estragon are looking at, while the second denotes glance duration, which in turn results in a character's particular attitude and intention.

Furthermore, the third category features verbs that represent the characters miming certain actions or expressing their feelings and thoughts through facial expressions (3). In multiple cases, miming serves a reinforcing function because the characters often reproduce through non-verbal language what they express orally. An example is when Vladimir sings a rhyming song and simultaneously mimes the events portrayed in the song lyrics:

> […] **VLADIMIR**: A dog came in – *relaxes stance, clears throat*
> A dog came in the kitchen
> And stole a crust of bread.
> Then cook up with a ladle
> And beat him till he was dead.
>
> Then all the dogs came running
> And dug the dog a tomb – *miming...halts, furrowed brow*
> Then all the dogs came running
> And dug the dog a tomb
> And wrote upon the tombstone
> For the eyes of dogs to come:
>
> A dog came in the kitchen
> And stole a crust of bread.

Then cook up with a ladle
And beat him till he was dead. [emphasis added] […]

In such cases, AD is essential since mimicry contributes greatly to building up the story's humorous effect as well as increasing the audience's involvement. From a grammatical point of view, mimicry is depicted by verbs of motion, while facial expressions also include nouns belonging to the semantic field of face parts. The description of facial expressions is an elaborate task since, in a limited time span, the audio describer should hypothetically mention the face elements that convey meaning and thus are paramount to the plot. However, at times general expressions such as "miming" provide a synthetic yet comprehensible solution, as when Vladimir represents through body language the action of digging the ground depicted in the rhyming song *A dog came in the kitchen*: "Then all the dogs came running. And dug the dog a tomb – *miming...halts, furrowed brow*" [emphasis added].

Eventually, the last semantic field relates to how the characters move around the stage (4). Therefore, grammatically speaking, verbs and their modifiers, namely adverbs, are the only categories serving this purpose. More specifically, phrasal verbs and verb phrases convey the idea of movement according to three parameters: movement direction (*Table 5, e*), the intensity of movement (*Table 5, f*) and the aim of motion (*Table 5, g*). As regards the first criterion, although there are no shifts in stage setting and the performance occurs entirely on stage and never in the parterre, terms and expressions refer to the characters' relationship between them and with the environment.

While the second parameter provides details about how energy is used in the movement or how fast/slow a movement is performed, the third criterion hints at the reason behind an action. To illustrate, in "they walk towards each other" the verb "walk" pairs up with an adverb to designate movement direction, while in "moving slowly" the adverb "slowly" indicates the intensity of the movement and in "holds out his arms defensively" the adverb "defensively" shows the aim of motion.

A further step in the analysis of lexicon is represented by determining the predominant semantic field in relation to the lexicon of the script. In order to do so, firstly, lexical frequency related to the entire text will be measured distinguishing between function words and content words; then, a word frequency count providing the number of

semantically similar terms will be carried out. This part of the analysis constitutes a pragmatic validation of the theoretical content provided in the previous chapter.

Being a systemic characteristic of the English language, the most frequently used function word is the possessive pronoun “his”, which is frequently followed by nouns designating body parts, props and costumes, as for instance in “with his back to us” or, “scrunches his nose”. The second most recurrent function word is “to”, employed both as a preposition and before a verb in its infinitive form. In the majority of cases “to” serves as a preposition of place expressing movement and direction, while “to” in a verbal structure specifies purpose. Moreover, next on the wordlist is “the” which denotes that, despite time and space constraints, the definite article is not subject to ellipsis or omission.

The high word frequency related to the content words “Gogo” and “Didi” shows that the characters’ nicknames are preferred over subject/object personal pronouns or more generic expressions such as “the man” or “the trump”. By contrast, “wide”, “whole” and “whip” are among the less recurrent content words with one occurrence each (see *Table 6* and *Table 7*).

Table 6. Word frequency of content words

WORD	N° OF OCCURRENCES
Gogo	49
Didi	41
hat	23
takes	21
hands	14
head	13
puts	12
Lucky’s	11
Lucky	11
Pozzo	10
other	10
hand	10
tree	9
right	9
place	9
left	9
Gogo’s	9
looks	8
look	8
arms	8

turns	7
boots	7
again	7
adjusts	7
throws	5
leg	5
halts	5
closer	5
turn	4
stands	4
runs	4
raises	4
points	4
looking	4
leaves	4
is	3
go	4
foot	4
everything	4
Didi’s	4
boot	4
watch	3
walks	3
upright	3
take	3
studying	3
steps	3
step	3
stand	3
slowly	3
sits	3
side	3
same	3
rope	3
resume	3
paces	3
landscape	3
ground	3
Gogo’s	3
gives	3
feet	3
face	3
disparity	3
upwards	2
unison	2
stone	2

standing	2
stage	2
snaps	2
skyward	2
size	2
simultaneously	2
shoulders	2
rubs	2
round	2
return	2
Pozzo’s	2
picks	2
passed	2
notices	2
move	2
lowering	2
listening	2
lights	2
legs	2
leave	2
leaf	2
jerks	2
imitates	2
holds	2
has	2
grotesque	2
grimaces	2
goes	2
gestures	2
gazing	2
gazes	2
frowns	2
forwards	2
fists	2
fingers	2
facing	2
eyes	2
ear	2
does	2
defensively	2
circle	2
chin	2
wide	1
whole	1
whip	1

Table 7. Word frequency of function words

WORD	N° OF OCCURRENCES
his	56
to	50
the	49
on	27
they	21
it	19
and	19
in	17
of	16
he	13
a	13
back	11
up	10
off	9
him	9
at	8
which	7
each	7
down	7
as	7
with	6
towards	6
out	6
who	5
their	5
away	5
us	4
them	4
one	4

own	3
over	3
from	3
by	3
before	3
across	3
two	3
forward	2
for	2
between	2
about	2
three	2
like	2

At a more granular level, calculating the number of semantically related words allows for the identification of the principal semantic fields in the script (see *Table 8*).

Table 8. Word frequency in reference to the main semantic fields

SEMANTIC FIELD	WORD FREQUENCY
BODY PARTS (1)	73
COSTUMES (2)	38
PROPS (3)	21
SETTING (4)	5

According to word frequency, language referred to body parts (1) presents the greatest number of occurrences since the protagonists are two human beings and everything revolves around them, from costumes to props and actions performed on stage. Accordingly, the second most used vocabulary belongs to the semantic fields of costumes and props (2,3). By contrast, setting descriptions (4) are marked by the lowest number of occurrences and involve elements such as the tree, the colour and position of stage lights and the number of people on stage. The reason is that the setting is deliberately a basic and unadorned landscape in which variations are marginal and rare.

In line with the existing guidelines for AD in the field of live performances, the linguistic system reflects the immediacy of actions and the specific nature of theatrical communication. In order to make meaning, words are actualised by the gestural and spatial systems. Indeed, as demonstrated in the first part of the analysis, adjectives and adverbs are strictly linked to the visual system as they appear mainly in the descriptions of props, costumes, body parts, facial expressions and gaze. Similarly, from a visual viewpoint, verbs depicting the movements of the body, the facial expressions, and gestures are then confirmed by sounds and dialogues that characterise the aural system.

3. Soundscape

The analysis of the aural features of the audio described version of the play is focused on a view of the performance as a complex system of semiotic resources, since it will shift the focus from a merely linguistic written level to a multimodal level. This section will examine all the auditory elements characterising the audio described performance, that is the soundscape. Drawing upon van Leeuwen's analytical framework (1999), speech, music, and sounds will be analysed in the analysis. Generally speaking, voices and sounds spread widely across the performance, except during the natural pauses of dialogues. By contrast, no pre-recorded music functioning as a moodsetter or informing the audience about the start of the performance or the interval was detected. Indeed, the production company's choice of avoiding music or instrumental songs to accompany the story is to be referred to the central role that pauses and silences play in Beckett's drama. Silence reflects the loneliness of humankind, as well as the characters' inability to find effective means to express themselves. The audience thus is encouraged to meditate on the hopelessness of human condition through the experience of the characters. Furthermore, given that AD comprises merely the audio describer's voice, the primary source of sound effects derives uniquely from the actors' performance and the events occurring on stage.

The parameters of van Leeuwen's model, that will be adopted for the analysis, are "perspective", "time and rhythm", "interaction of voices", "melody" and "voice quality". As regards perspective, throughout the performance the degree of loudness of the audio describer's voice varies depending on the interaction of speech with other elements of the soundscape. During silences between dialogues, AD is located in the foreground since

characters remain silent and the audio describer's voice predominates. By contrast, if the audio describer's voice overlaps with the characters' lines, it may be perceived at a middle distance from the listeners or in the background, depending on the audience adjusting the volume of the AD to better listen to sounds and voices on stage rather than the audio describer's voice.

As illustrated in chapter 1.1, the hierarchical organization of sounds in a soundscape, also determines the degree of formality adopted by the audio describer. In this play, perspective reflects the informal nature of AD communicative event, thus placing AD halfway between a more intimate tone and a more formal or solemn register. Analysing the performance only (i.e., not taking the AD into account), we would notice that the characters' voices as well as sounds are always in the foreground; however, in some cases certain ambient sounds are placed at a far distance from the audience. A case in point is when listeners can hear the sound of footsteps as the characters leave the stage or abrupt noises when the protagonists throw objects off stage. Letting the audience hear off-stage sounds lends greater depth to the performance besides conveying the idea of a landscape that transcends the stage itself. In this case the role of the AD is to facilitate comprehension and validate or confute the audience's hypotheses on the meaning and purpose of such sound effects.

Concerning the second parameter, the time and rhythm of speech and sounds are measured according to speech rate, pauses in the speech and tempo of music respectively. Despite not having access to the recording of the AD speech delivery, aspects related to the second parameter were discussed during the interview with Máirín Harte, therefore, excerpts of the interview will be included.

In terms of speech rate, the AD speech is medium and comprehensible, as affirmed by the audio describer during the interview. Generally speaking, pace seems to take into account of both time constraints and the need to preserve pauses, which in *Waiting for Godot* are extremely significant. In general, speech rate rises when the time span to include AD is short or the amount of detail to be described is copious, while it lowers when there are more extensive breaks between dialogues. Pauses in the AD speech, which graphically correspond to punctuation, serve three functions: facilitate information processing, sustain memory, and allow theatregoers to recreate the story in their minds as they listen to the performance. The audio describer's voice tends to maintain the most

meaningful and evocative pauses and synchronises with the events occurring on stage so as to give the visually impaired audience the same experience as that of the sighted audience. Moreover, since the source text already provides breaks in which inserting the AD, the number of extra pauses in the audio describer's delivery was low, thus adopting the same rhythm followed by the actors.

> […] I tried to respect the characters' silences by pausing whenever it was needed. Since the rhythm of the play is already moderate and intercut with moments of stillness, the number of extra pauses was minimal. […]

Therefore, pauses in the AD acquired a similar position to the one occupied by the silences that actors maintained during the story. In this case, in order to create meaning, the verbal, visual, and gestural modes realise an *intersemiotic complementarity* (Royce 2007) in which communication occurs through semantically coherent sign systems. In other words, the total absence of background sounds, the characters' stillness and silence match the audio describer's pauses since the characters' motionlessness occurs at the same time as the audio describer's decision to remain silent. Accordingly, this intersemiotic complementarity contributes to emphasising the meaning of silences besides reiterating the main themes of the play.

The third parameter refers to voice interaction, which in the AD is both sequential and simultaneous. The first modality occurs when the audio describer intervenes during silences between dialogues creating then a sort of turn-taking, while if the audio describer steps in during the characters' lines, a simultaneous interaction of voices occurs. However, this second modality may feature a plurality of voices, meaning that listeners hear both the characters and the audio describer's voices, or a voice dominance in which AD is placed in the foreground whereas stage sounds are in the background.

Melody, that is the fourth parameter, regards pitch movement, pitch range and pitch level. Considering the audio describer's objectivity in the delivery, the AD is characterised by a neutral pitch movement as affirmed by the audio describer during the interview:

> […] When I am audio describing a play, I usually try to get immersed in the story and adapt my voice tone to the source text so as to make my delivery more entertaining and enjoyable. However, in this specific case, I felt that a more neutral tone was a perfect match for such an introspective play. […]

Indeed, pitch movement varies according to the meaning a sentence intends to convey; however, being the AD script composed of affirmative sentences, no ascending pitch movement was detected. The same occurs with pitch range since the audio describer is more inclined not to infuse emotions or compete with the original product by standing out during the performance. As regards pitch level, the audio describer's voice conveys assertiveness and calmness.

Finally, as far as the voice quality is concerned, the voice of the audio describer is calm, plain and smooth, in line with the existing guidelines for AD[45]. Therefore, the voice of the audio describer differs completely from the continuously changeable voice of the characters.

3.1. Sounds

The AD is composed of only the vocalization of the script by the audio describer, with no occurrence of artificial sounds. Furthermore, since AD serves an assistive function, no impressionistic sound effects were detected in the audio describer's voice. By contrast, the performance itself presents a wider variety of sounds. Drawing upon Crook's classification of sounds (1999), the majority of noises arise from actions performed on stage, such as footsteps, thuds, jumps, tumbles, humming (see *Table 9*), thus all sounds come from actions performed by human beings.

Table 9. Classification of sounds

TYPE OF SOUND	EXAMPLE
NARRATION-RELATED AMBIENT (1)	• sound of footsteps • sound of thuds • jump sound

[45] "[…] The description therefore must not be hurried; every word should be clear, audible and timed carefully so that it does not sit uncomfortably close to incoming dialogue" https://www.bai.ie/en/ (last accessed 11/02/2022).

	• hand gestures sound • sound of clothes moving
SYMBOLIC (2)	• cough sound • inhalation sound • finger snaps • exclamations of surprise • exclamations of concern • exclamation of fear
CONFIRMATORY (3)	• a cappella nursery rhyme • a cappella lullaby • a cappella march song • a cappella Gregorian chant
IMPRESSIONISTIC (4)	• variations in the characters' vocalizations

The first category of sounds, namely ambient sounds (1), includes noises that listeners perceive in the background, such as the sound of footsteps, hand gestures or clothes moving. However, the total absence of narration-unrelated ambient sounds aiming to recreate the natural environment contributes to increasing the sense of desolation besides accentuating pauses.

As regards confirmatory sounds (3), this category includes songs performed without instrumental arrangement, which contribute to evoking specific situations and feelings besides facilitating the creation of vivid images in the audience's minds. Therefore, the slow and repetitive notes of a nursery rhyme as well as the more rhythmic march song allow for the representation of aural features which are to be attributed only to unique and distinguishable events.

With reference to impressionistic sounds (4), no particular effect was applied to the actors' voice or the audio describer's delivery; however, the performers' acting skills allow for voice variation according to the emotions they intend to convey.

The most frequent sound type is related to non-verbal vocalizations of certain emotional or physical states, namely symbolic sounds (2). Since sounds may be a source

of ambiguity due to the inability to see what is going on, the AD performs the pivotal function of validating or disproving the audience's inferences on sounds' meaning and purpose. A case in point is the inhalation sound that the audience can hear when Vladimir smells Gogo's boots at the beginning of the act. In this case, by stating "examine, smells deeply" the AD may either notify listeners of the action performed on stage or confirm/confute the audience's assumptions.

Most of the time, in order to avoid misinterpretation, AD supports the audience in the process of sound identification, as in "Didi runs" or "Didi rummages in his pocket". In the former example, a sound of accelerating footsteps may be mistaken for the sound of a character leaping or bouncing, while in the latter case the faint sound of clothes moving and the hand scratching may be insignificant to the audience, while in the scene it actually symbolizes the act of looking for something. Conversely, when a specific noise, sound effect or music is not narration-related and can be effortlessly recognised, they are not mentioned by the audio describer.

4. Gestures and non-verbal language

Similarly to the description of sounds, information about the gestural system and non-verbal language is included only when disambiguation is needed. However, unlike sound effects, mimics and gestures include elements perceivable through vision only, i.e., the considerable amount of information referred to kinesics and non-verbal communication. Indeed, AD performs an essential role especially when no sounds or dialogues are accompanying the characters' actions, as in the following scene, in which only a hat exchange between the duo takes place:

> […] He puts it on with his left hand in place of his own which he hands to GOGO.
> Gogo takes DIDI's hat with his right hand. GOGO adjusts LUCKY's hat on his head. It is roughly the same size as his. GOGO puts on DIDI's hat with his right hand in place of his own which he hands to DIDI with his left hand. DIDI takes GOGO's hat. Gogo adjusts DIDI's hat on his head. There is a great disparity of size. DIDI puts on GOGO's hat in place of LUCKY's which he hands to GOGO. Gogo takes LUCKY's hat. DIDI adjusts GOGO's hat on his head. Grotesque disparity. GOGO puts on LUCKY's hat in place of GOGO's which he hands to DIDI. DIDI takes his hat, GOGO adjusts LUCKY's hat on his head. Grotesque disparity. DIDI puts on his hat in place of GOGO's which he hands to

GOGO. GOGO takes his hat. DIDI adjusts his hat on his head. GOGO puts on his hat in place of LUCKY's which he hands to DIDI. Didi takes LUCKY's hat. GOGO adjusts his hat on his head. Gogo puts on LUCKY's hat in place of his own which he hands to DIDI. DIDI takes GOGO's hat. GOGO adjusts LUCKY's hat on his head. DIDI hands GOGO's hat back to GOGO who takes it and hands it back to DIDI who takes it and hands it back to GOGO who takes it and throws it down. The whole exchange is rapid and uninterrupted. […]

In this case, AD plays a crucial role as the sight-impaired audience would perceive this long silence as the result of a technical failure or a service's inefficiency.

As regards the non-verbal language employed in *Waiting for Godot*, descriptions centre mostly on four categories: posture, facial expressions, mimicry and body language (see *Table 10*).

Table 10. Classification of non-verbal language

CATEGORY	BODY PARTS/ PROPS	EXAMPLES
POSTURE (1)	• head, back, shoulders, legs	• stands upright • feet like a penguin, shoulders back • Gogo hunches over • relaxes stance
FACIAL EXPRESSIONS (2)	• mouth, eyebrows, nose, eyes	• frowns • his face beaming • scrunches his nose • studying each other across the space, emotionless
MIMICRY (3)	• eyes, hands, legs • baggage	• imitates Lucky sagging under the weight of his baggage • miming • Didi feigns fainting

		• Gogo imitates him • Didi does the tree
BODY LANGUAGE (4)	• legs, arms, head, fists, hands, chin, fingers • hat, rope, boots, coat, coat's sleeves	• Gogo lowers his head • Didi goes to embrace Gogo who holds out his arms defensively • points to himself

More specifically, the body parts involved in posture descriptions (1) are the characters' head, back, shoulders and legs, whereas when referring to facial expressions (2), eye contact, grimaces, the lowering or raising of the eyebrows convey details about emotions and intentions. The audience is provided with details about mimicry (3) when Vladimir or Estragon imitate other characters' movements, (e.g., "imitates Lucky sagging under the weight of his baggage"), feelings (e.g., "Didi feigns fainting"), or elements of the landscape (e.g., "Didi does the tree"). With reference to body language (4), AD mentions predominantly body parts such as the protagonists' legs, arms, head, fists, hands, chin and fingers. In the event that actors are playing a scene in which props are involved, the description focuses on the relation between the character and the object or costume. Accordingly, AD will include terms referring to props and costumes such as the hat, rope, boots, coat and the coat's sleeves.

However, some distinctions need to be highlighted among the four categories. As far as body language and eye contact are concerned, descriptions adopt three criteria that may not be followed simultaneously: direction of movement, how the movement is performed and the intensity of the movement. "Looks off to the left of the landscape" and "lowering his head" are examples of the first criterion, while "Confused looks" and "Throws up his arms defensively" indicate the actions' dynamics. The third criterion refers to the degree of energy that a character employs in order to perform a movement, as in "Studying the audience" or "slowly lifting one [boot]". As for the category regarding posture, since it denotes a position that the body supposedly assumes and maintains for a more prologued time span, no references to dynamism or movement were noticed. For this reason, the second key distinction to draw concerns inaction/stillness and action/dynamism. This

differentiation affects two categories: facial expressions and body language, specifically posture. While the following expressions “Mouths agape listening”, “Misery rests on his face” and “emotionless” highlight the lack of motion in the characters’ face, “scrunches his nose” and “He grimaces” show more dynamism. With respect to the second category, the expression “rubs arms, jogs, swinging his arms to keep warm” describes consecutive, energic actions, whereas “stands stiff” indicates inactivity.

In terms of function, facial expressions operate at the emotional level since they contribute to expressing the characters’ feelings of anger, fear, boredom, emptiness, while body movements serve a more informative function because they provide details about what is occurring in the scene, the actors’ position on stage or the direction characters are moving towards.

Generally speaking, non-verbal language serves three functions: 1) it expresses meaning independently from events or dialogues, 2) it accompanies dialogues by improving the semantic content of lines or sound effects, 3) it contrasts oral speech, as in the case of irony. In the first case, movements are minimal and narration-unrelated since they contribute to the representation of the characters’ attitude besides adding dynamism to the scene. Indeed, the characters’ pacing across the stage or hand gestures during conversations do not add semantic details to the plot because they are movements related to how the body naturally acts while speaking. By contrast, the second function refers to kinesics, facial expressions and gestures that match emotional vocalisation, as in the following example: “ESTRAGON: The best thing would be to kill me, like the other. VLADIMIR: What other? (Pause.) What other?”. While Vladimir insistently asks Estragon to whom he is referring, the former encourages Estragon to respond by upturning his palms and indicating an empty part of the landscape to emphasise that there are no other characters on stage. Another case in point is a conversation between Vladimir and Estragon in which the former is trying to remember the names of a man and a place he was talking about: “VLADIMIR: But we were there together, I could swear to it! Picking grapes for a man called… can’t think of the name of the man, at a place called… can’t think of the name of the place, do you not remember?”, as Vladimir tries to recall these names, he clicks his fingers, a culturally common hand gesture that symbolises a lapse of memory.

The third case is the thorniest since a character orally intends a particular meaning, though his body language and gesture communicate the opposite, thus resulting in a humorous and ironic effect. This divergence in meaning, also called *intersemiotic dissonance* (Royce 2007), is realised through the combination of incoherent sign systems. Given that the sight-impaired audience cannot have access to the visual elements of such jokes and the aim is to provide the visually impaired with the same experience as members of the sighted audience, the function of AD becomes crucial for actual understanding. In *Waiting for Godot* there are some interesting examples of *intersemiotic dissonance*, as in the following excerpt: "VLADIMIR: But yesterday evening it was all pale and bare like a skeleton. And now it's covered with leaves". This could be the perfect description of a leafy and mighty tree, but considering the context and setting of the play, we soon realise that the reality does not match with the character's depiction. Indeed, at the end of Vladimir's line, the audio describer informs the audience that the tree actually has three leaves in total, thus preserving the comic effect and having sight-impaired theatregoers react at the same time as the sighted audience:

> […] **VLADIMIR:** But yesterday evening it was all pale and bare like a skeleton. And now it's covered with leaves. *Three leaves*[46] […]

Moreover, taking into account on the one hand the complex and multifaceted nature of non-verbal language and on the other hand the tightness of time constraints, it is worth noticing that reduction and condensation take place. The reduction technique allows for the omission of negligible elements without compromising the overall effect of the scene or giving rise to misunderstandings. Whenever actions were performed consecutively during a short time span, in order to avoid leaving certain elements undescribed, the solutions that were adopted in the AD script are the following: "Miming", "repeats the same pose", "*As before*, but clockwise [emphasis added]". Such expressions were employed to describe movements involving different body parts that were not crucial to the plot since the audience would easily retrieve the meaning of the scene by way of listening to the soundscape. In the first example, while Vladimir sings *A dog came in the kitchen*, he mimes digging in the ground with a shovel. In the second case, in order to

[46] The added emphasis distinguishes the AD script from the play's script.

look into the distance, the same character raises his left hand to shield his eyes and kicks his right leg back. Eventually, in the last example, the duo circle anticlockwise in a half-round and Estragon flips over and faces the ground, then Vladimir takes off Estragon's boot.

A further example of the use of the reduction/condensation technique is represented by the substitution of the subject with its corresponding personal pronoun, as in "They look forward", in which the third-person plural subjective pronoun stands for "Didi and Gogo". Another example is, "he kicks his right leg back", in which the third-person singular subjective pronoun replaces the proper noun "Didi". Since both protagonists are male, the subject substitution technique was employed only when the audience could clearly understand which character was acting.

Similarly, when non-verbal language was not essential for the understanding of the storyline, a more generic description using the generalisation technique was noticed: "gestures", "gesturing towards us".

Another technique that was observed during the analysis is elimination, in particular subject ellipsis. Analogously to subject substitution, a full subject was opted for only in case of disambiguation or when different actions were performed simultaneously. The description "Relaxes stance, clears throat" refers to Didi, who is alone on stage, therefore subject ellipsis is allowed, while in "Gogo asleep, Didi gets up softly, takes off his coat, placing it across Gogo's shoulders" the subject needs to be disambiguated.

Eventually, the explicitation technique, which consists of putting into words extra-linguistic elements such as mimics, gestures, and facial expressions, was employed as follows: "studying each other across the space, *emotionless* [emphasis added]" and, "Confused looks". By watching the video of the show, in the first example, the characters' way of looking at each other and their body posture suggest the idea of apathy and inaction, while in the second example the furrowed brows in the protagonists' faces reveal scepticism and puzzlement.

In the concluding chapter, the results of this multimodal analysis will be discussed in comparison to the Irish Guidelines on AD.

CONCLUSIONS

By analysing the case study of *Waiting for Godot*'s audio described performance, this thesis has investigated the AD of the theatre show from a linguistic and multimodal perspective. Moreover, the AD proved to be a crucial tool in accessibility since it addressed the main difficulties that arise when dealing with blind and partially sighted people.

At a general level, the greater attention given to multimedia products, specifically to TV or the film industry, reveals a lower regard towards the field of theatrical performances and live cultural events as a whole. On the one hand, the lack of a universal set of guidelines may encourage AD scriptwriters to unleash their creativity, but on the other hand it may overshadow the issue of content accessibility.

A comparison between the analysed AD of the play with the guidelines proposed by the Irish model shows that these guidelines have been respected both in terms of content and form. When relevant to the plot, the audiences were provided with the following details:

- the characters' physical appearance, body language and facial expressions;
- the characters' actions;
- scene changes in location and time of the day;
- non easily recognisable sound effects.

However, the audio describer's choices demonstrated the prioritisation of essential information, namely the scene setting and the name of the character performing an action. In the former case, describing the ambience in which the actions take place aims to facilitate comprehension as well as the audience's imaginative recreation of the plot. In the latter case, referring to the characters by their names/nicknames aims to favour understanding and support memory. When describing the events, there is a high risk of providing redundant information, which in turn may determine a higher cognitive effort. Nevertheless, in this case the AD's neutral and not over-explanatory tone left no room for obvious statements, personal opinions or judgements. Moreover, the AD was always included during the natural pauses between mainstream dialogues, thus applying BAI's recommendations. However, meaningful silences were preserved in order to match the characters' introspective mood.

As regards the language employed in the AD, actions were described in the present simple and the present continuous: the former was used for unchangeable details related to the characters' attitude or physical appearance or finite specific actions, while the latter depicted on-going actions. In terms of syntax, telegraphic yet complete sentences provided only the key visual cues, thus avoiding redundancy.

An easily comprehensible language characterised by simple similes and comparisons stimulated reminiscence especially among theatregoers who have lost their sight later in life. For congenitally blind listeners, instead, the interplay of AD with features of the soundscape (van Leeuwen 1999) played a crucial role in guiding them along the series of events. Accordingly, the use of a specific language and sentence structure reflected the assistive function performed by AD in adapting to the audience's needs.

At a more specific level, taking into account Beckett's play and the genre of the Theatre of the Absurd, representing a play whose principal aim is to contrast meaning, rationality and even communication itself constituted an obstacle. The use of irony was a case in point, since during the play the humorous effect consisted mainly of sight gags or non-verbal cues transmitted through facial expressions, gestures and eye contact. On such occasions the AD proved to be essential as it bridged the information gap characterising the non-sighted audiences.

Besides being a valuable tool for support and inclusion, AD plays an active role in education since it promotes the sight-impaired people's knowledge of the external world. As affirmed by a congenitally blind man in an interview which was quoted by Fryer (2016: 166) in *An Introduction to Audio Description*, "All AD's good; all AD of people, what they do, their gestures – it's quite amazing because actually I learn things about people generally about their gestures because I don't know what gestures are like, or looks, like in literature I learn a lot about how people behave, how the sighted world behaves and how it works in terms of visualisation". Therefore, AD supports art's didactic and recreational purposes by expanding the original product's target audience and, at the same time, broadening their cultural background.

The multimodal discourse analysis has shown the interdependence between the source text and the AD, given the fact that the latter has to adapt to the source text's timing, pauses, language, amount of information to be conveyed and target audiences.

Furthermore, the multimodal discourse analysis proved to be a valuable tool for AD analysis. As highlighted by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 35), the place in which communication occurs, also called the *semiotic landscape*, is always the result of the connection between forms and modes and their uses and valuations. Indeed, only when all semiotic modes are considered jointly can the resulting analysis shed light on the relation of the meanings of a community and its semiotic manifestations. As with AD, in which an intersemiotic translation from a visual mode into an aural mode occurs, the process of *transcoding* from a source semiotic mode into a target semiotic mode enables us to have a more in-depth analysis of the communication process. This constant process of transposition can be encountered in several contexts, such as movies based on books, or artworks depicting historical events or in the case of interpreting and subtitling. In everyday life the mere act of reading aloud a text, in which a written text is transposed into an oral text, or in the case of writing, in which a mental process translates into a written text, are both actions involving an intersemiotic translation. This highlights the pivotal role of semiotic transcoding, which expands the ways we express ourselves and how we perceive the world around us: as Kress (2011: 47) rightly noticed, "the wide range of available modes increases the possibilities and potentials of apt representations of the world framed". Therefore, the key to accessibility lies in looking for new, different tools in order to provide semiotic and cognitive resources that are not available to a sight-impaired audience in the visual mode.

This study did not intend to assess the validity or efficacy of the analysed AD, but to present the case of the Abbey Theatre as a case study worth analysing for shedding light on the sub-area of AD for live events and performances, which in academic research is definitely under-investigated. This study could also be the starting point for future debate on a number of issues, including the fact that since in theatrical performances there is always room for improvisation, AD here becomes an even more demanding task compared to drafting AD for movies, in which the oral commentary adapts to a finite, unchangeable product.

This research hopes to raise more awareness in the field of accessible multimedia production, an ever-evolving world that is gradually adapting to new audiences and their requirements, all the more so in these times of pandemic.

Extensive work still needs to be done in order to accomplish a thorough inclusion of the blind and partially sighted community in cultural activities; however, if handled with care and cleverness, AD would benefit not only the sight-impaired audience, but also the entire community of theatregoers.

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APPENDIX A

ACT 2

Lights up on Vladimir standing right of the tree with his back to us looking skyward, perhaps at the furthest leaf. **DIDI***'s boots front center.* **LUCKY'***s hat to the left of the landscape. The tree has three leaves..... Lowering his head, gazes off to his right...takes a closer look. Raises his left hand to shield his eyes as he kicks his right leg back.....stands upright turns walking passed the tree, noticing the leaves he halts, circles the tree to take a closer look. Reaches up to touch the lowest leaf. Hand to chin. Looks off to the left of the landscape. Takes a closer look, repeats the same pose, looking off.....stands, turns, notices Gogo's boots, hurries to pick them up, examine, smells deeply, lowering the boots, his face beaming....put them back. Suddenly* stands upright, feet like a penguin, shoulders back, hands clasped.

VLADIMIR: A dog came in – relaxes stance, clears throat

A dog came in the kitchen
And stole a crust of bread.
Then cook up with a ladle
And beat him till he was dead.

Then all the dogs came running
And dug the dog a tomb – miming...halts, furrowed brow
Then all the dogs came running
And dug the dog a tomb
And wrote upon the tombstone
For the eyes of dogs to come:

A dog came in the kitchen
And stole a crust of bread.
Then cook up with a ladle
And beat him till he was dead.

Then all the dogs came running

And dug the dog a tomb –

Halts, frowns..resumes

Then all the dogs came running

And dug the dog a tomb –

Halts, frowns, tilts his head

And dug the dog a tomb… Gogo, barefoot, head bowed appears from our right, moving slowly across. Didi turns.

VLADIMIR: You again! (GOGO *halts but does not raise his head*. **VLADIMIR** *goes towards him, stretches out his arms*.) Come here till I embrace you.

ESTRAGON: (*Ill-tempered, sharp, rejecting him with both hands*) Don't touch me! Throws up his arms defensively (**VLADIMIR** *holds back, pained*.)

VLADIMIR: Do you want me to go away? (*Pause*.) Gogo! (*Pause*. **VLADIMIR** *observes him attentively*.) Did they beat you? (*Pause*.) Gogo! (**ESTRAGON** *remains silent, head bowed*.) Where did you spend the night?

ESTRAGON: Don't touch me! Don't question me! Don't speak to me! Stay with me!

VLADIMIR: Did I ever leave you?

ESTRAGON: You let me go.

VLADIMIR: Look at me. Will you look at me! DIDI GOES TO EMBRACE GOGO WHO HOLDS OUT HIS ARMS DEFENSIVELY. DIDI STEPS AWAY. *GOGO SHUFFLES PASSED DIDI*

ESTRAGON: What a day!

VLADIMIR: Who beat you? Tell me.

ESTRAGON: Another day done with.

VLADIMIR: Not yet.

ESTRAGON: For me it's over and done with, no matter what happens. (*Silence*.) I heard you singing.

VLADIMIR: That's right, I remember.

ESTRAGON: That finished me. I said to myself, he's all alone, he thinks I'm gone forever, and he sings.

VLADIMIR: One is not master of one's moods. All day I've felt in great form. (*Pause*.) I didn't get up in the night, not once!

ESTRAGON: (*Sadly*). You see, you piss better when I'm not there.

VLADIMIR: I missed you scrunches his nose… and at the same time I was happy. Isn't that a queer thing? Rubs chin

ESTRAGON: (*Shocked*). Happy?

VLADIMIR: Perhaps it's not quite the right word.

ESTRAGON: And now?

VLADIMIR: Now?… (*Joyous*.) There you are again…studying each other across the space, emotionless There we are again… Nods, Sighs There I am again.

ESTRAGON: You see, you feel worse when I'm with you. I feel better alone too.

VLADIMIR: (*Vexed*) Then why do you always come crawling back?

ESTRAGON: I don't know.

VLADIMIR: No, but I do. It's because you don't know how to defend yourself. I wouldn't have let them beat you.

ESTRAGON: You couldn't have stopped them.

VLADIMIR: Why not?

ESTRAGON: There was ten of them.

VLADIMIR: No, I mean before they beat you. I would have stopped you from doing whatever it was you were doing.

ESTRAGON: I wasn't doing anything.

VLADIMIR: Then why did they beat you?

ESTRAGON: I don't know.

VLADIMIR: Ah no, Gogo, the truth is there are things that escape you that don't escape me, you must feel it yourself.

ESTRAGON: I tell you I wasn't doing anything.

VLADIMIR: Perhaps you weren't. But it's the way of doing it that counts, the way of doing it, if you want to go on living. But enough about that. There you are back and there I am happy.

ESTRAGON: I wasn't doing anything.

VLADIMIR: You must be happy too, deep down, if you only knew it.

ESTRAGON: Happy about what?

VLADIMIR: To be back with me again. Gogo sits

ESTRAGON: Would you say so?

VLADIMIR: Say you are, even if it's not true.

ESTRAGON: What am I to say?

VLADIMIR: Say, I am happy.

ESTRAGON: I am happy.

VLADIMIR: So am I.

ESTRAGON: So am I. Misery rests on his face

VLADIMIR: We are happy.

ESTRAGON: We are happy. They look forward. Didi smiles, Gogo grimaces (*Silence*.) What do we do now, now that we are happy?

VLADIMIR: Wait for Godot.

ESTRAGON: Ah yes...*Gogo lowers his head. Didi paces* (*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: (*Moving away right*) Things have changed here since yesterday.

ESTRAGON: And if he doesn't come? Gogo faulters

VLADIMIR: (*After a moment of bewilderment*) We'll see when the time comes. (*Pause*. *Looks at the tree.*) I was saying that things have changed here since yesterday.

ESTRAGON: Everything oozes. Didi hands on knees

VLADIMIR: Look at the tree.

ESTRAGON: It's never the same pus from one second to the next.

VLADIMIR: The tree, look at the tree. They stand gazing up at the tree (**ESTRAGON** *looks at the tree, then goes towards it and is joined by* **VLADIMIR** *in front of it*.)

ESTRAGON: Was is not there yesterday?

VLADIMIR: Yes of course it was there. Do you not remember? We all but hanged ourselves from it. (*Considers.*) Yes that's right, all –, but –, hanged –, ourselves from it. But you wouldn't. Do you not remember?

ESTRAGON: You dreamt it.

VLADIMIR: Is it possible you've forgotten already?

ESTRAGON: That's the way I am. Either I forget immediately or I never forget.

VLADIMIR: And Pozzo and Lucky, have you forgotten them too?

ESTRAGON: Pozzo and Lucky?

VLADIMIR: He's forgotten everything!

ESTRAGON: I remember a lunatic who kicked the shins off me. Then he played the fool.

VLADIMIR: That was Lucky.

ESTRAGON: I remember that. But when was it?

VLADIMIR: And his keeper, do you not remember him?

ESTRAGON: He gave me a bone.

VLADIMIR: That was Pozzo.

ESTRAGON: And all that was yesterday, you say?

VLADIMIR: Yes of course it was yesterday.

ESTRAGON: And here where we are now?

VLADIMIR: Where else do you think? Do you not recognize the place?

ESTRAGON: (*Suddenly furious*) Recognize! Throws his arms in the air (*Looks about in a circle, gesturing with both hands*.) What is there to recognize? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk to me about scenery! Look at this muckheap! I've never stirred from it!

VLADIMIR: Calm yourself, calm yourself.

ESTRAGON: You and your landscapes! (*Points to the ground with both hands*.) Tell me about the worms!

VLADIMIR: All the same, you can't tell me that this throws arms out (*gesture*) bears any resemblance to… (*He hesitates.*)… to the Macon country for example. You can't deny there's a big difference.

ESTRAGON: The Macon country! Who's talking to you about the Macon country?

VLADIMIR: But you were there yourself, in the Macon country.

ESTRAGON: No I was never in the Macon country! I've puked my puke of a life away here, I tell you! Here! (*Points to the ground again with both hands*). In the Cackon country!

VLADIMIR: But we were there together, I could swear to it! Picking grapes for a man called… (*He snaps his fingers*.)… can't think of the name of the man, at a place called (*Snaps his fingers.*)… can't think of the name of the place, do you not remember?

ESTRAGON: (*A little calmer*) It's possible. I didn't notice anything.

VLADIMIR: But down there everything is red!

ESTRAGON: (*Exasperated*). I didn't notice anything, I tell you! Facing each other. Didi walks away (*Silence*. **VLADIMIR** *sighs deeply*.)

VLADIMIR: (*Moves away downstage right.*) You're a hard man to get on with, Gogo.

ESTRAGON: It'd be better if we parted.

VLADIMIR: You always say that and you always come crawling back.

ESTRAGON: The best thing would be to kill me, like the other. Turns away

VLADIMIR: What other? (*Pause*.) What other?

ESTRAGON: Like billions of others.

VLADIMIR: (*Sententious*) To every man his little cross. (*He sighs*.) Till he dies. (*Afterthought*) And is forgotten. (**ESTRAOGON** *joins* **VLADIMIR** *and stands on his right*.)

ESTRAGON: In the meantime let us try and converse calmly, since we are incapable of keeping silent.

VLADIMIR: You're right, we're inexhaustible.

E STRAGON: It's so we won't think.

VLADIMIR: We have that excuse.

ESTRAGON: It's so we won't hear.

VLADIMIR: We have our reasons.

ESTRAGON: All the dead voices. Side by side in unison they take a step towards

VLADIMIR: They make a noise like wings.

ESTRAGON: Like leaves.

VLADIMIR: Like sand.

ESTRAGON: Like leaves. They gaze out stoically(*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: They all speak at once.

ESTRAGON: Each one to itself.

VLADIMIR: Rather they whisper.

ESTRAGON: They rustle.

VLADIMIR: They murmur.

ESTRAGON: They rustle. (*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: What do they say?

ESTRAGON: They talk about their lives.

VLADIMIR: To have lived is not enough for them.

ESTRAGON: They have to talk about it.

VLADIMIR: To be dead is not enough for them.

ESTRAGON: It is not sufficient. Mouths agape listening (*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: They make a noise like feathers.

ESTRAGON: Like leaves.

VLADIMIR: Likes ashes.

ESTRAGON: Like leaves. Didi looks skyward(*Long silence*.)

VLADIMIR: Say something!

ESTRAGON: I'm seeking. (*Long silence*.)

VLADIMIR: (*In anguish*) Say anything at all!

ESTRAGON: What do we do now?

VLADIMIR: Wait for Godot.

ESTRAGON: Ah yes! (*Silence*.) Didi runs

VLADIMIR: This is awful!

ESTRAGON: Sing something.

VLADIMIR: No no! (*Reflects*.) We could start all over again perhaps.

ESTRAGON: That should be easy.

VLADIMIR: It's the start that's difficult.

ESTRAGON: You can start from anything.

VLADIMIR: Yes, but you have to decide.

ESTRAGON: True. (*Silence*.) Reaching out to each other

VLADIMIR: Help me!

ESTRAGON: I'm seeking. (*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: When you seek you hear.

ESTRAGON: You do.

VLADIMIR: That prevents you from finding.

ESTRAGON: It does.

VLADIMIR: That prevents you from thinking.

ESTRAGON: You think all the same.

VLADIMIR: No no, impossible.

ESTRAGON: That's the idea, let's contradict each another.

VLADIMIR: Impossible.

ESTRAGON: You think so?

VLADIMIR: We're in no danger of ever thinking any more.

ESTRAGON: Then what are we complaining about?

VLADIMIR: Thinking is not the worst.

ESTRAGON: Perhaps not. But at least there's that.

VLADIMIR: That what?

ESTRAGON: That's the idea, let's ask each other questions.

VLADIMIR: What do you mean, at least there's that?

ESTRAGON: That much less misery.

VLADIMIR: True.

ESTRAGON: Well? If we gave thanks for our mercies?

VLADIMIR: What is terrible is to *have* thought.

ESTRAGON: But did that ever happen to us? Together they turn to us, step forward

VLADIMIR: (*Looks out.*) Where are all these corpses from?

ESTRAGON: (*Looks out.*) These skeletons.

VLADIMIR: Tell me that.

ESTRAGON: True.

VLADIMIR: We must have thought a little.

ESTRAGON: At the very beginning. Studying the audience

VLADIMIR: A charnel-house! A charnel-house!

ESTRAGON: (*Turns away.*) You don't have to look.

VLADIMIR: You can't help looking.

ESTRAGON: True.

VLADIMIR: Try as one may.

ESTRAGON: I beg your pardon?

VLADIMIR: Try as one may.

ESTRAGON: We should turn resolutely towards Nature. (***They turn to look quickly at the tree****, then back to us*.)

VLADIMIR: We've tried that.

ESTRAGON: True.

VLADIMIR: On it's not the worst, I know.

ESTRAGON: What?

VLADIMIR: To have thought.

ESTRAGON: Obviously.

VLADIMIR: But we could have done without it.

ESTRAGON: Que voulez-vous?

VLADIMIR: I beg your pardon?

ESTRAGON: Que voulez-vouz.

VLADIMIR: Ah! que voulez-vous. Exactly. Gogo paces

ESTRAGON: (*Moving off left*) That wasn't such a bad little canter.

VLADIMIR: (*Moving off right*) Yes, but now we'll have to find something else. Didi joins him (*They take off their hats, concentrate.*)

ESTRAGON: (*Advancing towards centre*) Let me see. Let me see.

VLADIMIR: (*Advancing towards centre*) Let me see. Let me see. (*They turn just before collision.*)

ESTRAGON: (*Moving away left*) Let me see. Let me see.

VLADIMIR: (*Moving away right*) Let me see. Let me see. Ah! (*They halt and put on their hats.*)

ESTRAGON: Well?

VLADIMIR: What was I saying, we could go on from there.

ESTRAGON: What were you saying when?

VLADIMIR: At the very beginning.

ESTRAGON: The very beginning of WHAT?

VLADIMIR: This evening… I was saying gestures… I was saying gestures…

ESTRAGON: I'm not a historian.

VLADIMIR: (*Paces midstage, fidgeting.*) Wait…walks backwards and forwards we embraced… we were happy… happy… what do we do now that we're happy… go on waiting… waiting… let me think… it's coming… go on waiting… now that we're happy… let me see… ah! The tree! **Pauses by the tree** (*Points and moves towards the tree.*)

ESTRAGON: The tree?

VLADIMIR: Do you not remember?

ESTRAGON: I'm tired.

VLADIMIR: Look at it.

ESTRAGON: (*Looks quickly and then turns back.*) I see nothing.

VLADIMIR: But yesterday evening it was all pale and bare like a skeleton. And now it's covered with leaves. Three leaves

ESTRAGON: Leaves?

VLADIMIR: In a single night.

ESTRAGON: It must be the Spring.

VLADIMIR: But in a single night!

ESTRAGON: I tell you we weren't here yesterday. Another of your nightmares.

VLADIMIR: And where were we yesterday evening according to you?

ESTRAGON: How would I know? In another compartment. (*Gestures towards the audience*.) There's no lack of void. Gesturing towards us

VLADIMIR: (*Sure of himself*) Good. We weren't here yesterday evening. Now what did we do yesterday evening? Gogo eyes searching

ESTRAGON: Do?

VLADIMIR: Try and remember.

ESTRAGON: Do… I suppose we blathered.

VLADIMIR: (*Controlling himself*). About what?

ESTRAGON: Oh… this and that I suppose, nothing in particular. (*With assurance*) Yes, now I remember, yesterday evening we spent blathering about nothing in particular. That's been going on now for half a century.

VLADIMIR: You don't remember any fact, any circumstance?

ESTRAGON: (*Weary*) Don't torment me, Didi.

VLADIMIR: The sun. The moon. Do you not remember?

ESTRAGON: They must have been there, as usual.

VLADIMIR: You didn't notice anything out of the ordinary?

ESTRAGON: Alas!

VLADIMIR: And Pozzo? And Lucky?

ESTRAGON: Pozzo?

VLADIMIR: The bones.

ESTRAGON: They were like fishbones.

VLADIMIR: It was Pozzo gave them to you.

ESTRAGON: I don't know.

VLADIMIR: And the kick.

ESTRAGON: That's right, someone gave me a kick.

VLADIMIR: It was Lucky gave it to you.

ESTRAGON: And all that was yesterday?

VLADIMIR: Show your leg. They look down at Gogo's legs

ESTRAGON: Which?

VLADIMIR: Both. Pull up your trousers. Gogo gives *left leg to* ***DIDI WHO TAKES IT BETWEEN HIS LEGS*** Pull up your trousers.

ESTRAGON: I can't. Didi l*ooks, lets it go*.)

VLADIMIR: The other. (**GOGO** *gives the same leg*.) The other, pig! (**GOGO** *gives the other leg. Poking with his fingers, triumphantly*) There's the wound! Beginning to fester!

ESTRAGON: And what about it?

VLADIMIR: (*Letting go the leg, moving away towards the boots*) Where are your boots?

ESTRAGON: I must have thrown them away.

VLADIMIR: When?

ESTRAGON: I don't know.

VLADIMIR: Why?

ESTRAGON: (*Exasperated*) I don't know why I don't know!

VLADIMIR: No, I mean why did you throw them away?

ESTRAGON: (*Exasperated*) Because they were hurting me! Didi points to the boots

VLADIMIR: (*Triumphantly, pointing to the boots*) There they are! (*Estragon looks at the boots*.) At the very spot where you left them yesterday! Gogo freezes, staring at the boots creeps towards them, slowly lifting one and studying it (**ESTRAGON** *goes towards the boots, picks up a boot and inspects it closely*.)

ESTRAGON: They're not mine.

VLADIMIR: (*Stupefied*) Not yours!

ESTRAGON: Mine were black. These are brown.

VLADIMIR: You're sure yours were black?

ESTRAGON: Well they were a kind of gray.

VLADIMIR: And these are brown. Show me. Didi takes the boot

ESTRAGON: Well they're a kind of green.

VLADIMIR: Show. Didi studies the boot, throws it down (**ESTRAGON** *hands him the boot.* **VLADIMIR** *inspects it, drops it. Silence*.) Well of all the –

ESTRAGON: You see, (*moving away upstage left*) all that's a lot of bloody –

VLADIMIR: Ah! I see what it is. Yes, I see what's happened.

ESTRAGON: All that's a lot of bloody –

VLADIMIR: It's elementary. Pulls Gogo closer Someone came and took yours and left you his. They look down at his feet

ESTRAGON: (*Confused. Looking first at boots and then at* **VLADIMIR**) Why?

VLADIMIR: His were too tight for him, so he took yours.

ESTRAGON: But mine were too tight. (*Confused looks, as before.*)

VLADIMIR: For you. Not for him. Confused looks

ESTRAGON: (*Having tried in vain to work it out*) I'm tired! Gogo hunches over (*Pause.*) Let's go.

VLADIMIR: We can't.

ESTRAGON: Why not?

VLADIMIR: We're waiting for Godot.

ESTRAGON: Ah yes! (*Pause. Despairing*) What'll we do, what'll we do!

VLADIMIR: There's nothing we can do.

ESTRAGON: But I can't go on like this!

VLADIMIR: Would you like a radish?

ESTRAGON: Is that all there is?

VLADIMIR: There are radishes and turnips.

ESTRAGON: Are there no carrots?

VLADIMIR: No. Anyway you overdo it with your carrots.

ESTRAGON: Then give me a radish. Didi rummages in his pocket (**VLADIMIR** *feels in his pockets, finally brings out a radish, goes and hands it to* **ESTRAGON**, *moves away.* **ESTRAGON** *examines it.*) It's black!

VLADIMIR: It's a radish.

ESTRAGON: I only like the pink ones, you know that!

VLADIMIR: Then you don't want it?

ESTRAGON: I only like the pink ones!

VLADIMIR: Then give it back to me. (**VLADIMIR** *returns to* **ESTRAGON**, *takes back the radish and moves away.*)

ESTRAGON: I'll go and get a carrot. (*He does not move.*)

VLADIMIR: This is becoming really insignificant.

ESTRAGON: Not enough. Didi paces (*Silence*. **VLADIMIR** *wanders before hitting on next way to pass the time*.)

VLADIMIR: What about trying them.

ESTRAGON: I've tried everything.

VLADIMIR: No, I mean the boots.

ESTRAGON: Would that be a good thing?

VLADIMIR: It'd pass the time. (**ESTRAGON** *hesitates*.) I assure you, it'd be an occupation.

ESTRAGON: A relaxation.

VLADIMIR: A recreation.

ESTRAGON: A relaxation.

VLADIMIR: Try.

ESTRAGON: You'll help me?

VLADIMIR: I will of course. (*They converge on the boots.* **VLADIMIR** *stoops to pick up boot.* **ESTRAGON** *pulls him up*.)

ESTRAGON: We don't manage too badly, eh Didi, between the two of us?

VLADIMIR: Yes yes. Come on, we'll try the left first. (**VLADIMIR** *stoops and up as before*.)

ESTRAGON: We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?

VLADIMIR: (*Impatiently*) Yes yes, we're magicians. But let us persevere in what we have resolved, before we forget. *picks up the left boot* Come on, give me your foot. Gogo *raises his right foot*.) The other, hog! Gogo *raises the other foot*.) Higher! *They circle anticlockwise in a half-round, Gogo, flips over so he is facing the ground, Didi succeeds in getting on the boot* Try and walk. Gogo takes wide steps (**VLADIMIR** *moves away a little to observe.* **ESTRAGON** *takes a few steps right and returns*.) Well?

ESTRAGON: It fits.

VLADIMIR: (*Taking string from his pocket*). We'll try and lace it.

ESTRAGON: (*Vehemently*) No no, no laces, no laces!

VLADIMIR: You'll be sorry. Let's try the other. *As before, but clockwise.*

ESTRAGON *walks to the stone, halts there.*) Well?

ESTRAGON: (*Hesitates. Grudgingly*) It fits too.

VLADIMIR: They don't hurt you?

ESTRAGON: Not yet.

VLADIMIR: Then you can keep them.

ESTRAGON: They're too big.

VLADIMIR: Perhaps you'll have socks some day.

ESTRAGON: True.

VLADIMIR: Then you'll keep them?

ESTRAGON: That's enough about these boots.

VLADIMIR: Yes, but –

ESTRAGON: (*Violently*). Enough! Gogo looks away hands on hips (*Silence*.) I suppose I might as well sit down. *Looking about for a place to sit....points to the stone, goes to it. Sits upright*

VLADIMIR.)

VLADIMIR: That's where you were sitting yesterday evening.

ESTRAGON: If I could only sleep.

VLADIMIR: Yesterday you slept.

ESTRAGON: I'll try. (*He resumes his foetal posture, his head between his knees*.)

VLADIMIR: Wait. Takes Gogo in his arms and rocks him(*He goes over and sits down beside* **ESTRAGON** *and croons loudly with arm around him rocking him*.)

Bye bye bye bye

Bye bye –

ESTRAGON: (*Looking up angrily*) Not so loud!

VLADIMIR: (*Softly*) Bye bye bye bye

Bye bye bye bye

Bye bye bye bye

Bye bye…Gogo asleep, Didi gets up softly, takes off his coat, placing it across Gogo's shoulders standing tugs his waistcoat..stands stiff..rubs arms jogs, .swinging his arms to keep warm...Gogo startles (**ESTRAGON** *sleeps*. **VLADIMIR** *gets up softly, takes off his coat and lays it across* **ESTRAGON***'s shoulders, then starts walking upstage right and left, swinging his arms to keep himself warm.* **ESTRAGON** *wakes with a start, jumps up, casts about wildly.* **VLADIMIR** *runs to him, puts his arms around him*.) There… there… Didi is there… don't be afraid…

ESTRAGON: Ah!

VLADIMIR: There… there… it's all over.

ESTRAGON: I was falling –

VLADIMIR: It's all over, it's all over.

ESTRAGON: I was on top of a –

VLADIMIR: Don't tell me! Come, we'll walk it off. (Takes Gogo by the hand

ESTRAGON *by the hand and walks him up and down intoning Chopin's Funeral March until* **ESTRAGON** *refuses to go any further*.)

ESTRAGON: That's enough. I'm tired. (*He pulls his arm free and moves away.*)

VLADIMIR: You'd rather be stuck there doing nothing?

ESTRAGON: Yes.

VLADIMIR: Please yourself. (*He picks up his coat, puts it on and paces about the stage.*)

ESTRAGON: Let's go. Pacing

VLADIMIR: We can't.

ESTRAGON: Why not?

VLADIMIR: We're waiting for Godot.

ESTRAGON: Ah yes! (**VLADIMIR** *walks up and down*.) Can you not stay still?

VLADIMIR: I'm cold.

ESTRAGON: We came too soon.

VLADIMIR: It's always at nightfall.

ESTRAGON: But night doesn't fall.

VLADIMIR: It'll fall all of a sudden, like yesterday.

ESTRAGON: Then it'll be night.

VLADIMIR: And we can go.

ESTRAGON: Then it'll be day again. (*Pause. Despairing*) What'll we do, what'll we do!

VLADIMIR: (*Violently*) Will you stop whining! I've had about my bellyful of your lamentations!

ESTRAGON: (*Heads upstage.*) I'm going. Turns to leave

VLADIMIR: (*Seeing* **LUCKY***'s hat*) Well!

ESTRAGON: Farewell.

VLADIMIR: Lucky's hat. Picks it up (*He goes towards it downstage right*.) I've been here an hour and never saw it. (*He picks it up. Very pleased*.) Fine!

ESTRAGON: You'll never see me again.

VLADIMIR: I knew it was the right place. Now our troubles are over. (*He contemplates the hat, straightens it*.) Must have been a very fine hat. (*He puts it on with his left hand in place of his own which he hands to* ***GOGO*** *with his right hand*.) Here.

ESTRAGON: What?

VLADIMIR: Hold that. (Gogo *takes* **DIDI***'s hat with his right hand.* **GOGO** *adjusts* **LUCKY***'s hat on his head. It is roughly the same size as his.* **GOGO** *puts on* ***DIDI****'s hat with his right hand in place of his own which he hands to* ***DIDI*** *with his left hand.* **DIDI** *takes* ***GOGO****'s hat*. Gogo *adjusts* ***DIDI****'s hat on his head. There is a great disparity of size.* **DIDI** *puts on* ***GOGO****'s hat in place of* **LUCKY***'s which he hands to* ***GOGO***. Gogo *takes* **LUCKY***'s hat*. **DIDI** *adjusts* **GOGO***'s hat on his head. Grotesque disparity.* ***GOGO*** *puts on* **LUCKY***'s hat in place of* ***GOGO****'s which he hands to* ***DIDI***. **DIDI** *takes his hat,* **GOGO** *adjusts* **LUCKY***'s hat on his head. Grotesque disparity.* **DIDI** *puts on his hat in place of* ***GOGO****'s which he hands to* ***GOGO***. **GOGO** *takes his hat*. **DIDI** *adjusts his hat on his head*. **GOGO** *puts on his hat in place of* **LUCKY***'s which he hands to* ***DIDI***. Didi *takes* **LUCKY***'s hat.* ***GOGO*** *adjusts his hat on his head. Gogo puts on* **LUCKY***'s hat in place of his own which he hands to* ***DIDI.*** **DIDI** *takes* ***GOGO****'s hat*. **GOGO** *adjusts* **LUCKY***'s hat on his head.* ***DIDI*** *hands* **GOGO***'s hat back to* ***GOGO*** *who takes it and hands it back to* ***DIDI*** *who takes it and hands it back to* ***GOGO*** *who takes it and throws it down. The whole exchange is rapid and uninterrupted*.) How does it fit me?

ESTRAGON: How would I know?

VLADIMIR: No, but how do I look in it? *turns his head coquettishly to and fro, minces like a mannequin*

ESTRAGON: Hideous.

VLADIMIR: Yes, but not more so than usual?

ESTRAGON: Neither more nor less.

VLADIMIR: Then I can keep it. They stare out Mine irked me. (*Pause*.) How shall I say? (*Pause*.) It itched me. *He grimaces, takes off* **LUCKY***'s hat, peers into it, puts it on again*.)

ESTRAGON: I'm going. (*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: Will you not play?

ESTRAGON: Play at what?

VLADIMIR: We could play at Pozzo and Lucky.

ESTRAGON: Never heard of it.

VLADIMIR: I'll do Lucky, you do Pozzo. *imitates* **LUCKY** *sagging under the weight of his baggage.* ***GOGO*** *looks at him stupefied* Go on.

ESTRAGON: What am I to do?

VLADIMIR: Curse me!

ESTRAGON: (*After reflection*) Naughty!

VLADIMIR: Stronger!

ESTRAGON: Gonococcus! Spirochete! Didi *sways back and forth, doubled in two*

VLADIMIR: Tell me to think.

EBSTRAGON: What?

VLADIMIR: Say, Think, pig!

ESTRAGON: Think, pig! (*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: I can't.

ESTRAGON: That's enough of that.

VLADIMIR: Tell me to dance.

ESTRAGON: I'm going.

VLADIMIR: Dance, hog! Gogo shakes his head and leaves. Didi attempts to stand on one leg (**VLADIMIR** *writhes. Exit* **ESTRAGON** *left, precipitately*.) I can't! Notices Gogo has left, runs off and back again...Gogo runs on (*He looks up, misses* **ESTRAGON**.) Gogo! (*Exit right to look for him. Re-enters.*) *Enter* **ESTRAGON** *left, panting. He hastens towards* **VLADIMIR**, *meets him in the centre*.) There you are again at last!

ESTRAGON: I'm accursed!

VLADIMIR: Where were you? I thought you were gone for ever.

ESTRAGON: To the foot of the rise. They're coming!

VLADIMIR: Who?

ESTRAGON: I don't know.

VLADIMIR: How many?

ESTRAGON: I don't know.

VLADIMIR: (*Triumphantly*) It's Godot! At last! Gogo! It's Godot! We're saved! Let's go and meet him! Running off Gogo! Come back! An empty stage....They return from different sides of the stage (**VLADIMIR** *runs and exit left. Enter* **ESTRAGON** *right,* **VLADIMIR** *left. They hasten towards each other and meet at the centre*.) There you are again!

ESTRAGON: I'm in hell!

VLADIMIR: Where were you?

ESTRAGON: To the foot of the rise.

VLADIMIR: No doubt we're on a plateau, served up on a plateau.

ESTRAGON: They're coming there too!

VLADIMIR: We're surrounded! (**ESTRAGON** *makes a rush towards back*.) Imbecile! There's no way out there. (*He takes* **ESTRAGON** *by the arm and drags him towards front. Gesture towards front*.) There! Not a soul in sight! Off you go! Quick! (*He pushes* **ESTRAGON** *towards auditorium.* **ESTRAGON** *recoils in horror backwards to the shelter of* **VLADIMIR**.) You won't? (*He contemplates auditorium*.) Well I can understand that. Let me see. (*He reflects*.) Your only hope left is to disappear.

ESTRAGON: Where?

VLADIMIR: Behind the tree. (**ESTRAGON** *hesitates*.) Quick! Behind the tree. (*They run to the tree,* **ESTRAGON** *stands behind it, realizes he is not hidden, comes out from behind the tree*.) Decidedly this tree will not have been of the slightest use to us.

ESTRAGON: (*Calmer*) I lost my head. Forgive me. It won't happen again. Tell me what to do.

VLADIMIR: There's nothing to do.

ESTRAGON: You go and stand there. (*He draws* **VLADIMIR** *to extreme right and places him with his back to the stage*.) There, don't move, and watch out. The pair stand on either side of the landscape looking off simultaneously

Back to back like in the good old days. *look at each other... resume their watch. Long silence*.)

ESTRAGON: Do you see anything coming?

VLADIMIR: (*Turning his head*) What?

ESTRAGON: (*Louder*) Do you see anything coming?

VLADIMIR: No.

ESTRAGON: Nor I. (*They resume their watch*. *Silence.*)

VLADIMIR: You must have had a vision.

ESTRAGON: (*Turning his head*) What?

VLADIMIR: (*Louder*). You must have had a vision.

ESTRAGON: No need to shout! (*They resume their watch*. *Silence*.)

ESTRAGON *and* **VLADIMIR**: (*Turning simultaneously*) Do you –

VLADIMIR: Oh pardon!

ESTRAGON: Carry on.

VLADIMIR: No no, after you.

ESTRAGON: No no, you first.

VLADIMIR: I interrupted you.

ESTRAGON: On the contrary. They walk towards each other

VLADIMIR: Ceremonious ape!

ESTRAGON: Punctilious pig!

VLADIMIR: Finish your phrase, I tell you!

ESTRAGON: Finish your own! (*Silence.*)

VLADIMIR: Moron!

ESTRAGON: That's the idea, let's abuse each other. (*They turn, move apart, turn again, face each other, taking steps towards each other*)

VLADIMIR: Moron!

ESTRAGON: Vermin!

VLADIMIR: Abortion!

ESTRAGON: Morpion!

VLADIMIR: Sewer-rat!

ESTRAGON: Curate!

VLADIMIR: Cretin!

ESTRAGON: (*With finality*) Crritic!

VLADIMIR: Oh! Didi feigns fainting

ESTRAGON: Now let's make it up.

VLADIMIR: Gogo!

ESTRAGON: Didi!

VLADIMIR: Your hand!

ESTRAGON: Take it!

VLADIMIR: Come to my arms!

ESTRAGON: Yours arms?

VLADIMIR: My breast!

ESTRAGON: Off we go! (*They embracing they waltz in a circle humming the Waltz Duet from* The Merry Widow. *They separate and move apart. Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: How time flies when one has fun! They return to stillness (*Silence*.)

ESTRAGON: What do we do now?

VLADIMIR: While waiting.

ESTRAGON: While waiting. (*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: We could do our exercises.

ESTRAGON: Our movements.

VLADIMIR: Our elevations.

ESTRAGON: Our relaxations.

VLADIMIR: Our elongations.

ESTRAGON: Our relaxations.

VLADIMIR: To warm us up.

ESTRAGON: To calm us down.

VLADIMIR: Off we go. Didi *hops from one foot to the other. **GOGO** imitates him*

ESTRAGON: (*Stopping*) That's enough. I'm tired.

VLADIMIR: (*Stopping*) We're not in shape. What about a little deep breathing?

ESTRAGON: I'm tired breathing.

VLADIMIR: You're right. (*Pause*.) Let's just do the tree, for the balance.

ESTRAGON: The tree? **DIDI** *does the tree, staggering about on one leg as Gogo watches on quizzically*

VLADIMIR: (*Stopping*). Your turn. **GOGO** *does the tree, staggers*

ESTRAGON: Do you think God sees me?

VLADIMIR: You must close your eyes. (**ESTRAGON** *closes his eyes, staggers worse*.)

ESTRAGON: *brandishing his fists skywards* God have pity on me!

VLADIMIR: (*Vexed*) And me?

ESTRAGON: On me! On me! Pity! On me! The two hide behind the stone as Pozzo and Lucky appear Pozzo bumps into Lucky and the two fall to the ground

POZZO: (*Clutching onto* **LUCKY** *who staggers*). What is it? Who is it? (**LUCKY** *falls as in Act 1, drops everything and brings down* **POZZO** *with him in the same manner. They lie helpless among the scattered baggage perpendicular across each other midstage off-centre right.*)

ESTRAGON: Is it Godot?

VLADIMIR: At last! (*He goes towards the heap*.) Reinforcements at last!

POZZO: Help!

ESTRAGON: Is it Godot?

VLADIMIR: (*Retreats to* **ESTRAGON**.) We were beginning to weaken. Now we're sure to see the evening out.

POZZO: Help!

VLADIMIR: We are no longer alone, waiting for the night, waiting for Godot, waiting for… waiting. All evening we have struggled, unassisted. Now it's over. It's already tomorrow.

POZZO: Help!

VLADIMIR: Time flows again already. The sun will set, the moon rise, and we away… from here.

POZZO: Pity!

VLADIMIR: Poor Pozzo! **They rise**

ESTRAGON: I knew it was him.

VLADIMIR: Who?

ESTRAGON: Godot.

VLADIMIR: But it's not Godot.

ESTRAGON: It's not Godot?

VLADIMIR: It's not Godot.

ESTRAGON: Then who is it?

VLADIMIR: It's Pozzo.

POZZO: Here! Here! Help me up!

VLADIMIR: He can't get up.

ESTRAGON: Let's go.

VLADIMIR: We can't.

ESTRAGON: Why not?

VLADIMIR: We're waiting for Godot.

ESTRAGON: Ah yes! (*Silence.*) Didi in Gogo's ear. Pozzo and Lucky splayed on the floor

VLADIMIR: (*Whispers, conspiring.*) Perhaps he has another bone for you.

ESTRAGON: Bone?

VLADIMIR: Chicken. Do you not remember?

ESTRAGON: It was him?

VLADIMIR: Yes.

ESTRAGON: Ask him.

VLADIMIR: (*Advances towards* **POZZO**, *halts, retreats.*) Perhaps we should help him first.

ESTRAGON: To do what?

VLADIMIR: To get up.

ESTRAGON: He can't get up?

VLADIMIR: He wants to get up.

ESTRAGON: Then let him get up.

VLADIMIR: He can't.

ESTRAGON: Why not?

VLADIMIR: I don't know. T*hey go towards* **POZZO AND JUMP BACK AS POZZO MOVES**

ESTRAGON: We should ask him for the bone first. Then if he refuses we'll leave him there.

VLADIMIR: You mean we have him at our mercy?

ESTRAGON: Yes.

VLADIMIR: And that we should subordinate our good offices to certain conditions?

ESTRAGON: Yes.

VLADIMIR: That seems intelligent all right. (*They go a little closer than before towards* **POZZO** *in the heap, halt, then* **VLADIMIR** *initiates the retreat.*) But there's one thing I'm afraid of.

ESTRAGON: What?

VLADIMIR: That Lucky might get going all of a sudden. Then we'd be ballocksed.

ESTRAGON: Lucky?

VLADIMIR: The one that went for you yesterday.

ESTRAGON: I tell you there was ten of them.

VLADIMIR: No, before that, the one that kicked you.

ESTRAGON: Is he there?

VLADIMIR: As large as life. (*They go closer towards* **LUCKY** *in the heap, halt,* **VLADIMIR** *gestures towards him.*) For the moment he is inert. (*Retreat to stone initiated by* **VLADIMIR**.) But he might run amuck any minute.

POZZO: Help!

ESTRAGON: And suppose we gave him a good beating, the two of us.

VLADIMIR: You mean if we fell on him in his sleep?

ESTRAGON: Yes.

VLADIMIR: That seems a good idea all right. They step closer in unison, rolling their sleeves, closed fists, preparing to swing (*They go closer to the heap, pushing up their sleeves.*) But could we do it? Is he really asleep? (*Pause.*) No, (*They retreat.*) the best would be to take advantage of Pozzo's calling for help – In anticipation of some tangible return.

ESTRAGON: And suppose he – (**VLADIMIR** *takes* **ESTRAGON***'s arm, leading him in an anticlockwise circle upstage around the heap.*)

VLADIMIR: Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed. Not indeed that we personally are needed. Others would meet the case equally well, if not better. (*They halt at the top of the circle, a little off-centre right.*) To all mankind they were addressed, those cries for help still ringing in our ears! But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us. (*Pause. They pose.*)

POZZO: Help!

VLADIMIR: Whether we like it or not. (*They continue to circle downstage, halt just right of the stone*.) Let us make the most of it, before it is too late! Let us represent worthily for once the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us! What do you say? (**ESTRAGON** *pulls free and tired, sits, says nothing*.) It is true that when with folded arms we weigh the pros and cons we are no less a credit to our species. The tiger bounds to the help of his congeners without the least reflection, or else he slinks away into the depths of the thickets. But that is not the question. What are we doing here, *that* is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come –

ESTRAGON: Ah yes!

VLADIMIR: Or for night to fall. (*Pause*.) We have kept our appointment and that's an end to that. We are not saints, but we have kept our appointment. How many people can boast as much?

ESTRAGON: Billions.

VLADIMIR: You think so?

ESTRAGON: I don't know.

VLADIMIR: You may be right.

POZZO: Help!

VLADIMIR: All I know is that the hours are long, under these conditions, and constrain us to beguile them with proceedings which – how shall I say – which may at first sight seem reasonable, until they become a habit. You may say it is to prevent our reason from foundering. No doubt. To us But has it not long been straying in the night without end of the abyssal depths? That's what I sometimes wonder. You follow my reasoning?

ESTRAGON: (*Pointing heavenward with his index finger, aphoristic for once*). We are all born mad. Some remain so.

POZZO: Help! I'll pay you!

ESTRAGON: How much?

POZZO: One hundred francs!

ESTRAGON: It's not enough.

VLADIMIR: I wouldn't go so far as that.

ESTRAGON: You think it's enough?

VLADIMIR: No, I mean so far as to assert that I was weak in the head when I came into the world. But that is not the question.

POZZO: Two hundred!

VLADIMIR: We wait. We are bored. (*He throws up his hand*.) No, don't protest, we are bored to death, there's no denying it. Good. A diversion comes along and what do we do? We let it go to waste. Come, let's get to work! (*He advances towards the heap, stops in his stride*.) In an instant all will vanish and we'll be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness! (*He broods*.)

POZZO: (*Holding out his right hand*) Two hundred!

VLADIMIR: We're coming! (*He tries to pull* **POZZO** *to his feet, fails, stumbles, falls backwards*.)

ESTRAGON: (*Stands and moves towards the pile*.) What's the matter with you all?

VLADIMIR: Help!

ESTRAGON: I'm going.

VLADIMIR: Don't leave me!

POZZO: Where am I?

VLADIMIR: Gogo!

POZZO: Help!

VLADIMIR: Help!

ESTRAGON: I'm going.

VLADIMIR: Help me up first, then we'll go together.

ESTRAGON: You promise?

VLADIMIR: I swear it!

ESTRAGON: And we'll never come back?

VLADIMIR: Never!

ESTRAGON: We'll go to the Pyrenees.

VLADIMIR: Wherever you like.

ESTRAGON: I've always wanted to wander in the Pyrenees.

VLADIMIR: You'll wander in them. (*Extends hand.*)

ESTRAGON: (*Extends hand to take* **VALDIMIR***'s, suddenly recoils.*) Who farted?

VLADIMIR: Pozzo.

POZZO: Here! Here! Pity!

ESTRAGON: It's revolting!

VLADIMIR: Quick! (*Extending hand again*) Give me your hand!

ESTRAGON: I'm going. (*Pause. Louder*) I'm going.

VLADIMIR: Well I suppose in the end I'll get up by myself. (*He tries, fails*.) In the fullness of time.

ESTRAGON: What's the matter with you?

VLADIMIR: Go to hell.

ESTRAGON: Are you staying there?

VLADIMIR: For the time being.

ESTRAGON: Come on, get up, you'll catch a chill.

VLADIMIR: Don't worry about me.

ESTRAGON: Come on, Didi, don't be pig-headed! Up! (*He stretches out his hand which* **VLADIMIR** *makes haste to seize*.)

VLADIMIR: Pull! (**ESTRAGON** *pulls, stumbles, falls backwards like* **VLADIMIR** *earlier. Long silence*.)

POZZO: Help!

VLADIMIR: We've arrived.

POZZO: Who are you?

VLADIMIR: We are men. (*Long silence*.)

ESTRAGON: Sweet mother earth!

VLADIMIR: Can you get up?

ESTRAGON: I don't know.

VLADIMIR: Try.

ESTRAGON: Not now, not now. (*Silence*.)

POZZO: What happened?

VLADIMIR: (*Violently*) Will you stop it, you! Pest! He thinks of nothing but himself!

ESTRAGON: What about a little snooze?

VLADIMIR: Did you hear him? He wants to know what happened!

ESTRAGON: Don't mind him. Sleep. (*Silence*.)

POZZO: Pity! Pity!

ESTRAGON: (*With a start*) What? What is it?

VLADIMIR: It's this bastard Pozzo at it again.

ESTRAGON: Make him stop it. Kick him in the crotch.

VLADIMIR: Will you stop it! (*Striking* **POZZO**). Crablouse! (**POZZO** *extricates himself with cries of pain and crawls away upstage left. He stops, saws the air blindly, calling for help.* **VLADIMIR**, *propped on his elbow, observes his retreat*.)

POZZO: Lucky!

VLADIMIR: He's up!

POZZO: Lucky! (**POZZO** *collapses*.)

VLADIMIR: He's down!

ESTRAGON: What do we do now?

VLADIMIR: Perhaps I could call to him.

ESTRAGON: Yes, call to him.

VLADIMIR: Pozzo! (*Silence*.) Pozzo! (*Silence*.) No reply.

ESTRAGON: Together.

VLADIMIR *and* **ESTRAGON**: Pozzo! Pozzo! (*Silence*.)

ESTRAGON: We might try him with other names.

ESTRAGON: It'd be amusing.

VLADIMIR: What'd be amusing?

ESTRAGON: To try him with other names, one after the other. It'd pass the time. And we'd be bound to hit on the right one sooner or later.

VLADIMIR: I tell you his name is Pozzo.

ESTRAGON: Let's see. (*He reflects*.) Abel! Abel!

POZZO: Help!

ESTRAGON: Got it in one!

VLADIMIR: I begin to weary of this motif.Sam09

ESTRAGON: Perhaps the other is called Cain. To Lucky Cain! Cain!

POZZO: Help!

ESTRAGON: He's all humanity. Gazing upwards (*Silence*.) Look at the little cloud.

VLADIMIR: (*Raising his eyes*) Where?

ESTRAGON: There. (*Pointing upwards with his little finger*.) In the zenith.

VLADIMIR: Well? (*Pause*.) What is there so wonderful about it? (*Silence*.)

ESTRAGON: Let's pass on now to something else, do you mind?

VLADIMIR: I was just going to suggest it.

ESTRAGON: But to what?

VLADIMIR: Ah! (*Silence*.)

ESTRAGON: Suppose we got up to begin with?

VLADIMIR: No harm trying. (*They get up*.)

ESTRAGON: Child's play.

VLADIMIR: Simple question of will-power.

ESTRAGON: And now?

POZZO: Help!

ESTRAGON: Let's go.

VLADIMIR: We can't.

ESTRAGON: Why not?

VLADIMIR: We're waiting for Godot.

ESTRAGON: Ah yes! (*Despairing*) What'll we do, what'll we do!

POZZO: Help!

VLADIMIR: What about helping him?

ESTRAGON: What does he want?

VLADIMIR: He wants to get up.

ESTRAGON: Then why doesn't he?

VLADIMIR: He wants us to help him get up.

ESTRAGON: Then why don't we? What are we waiting for? (*They go to* **POZZO** *and help him to his feet, let him go, move away to left and right. He falls forwards as before*.) He's doing it on purpose.

VLADIMIR: We must hold him. (*raising him again*. **POZZO** *sags between them, his arms round their necks*.) Feeling better?

POZZO: Who are you?

VLADIMIR: Do you not recognize us?

POZZO: I am blind. (*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: Blind!

ESTRAGON: Perhaps he can see into the future.

VLADIMIR: Blind! Since when?

POZZO: I used to have wonderful sight

ESTRAGON: (*Irritably*). Expand! Expand!

VLADIMIR: Let him alone. Can't you see he's thinking of the days when he was happy. (*Pause*.) *Memoria praeteritorum bonorum* – that must be unpleasant.

POZZO: Quite wonderful.

VLADIMIR: And it came on you all of a sudden?

POZZO: I woke up one fine day as blind as Fortune. (*Pause*.) Sometimes I wonder if I'm not still asleep.

VLADIMIR: And when was that?

POZZO: I don't know.

VLADIMIR: But no later than yesterday –

POZZO: (*Violently*) Don't question me! The blind have no notion of time. The things of time are hidden from them too.

VLADIMIR: Well just fancy that! I could have sworn it was just the opposite.

POZZO: Where is my menial?

VLADIMIR: He's about somewhere.

POZZO: Why doesn't he answer when I call?

VLADIMIR: I don't know. He seems to be sleeping. Perhaps he's dead.

POZZO: Go and see is he hurt.

VLADIMIR: We can't leave you.

POZZO: You needn't both go.

VLADIMIR: (*To* **ESTRAGON**). You go.

ESTRAGON: After what he did to me? Never!

POZZO: (*Pushing* **ESTRAGON** *away towards the stone, clutching onto* **VLADIMIR**) Yes yes, let your friend go, he stinks so. (*Silence*.) What is he waiting for?

VLADIMIR: What are you waiting for?

ESTRAGON: I'm waiting for Godot. (*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: What exactly should he do?

POZZO: Well to begin with he should pull on the rope, as hard as he likes so long as he doesn't strangle him. He usually responds to that. If not he should give him a taste of his boot, in the face and the privates as far as possible.

VLADIMIR: (*To* **ESTRAGON**). You see, you've nothing to be afraid of. It's even an opportunity to revenge yourself.

ESTRAGON: And if he defends himself?

POZZO: No no, he never defends himself.

VLADIMIR: I'll come flying to the rescue. (**ESTRAGON** *goes to* **LUCKY**.)

ESTRAGON: Don't take your eyes off me. Walks slowly to Lucky, *raises his foot to kick him*.)

VLADIMIR: (*Halting* **ESTRAGON***'s kick*.) Make sure he's alive before you start. No point in exerting yourself if he's dead.

ESTRAGON: (*Bending over* **LUCKY**). He's breathing.

VLADIMIR: Then let him have it. (**ESTRAGON** *kicks* **LUCKY**, *hurts foot, hobbles limping and groaning to the stone.* **VLADIMIR** *rushes to him.* **POZZO** *falls, gets up and staggers blindly upstage.*)

ESTRAGON: Oh the brute! (*He sits down on the stone and tries to take off his boot. But he soon desists and disposes himself for sleep, his arms on his knees and his head on his arms.*)

POZZO: What's gone wrong now? What's gone wrong now?

VLADIMIR: My friend has hurt himself.

POZZO: And Lucky?

VLADIMIR: So it is he?

POZZO: What?

VLADIMIR: It is Lucky?

POZZO: I don't understand.

VLADIMIR: And you are Pozzo?

POZZO: Certainly I am Pozzo.

VLADIMIR: The same as yesterday?

POZZO: Yesterday?

VLADIMIR: We met yesterday. (*Silence*.) Do you not remember?

POZZO: I don't remember having met anyone yesterday. But tomorrow I won't remember having met anyone today. So don't count on me to enlighten you.

VLADIMIR: But –

POZZO: Enough! Up pig!

VLADIMIR: (*Holds him back by the arm.*) You were bringing him to the fair to sell him. You spoke to us. He danced. He thought. You had your sight.

POZZO: As you please. Let me go! (**VLADIMIR** *moves away*.) Up! (**LUCKY** *gets up*.)

VLADIMIR: He's getting up.

POZZO: He'd better! (**LUCKY** *gathers up all his burdens save for the whip and stands tottering with his back to* **POZZO**.)

VLADIMIR: He's picking up his bags. Now he's all set.

POZZO: Whip!

VLADIMIR: Where do you go from here?

POZZO: No concern of mine.

VLADIMIR: How changed you are.

POZZO: On. (**LUCKY**, *laden down, takes his place before* **POZZO**.) Whip! (**LUCKY** *puts everything down, looks for whip, finds it, puts it into* **POZZO***'s right hand, takes up everything again*.) Rope! (**LUCKY** *puts everything down, puts end of rope into* **POZZO***'s hand, takes up everything again*.) On!

VLADIMIR: What is there in the bag?

POZZO: Sand. (*He jerks the rope*.) On! (*They start towards the wings right*.)

VLADIMIR: (*Halting them*) Don't go yet.

POZZO: I'm going. On! (*They start to leave again*.)

VLADIMIR: (*Halting them again*) What do you do when you fall far from help?

POZZO: We wait till we can get up. Then we go on. On! (*They start to leave again*.)

VLADIMIR: (*Halting them*) Before you go tell him to sing.

POZZO: Who?

VLADIMIR: Lucky.

POZZO: To sing?

VLADIMIR: Yes. Or to think. Or to recite.

POZZO: But he is dumb.

VLADIMIR: Dumb!

POZZO: Dumb. He can't even groan.

VLADIMIR: Dumb! Since when?

POZZO: (*Suddenly furious*) Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day like any other day, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one

day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (*Calmer*) They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more. (*He jerks the rope*.) On!

(*Exeunt* **POZZO** *and* **LUCKY LEAVE.** Didi **LOOKS OVER TO HIS FRIEND, RUNS TO HIM** *follows them to the edge of the stage, looks after them. The noise of falling, reinforced by mimic of* **VLADIMIR**, *announces that they are down again. Silence*. **VLADIMIR** *goes towards* **ESTRAGON**, *contemplates him a moment, then shakes him awake*.)

ESTRAGON: (*Wild gestures, incoherent words. Finally*) I was asleep. Why will you never let me sleep?

VLADIMIR: I felt lonely.

ESTRAGON: I was dreaming I was happy.

VLADIMIR: That passed the time.

ESTRAGON: I was dreaming that –

VLADIMIR: (*Violently*) Don't tell me! (*Silence*.) I wonder is he really blind.

ESTRAGON: Blind? Who?

VALDIMIR: Would one truly blind say he had no notion of time?

ESTRAGON: Who?

VLADIMIR: Pozzo.

ESTRAGON: Is he blind?

VLADIMIR: So he said.

ESTRAGON: Well what about it?

VLADIMIR: It seemed to me he saw us.

ESTRAGON: You dreamt it. (*Pause*.) Let's go. (*Half rises*.) We can't. (*Sits again*.) Ah yes! (*Pause*.) Are you sure it wasn't him?

VLADIMIR: Who?

ESTRAGON: Godot.

VLADIMIR: But who?

ESTRAGON: Pozzo.

VLADIMIR: Not at all! (*Less sure*.) Not at all! Gazes after Pozzo and Lucky (*Still less sure*.) Not at all! (*Moves away*.)

ESTRAGON: I suppose I might as well get up. (*He gets up painfully*.) Ow! Ow!

VLADIMIR: I don't know what to think any more.

ESTRAGON: My feet! Help me! (*He sits again and tries to take off his boots*.)

VLADIMIR: Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today? That with Estragon my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? Light turns a peachy gold of a sunset Probably. But in all that what truth will there be? (**ESTRAGON**, *having struggled with his boots in vain, is dozing off again*. **VLADIMIR** *looks at him*.) He'll know nothing. He'll tell me about the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot. (*Pause*.) Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. (*He listenings*.) But habit is a great deadener. (*He looks away upstage right*.) At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, (*He looks front*.) he is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on. Holds out a hand (*Pause*.) I can't go on! (clasping hands to mouth *He looks back front to where he stood before. Pause*.) What have I said? (*Enter* **BOY** *right. He halts. Silence*.)

BOY: Mister… Mister Albert…

VLADIMIR: Off we go again. to Gogo's sleeping ear (*He goes towards the* **BOY**, *halts several steps from him. Pause*.) Do you not recognize me?

BOY: No sir.

VLADIMIR: It wasn't you came yesterday.

BOY: No sir.

VLADIMIR: This is your first time.

BOY: Yes sir. (*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: You have a message from Mr. Godot.

BOY: Yes sir.

VLADIMIR: He won't come this evening.

BOY: No sir.

VLADIMIR: But he'll come tomorrow.

BOY: Yes sir.

VLADIMIR: Without fail.

BOY: Yes sir. (*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: Did you meet anyone?

BOY: No sir.

VLADIMIR: Two other… (*He hesitates*.)… men?

BOY: I didn't see anyone, sir. (*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: What does he do, Mr. Godot? (*Silence*.) Do you hear me?

BOY: Yes sir.

VLADIMIR: Well?

BOY: He does nothing, sir. (*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: How is your brother?

BOY: He's sick, sir.

VLADIMIR: Perhaps it was he came yesterday.

BOY: I don't know, sir. (*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: (*Softly*) Has he a beard, Mr. Godot?

BOY: Yes sir.

VLADIMIR: Fair or… (*He hesitates*.)… or black… (*He hesitates*.)… or red?

BOY: I think it's white, sir. (*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: Christ have mercy on us! (*Silence*.)

BOY: What am I to tell Mr. Godot, sir?

VLADIMIR: Tell him… points to himself (*He hesitates*.)… tell him you saw me and that… (*He hesitates*.)… that you saw me. (*With sudden violence*) You're sure you saw me, you won't come and tell me tomorrow that you never saw me! PUT MOON PIECE HERE FROM BRIDS BIT!!! (*Silence*. **VLADIMIR** *advances a step. The* **BOY** *exits calmly backwards. Silence. The sun sets, the moon rises. As in Act 1*. **VLADIMIR** *moves downstage centre and stands motionless and bowed*. **ESTRAGON** *wakes, takes off his boots, gets up with one in each hand and goes and puts them down center front, then goes towards* **VLADIMIR**.)

ESTRAGON: What's wrong with you?

VLADIMIR: Nothing.

ESTRAGON: I'm going.

VLADIMIR: So am I.

ESTRAGON: Was I long asleep?

VLADIMIR: I don't know. (*Silence*.)

ESTRAGON: Where shall we go?

VLADIMIR: Not far.

ESTRAGON: Oh yes, let's go far away from here.

VLADIMIR: We can't.

ESTRAGON: Why not?

VLADIMIR: We have to come back tomorrow.

ESTRAGON: What for?

VLADIMIR: To wait for Godot.

ESTRAGON: Ah yes! (*Silence*.) He didn't come?

VLADIMIR: No.

ESTRAGON: And now it's too late.

VLADIMIR: Yes, now it's night.

ESTRAGON: (*Whispering*) And if we dropped him? (*Pause*.) If we dropped him?

VLADIMIR: He'd punish us. (*Silence. He looks at the tree*.) Everything's dead but the tree.

ESTRAGON: (*Looking at the tree*). What is it?

VLADIMIR: It's the tree.

ESTRAGON: Yes, but what kind?

VLADIMIR: I don't know. A willow. Let's go. (**VLADIMIR** *takes* **ESTRAGON***'s hand and they go to the tree, halting with* **VLADIMIR** *to the right and* **ESTRAGON** *to the left of it. Silence*.)

ESTRAGON: (*Lets go of* **VLADIMIR***'s hand.*) Why don't we hang ourselves?

VLADIMIR: With what?

ESTRAGON: You haven't got a bit of rope?

VLADIMIR: No.

ESTRAGON: Then we can't. (*Silence*.)

VLADIMIR: (*Takes hand again.*) Let's go.

ESTRAGON: (*Lets go of hand*.) Wait, there's my belt.

VLADIMIR: It's too short.

ESTRAGON: You could hang onto my legs.

VLADIMIR: And who'd hang onto mine?

ESTRAGON: True.

VLADIMIR: Show me all the same. (**ESTRAGON** *loosens the cord that holds up his trousers which, much too big for him, fall about his ankles. They look at the cord*.) It might do in a pinch. But is it strong enough?

ESTRAGON: We'll soon see. Here. (*They each take an end of the cord and pull. It breaks.*)

VLADIMIR: Not worth a curse. (*Silence*.)

ESTRAGON: You say we have to come back tomorrow?

VLADIMIR: Yes.

ESTRAGON: Then we can bring a good bit of rope.

VLADIMIR: Yes. (*Silence*.)

ESTRAGON: Didi?

VLADIMIR: Yes.

ESTRAGON: I can't go on like this.

VLADIMIR: That's what you think.

ESTRAGON: If we parted? That might be better for us.

VLADIMIR: We'll hang ourselves tomorrow. (*Pause*.) Unless Godot comes.

ESTRAGON: And if he comes?

VLADIMIR: We'll be saved.

ESTRAGON: Well? Shall we go?

VLADIMIR: Pull on your trousers.

ESTRAGON: What?

VLADIMIR: Pull on your trousers.

ESTRAGON: You want me to pull off my trousers?

VLADIMIR: Pull ON your trousers.

ESTRAGON: (*Realizing his trousers are down*) Ah yes! (*He pulls up his trousers.*)

VLADIMIR: (*Looking up*) Well? Shall we go?

ESTRAGON: (*Looking down*) Yes, let's go. (*They do not move*. *Silence*.)

Curtain

Arts & Disability Ireland promotes fully accessible theatre. You can help us by completing an audience survey. Please visit www.adiarts.ie to take part. Thank You!

APPENDIX B

THE MAKING OF AN AUDIO DESCRIBED PERFORMANCE: AN INTERVIEW WITH MÁIRÍN HARTE

The following interview is the result of an online meeting held on November 17, 2021, with the audio describer who drafted the script for the AD version of the show under analysis.

1. **Was the show attended only by visually impaired people or was there a mixed audience, meaning there were both a sighted and non-sighted audience?**
   The show was attended by both visually impaired patrons and sighted theatregoers.
2. **After the audio described show, did you have the chance to get any feedback about the AD?**
   No, usually there are no questionnaires, however, drawing up polls could be a good solution to getting to know the audience's reaction to the show and the experience inside the theatre.
3. **What tone of voice did you adopt during the AD delivery of *Waiting for Godot*? What was the speed of the speech? Did you get immersed in the story or try to stay as neutral as possible?**
   In the case of Beckett's play, the most important thing was to preserve the nature of the source text and the author's decisions. Therefore, I tried to respect the characters' silences by pausing whenever it was needed. Since the rhythm of the play is already moderate and intercut with moments of stillness, the number of extra pauses was minimal. The rhythm of the play also allowed me to deliver my speech at a medium pace. When I am audio describing a play, I usually try to get immersed in the story and adapt my voice tone to the source text so as to make my delivery more entertaining and enjoyable. However, in this specific case, I felt that a more neutral tone was a perfect match for such an introspective play.
4. **Were you the only audio describer? Did you have a colleague helping you?**
   There were two audio describers, one of my colleagues and me. As we usually do, we divided the work into two equal parts, one read the first act, and the other read the second act, which was shorter, plus the introductory notes.

5. **How much time did it take to prepare for the performance?**

   The preparation of the performance took approximately 45 hours. During this time, audio describers usually watch the recording of the performance, then draft the AD script. This task takes a long time since you need to find the right words that adapt to the play you are working on. Once the script is ready, we usually do a run-through before the show to check for technical issues.

6. **What kind of equipment do you use for audio description?**

   During the performance, we are allocated away from the audience, in a tech box for example, so as not to disturb the rest of the audience with our voice. We usually have a pair of headsets, a headpiece and an earpiece. This equipment is connected to a microphone so that our voice can be heard clearly through the audience's headsets. The person in charge of checking if all the equipment works is the stage manager.

7. **How do you deal with technical issues happening during a play?**

   Since multiple run-throughs are carried out before the audio described show, no major technical issues happen during the performance. However, if they do, only a few of them occur at the beginning of the show and they regard the headsets or the volume. Most of the time, you simply need to switch channels or change headsets. In case of technical issues, the staff members of the theatre are always ready to help.

8. **What got you interested in audio description (AD)?**

   I have always been fascinated by all ways of communicating through art, from literature, artworks to plays, which is the reason why I attended a drama school. Another passion of mine is writing –I have written some books – as it allows me to express myself while letting my mind flow. I reckon that I got interested in inclusion and accessibility when I worked with a group of disabled adults. The idea of helping other people filled my heart with joy.

9. **Can AD be considered a creative process? Do you feel that AD is more of a constrained process because of time limits and faithfulness to the original text?**

   I think that AD is intrinsically a creative process, and we can see this in ADs for theatrical performances, museums, tours, movies since they are more art-related activities. On the contrary, AD for TV programs, such as documentaries, news or TV shows, needs to be more neutral and adopt a mere broadcasting style. Therefore, AD in TV seems more detached, compared to the more involving commentary of live cultural events.

10. How did you become an audio describer for theatrical performances?

I attended a three-month course in which I learnt the techniques of audio describing, however, my previous knowledge of drama definitely came in handy.

11. What do you have access to when preparing a script?

Although it depends on the show, we usually have access to the recording of the play, the characters' costumes and props and, if any, photos taken during previous performances. Then, some days before the show we have a walk on the stage to have an idea of its length, width and shape. During this visit, we may have the chance to talk to the stage manager, the education officer and the staff members.

12. How do you decide how much detail to describe in a theatre performance?

I usually follow the "less is more" rule since you do not want to overwhelm the audience with an excessive amount of information. I surely need to inform theatregoers on all detail related to physical things, namely the characters' physicality, costumes, attitude, particular movements. Then, facial expressions and the look characters give each other are essential in order for the audience to follow the story and understand the meaning behind certain actions or dialogues. For example, if the story takes a turn for the worse and overall, there is a bad atmosphere, I need to convey these feelings, however, without over-explaining or giving away too much. Other details that I have to take care of are certainly jokes, sight gags or sounds whose source may not be easily intelligible.

13. How do you warm up before a performance? Do you follow a particular routine?

About an hour before the starting of the show I usually practice some diction exercises, such as humming and breathing that help with articulation and warm up my voice. Some very useful practices that help me concentrate and manage nervousness are mindfulness and meditation.

14. What are some aspects of audio describing that you enjoy?

I love the idea of communicating with people, helping them and contributing to providing inclusivity and accessibility in the field I am working in. Moreover, having attended drama school, activities such as voice-over, writing and working in the art field in general have always interested me. Last but not least, AD allows you to learn new things and increase your curiosity.

15. Would you say there is a high demand for audio describers?

We are all aware that AD is becoming a booming field, especially in countries such as America, Australia and Canada. In the UK, although there is a strong blind community, it still needs time to develop. Providing accessibility is a long process that requires time to settle in. However, there is another growing field concerning accessibility and that is Sign Language.