

# SHAMELESS AUDIO DESCRIPTION: THE ART OF DESCRIBING EROTIC SCENES OF THE MOVIE *FUTURE BEACH* (*PRAIA DO FUTURO*)

## *Audio Descripción desvergonzada: el arte de describir escenas eróticas de la película Praia do Futuro*

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**ABSTRACT:** Audio description is considered one of the forms of intersemiotic translation (Roman Jakobson, 1995), in view that it can be defined as the translation of images (visual signs) into words or texts (verbal signs). Its function is to convey into words the descriptions of static or moving images for individuals with visual impairment. The aim of this paper is to present the challenges encountered during the elaboration of scripts for ADs in scenes of Brazilian movies, which have erotic situations played by its main characters. We will study the case of two scenes of the movie *Future Beach* (*Praia do Futuro*), directed by Karim Aïnouz, 2014. The work is divided into two initial parts with the presentation of theoretical content covering the themes of obscenity and eroticism in the area of audiovisual translation and over some fundamental concepts related to audio description. In the third part, we will show the AD case study of two erotic and sensual scenes of the movie *Future Beach* and conclude with some reflections about the challenges of the AD process.

*Keywords:* audiovisual translation; audio description; *Future Beach*.

### 1. AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION AND OBSCENE LANGUAGE

The audiovisual translation is one area of Translation Studies defined by the researcher Jorge Díaz-Cintas as follows:

In its primary inception, AVT was used to encapsulate different translation practices used in audiovisual media- cinema, television, VHS- in which there is a transfer from a source to a target language. Dubbing and subtitling are the most popular in the profession and the best known by audiences, but there are some others such as voice over, partial dubbing, narration and interpreting. The translation of live performance was added to this taxonomy at a larger stage and this is how surtitling for the opera and the theatre has also come to be included. The change of language that takes place in all these cases has been a key factor when labeling these practices as translation (2005, 4).

Beyond the best known modalities mentioned by Díaz-Cintas, the Audiovisual Translation also covers some modalities that help the inclusion of people with disabilities in entertainment contexts, like the audio description and subtitling for deaf and hearing impaired. Normally, such modalities are composed of intralinguistic forms, i.e., the movies are in a set language (as Portuguese, for example) and the ADs are also made in this idiom. Our focus in this paper is only on the audio description.

According to Araújo e Franco the definition of AD is:

The audio description is the translation in words of the visual impressions of an object, whether a movie, work of art, a play, a dance show or sports event. The resource has the purpose of making these products accessible to people with visual impairment. The AD can be prerecorded or live. The prerecorded AD is

commonly used in movies, TV programs and works of art, while the live AD happens in events and the theatre (2011, 17 [Our translation]).

The theme involving obscenities and erotic expressions in audio description scripts is still considered unusual, almost exclusive, in Audiovisual Translation literature, although there are some works about subtitling translation related to profanity and obscenities.

Some Brazilian authors that have already done researches about translation and subtitling of bad language and obscenities are Cláudia Zavaglia, Vivian Orsi and Thais Collet.

In her article “A tradução de palavras constantes das legendas do filme americano *Gran Torino*” (*The translation of bad language that appears in the subtitling of the American movie Gran Torino*), the Brazilian author Thais Collet (2011) presents her research over a comparison between the original and its translation, of a scene taken from the movie *Gran Torino* (2008) directed by Clint Eastwood. In the analyzed scene in Collet’s research, out of 26 uses of bad language, two were translated for equivalents, 16 by more neutral words and 8 were completely omitted. Such results show that, in general, there is a tendency to minimize the content of bad language during the translation process. This attitude is not adopted by the simple choice of the translator, but usually follows guidelines provided by the corporations who hired the translators which, on their part, represent the distributors of foreign movies in Brazil.

The translation shown in the subtitling reflects the shame of the public that watches such movies. As the subtitling is a written representation of a speech, there is the tendency on this transition to formalize some vulgar expressions that are spoken on a given speech.

Orsi and Zavaglia (2007) show in the article “Léxico erótico-obsceno em italiano e português: algumas considerações” (*Erotic-obscene lexicon in Italian and Portuguese: some remarks*) the lexicographic research they have done over 80 entries of an Italian-Portuguese/Portuguese-Italian bilingual vocabulary proposal in the erotic-obscene context.

According to the Brazilian researchers:

The examination of erotic language covers areas over which the silence has been preferred – although they are extremely popular and current – such as, the ones related to obscene words/bad language, blasphemies, slang and malicious speech (2007, 39 [Our translation]).

We will check in the next section that, in the erotic scenes of the film analyzed by us, silence was not the option for its audio describers. Their choices proved that the blind audience must have the right to understand each and every movement of the characters.

## 2. AUDIO DESCRIPTION: CONCEPTS AND USES IN CINEMATIC CONTEXT

As we mentioned before, the audio description is one modality of AVT. Their definitions are always conceived inside the translation vision as an authorial process. It is considered as a resource that allows a person with visual impairment to have access to a live or recorded audio description of verbal elements presented in several formats and situations; video, photography, enactments, static scenes or in movement, sculpture, routine events (marriages, births, sports competitions, etc.), and several other artistic and entertainment products

According to Brazilian researcher and audio describer Lívia Motta:

The audio description is an activity of linguistic mediation, a modality of intersemiotic translation, which transforms the visual in verbal, opening larger possibilities to access the culture and information, contributing to cultural, social and school inclusion. Beyond people with visual impairment, the audio description enlarges also, the understanding of people with mental impairment, elderly and dyslexics.<sup>1</sup>

According to our conception and experience since 2012, the range of situations and products that allow AD insertions is so vast as the quantity of verbal signs in existence, that is, any and every verbal sign may be audio described.

In the context of research of audiovisual products, such as material made available on video, movies, TV series, music videos, etc., we assumed as theoretical support, the definitions of German audio writer Bernd Benecke.

To make an AD insertion on audiovisual products, it is necessary to analyze its scenes, plot and to choose precisely on what intervals the AD will be inserted according to prioritization criteria of some elements over others.

Benecke (2004) as much as other researchers from the audio description area, holds that the process of script development of AD must always be done by teams, with a consultant that is visually impaired, in such a way, that meets the needs of the target audience. He mentions some steps of this process: a) the choice of suitable television programs (some have very fast dialogues, which increase the difficulty to insert audio description; b) elaborations of a provisional script; c) adjustment of the audio level of the program.

Still according to Benecke (2004) conceptions, when we make audio description scripts, there is a need to place ourselves in the perspective of people with visual impairment to better adapt the script.

One crucial step in the AD process is the use of words, a step not always executed by the same person who wrote the script.

Benecke (2004) holds that the use of words should be as discreet as possible, to highlight the original words and not the content described on the audio. SNYDER (2008) proposes that the relevancy of the tone of the descriptor/speaker must be according to what is being described, helping thus the spectator to be able to understand the dramatic charge of the material.

We consider that even when the audio description is presented without any value judgment in its presentation, the correct tone must be used in line with every subject matter.

### 3. CASE STUDY: AUDIO DESCRIPTION OF SEXY AND EROTIC SCENES FROM THE MOVIE FUTURE BEACH

From Aquaman to Speed Racer:

There are two types of fear and courage, Speed:

Mine is that of the one who pretends nothing is dangerous.

Yours is that of someone who knows that everything is dangerous in this huge ocean (Donato – Aquaman. *Future Beach*, 01h38min.).

We will present now two analyses of ADs from scenes of Brazilian film *Future Beach*, directed by Karim Aizmouz, 2014.

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1. See <http://www.vercompalavras.com.br/defnicoes>

The choice of these two examples was due to the quality of their description, words used in the AD and also because they have been able to present to people with visual impairment, details that are extremely relevant in sexual scenes.

The story presented in *Future Beach* focuses on the relationship of three men: Donato (Wagner Moura) which works as lifeguard in Fortaleza, his youngest brother, Ayrton (Jesuita Barbosa) which has a big admiration for his brother due to the courage shown while throws himself into the sea to save unknown people, and Konrad (Clemens Schick) a blue eyed German that changes Donato's life completely after being saved by him on *Future Beach*. More than ten years later, Ayrton, with the desire to reconnect with his brother, goes after him in the cold Berlin.

The film is divided into three parts: "The Drowned Man's Embrace", "A Hero Cut in Half" and "The German Speaking Ghost".

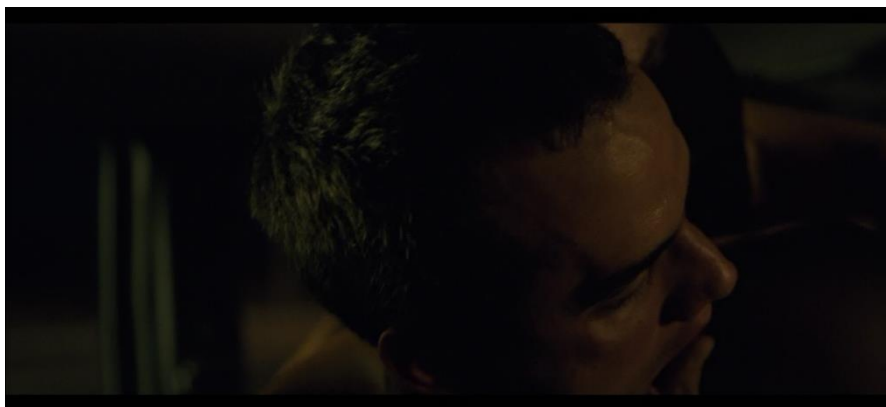
It was released in 2014 and its audio description was produced by a company specialized in audio-visual accessibility named *Mais Diferenças* (More Differences). It is noteworthy that at the time of release of *Future Beach* in São Paulo capital, there were accessible sessions with Brazilian sign languages (LIBRAS), audio description and subtitling for deaf and hearing impaired in theaters located at Espaço Cultural Itaú Frei Caneca. The users could access the resources through Whatscine app.

In an interview published on *Mais Diferenças* website, the audio describer of *Future Beach*, Ana Rosa Bardin Rabello, commented that "Translate such wealth of details was a great challenge but it was also very satisfying for us"<sup>2</sup>.

It is also important to mention that Brazilian movie theatres rarely present resources for people with disabilities. So movie sessions with audio description, subtitles for deaf and impaired hearing people and Brazilian sign language (LIBRAS) available are considered a unique opportunity for people with visual and hearing disabilities.

The scene presented below is from the first part of the movie *The Drowned Man's Embrace*. After trying to save a man in *Future Beach*, Donato is in charge of informing the 'German' about the fatality. Konrad had an affective relationship with the victim who drowned. When leaving the hospital, Donato offers a ride to the German. He accepts and they end up having sex in Donato's car, by the roadside.

Here are the images and the scene AD.



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2. <http://www.maisdiferencas.org.br/site/noticias/?id=101>



Scene – Donato and the German in the car.  
12'18s-12'56s

IN THE CAR, THEY HAVE SEX IN A NEARLY VIOLENT WAY.  
THE GERMAN IS OVER DONATO.  
WITH STRENGTH, THE GERMAN'S ARMS REST ON THE LOVER'S BODY AND WITH ONE HAND HE TRIES TO REACH HIS FACE.  
DONATO SHOWS SATISFACTION AND FATIGUE.

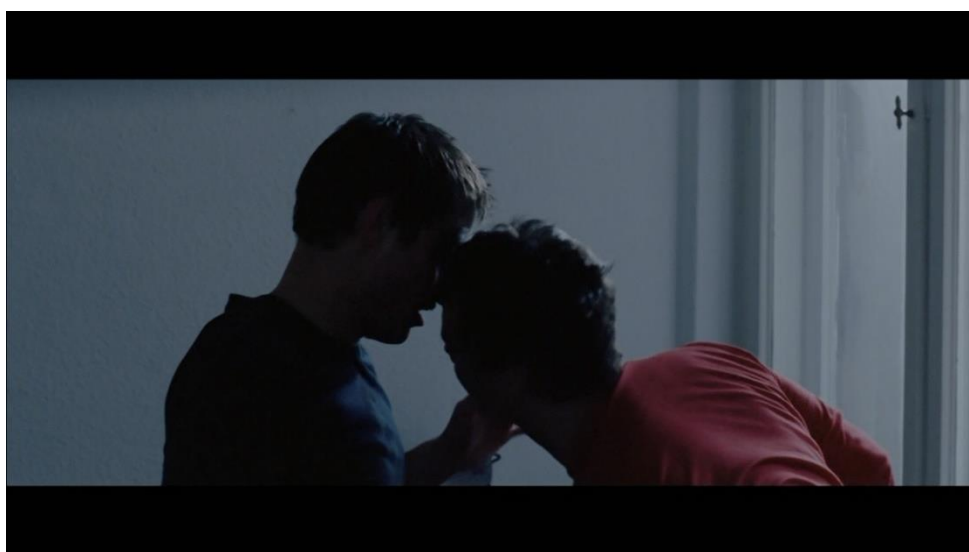
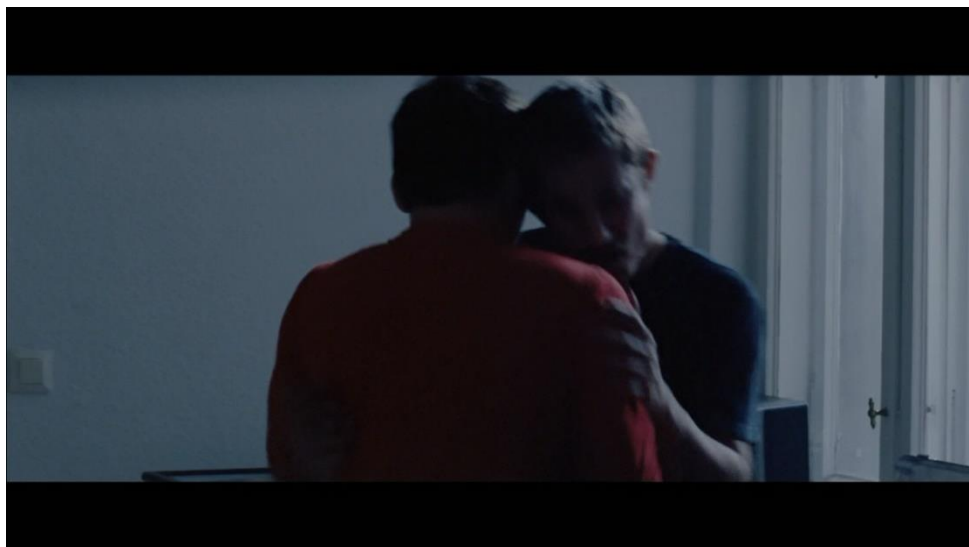
We can see that the AD writer shows his interpretation of the scene, which is very intense, because it happens a few hours after a tragic death involving the two characters. The part “they have sex in a nearly violent way” brings a necessary interpretation for the person visually impaired, which otherwise could not understand the fact that there was intimacy and affection in the sexual relationship between the two characters. The choice of the verb “transar” (have sex) is very relevant, because it does not hide what the scene really shows.

In this same AD sequence, we find the expressions “nearly violent way” and “Donato shows satisfaction and fatigue”. Only with this audio description it becomes clear that the sexual relationship between the two characters was pleasurable, but brute.

Such description becomes even more representative when we compare it with the next erotic scene between Donato and Konrad.

The scene takes place in the second part of the film, “A hero cut in half” (Um herói cortado ao meio). The two men live together in Berlin in an apartment. They are lovers and they are listening the French song Aline (Daniel Georges Jacques Bevilacqua/Christophe, 1965). Differently from what happens in the car scene, there is a seduction game that is extremely visual, using role-playing, dances and gestures made by the couple.

We will present three images from the scenes and the audio description of the segment.





Scene in the apartment 35:16-38:14 min.

IN THE HOUSE, ON THE WALL, AT THE LEVEL OF THE GERMAN'S HEAD, A FRAME WITH A GIRL FACE THAT, WITH HIM STANDING IN FRONT OF IT, GIVES THE IMPRESSION THAT HIS FACE IS FRAMED.  
HE DANCES.  
RAISES HIS ARMS, SENSUALIZES.  
DRAMATIZES.  
IN THE FRAME, THE GIRL SMILES.  
HE WADDLES GENTLY.  
HE BEGINS TO TAKE OFF HIS COAT, DONATO APPROACHES, TAKING OFF HIS COAT TOO.  
THE LEATHER COATS HIT THE GROUND.  
36:35 – THEY LOOK EACH OTHER WITH DESIRE.  
DONATO WEARS A RED TEE WITH LONG SLEEVES. HE PICKS UP THE FRAME ON THE WALL AND PLACES OVER HIS FACE.  
FACING EACH OTHER.  
THEY SEDUCE ONE ANOTHER AND EMBRACE.  
FOREHEAD WITH FOREHEAD, LIPS ALMOST TOUCHING.  
THEY DANCE WITH THEIR ARMS TOUCHING THE AIR.  
NAKED BREASTS, KISSING.  
DONATO PUSHES THE GERMAN.  
HE LOWERS HIS PANTS, DONATO APPROACHES.  
WITH THEIR PANTS LOWERED, THE GERMAN GRABS DONATO'S BOTTOM, THEY HOLD ONE ANOTHER WITH VIGOR AND INTENSITY.

In the script the word “seduce” appears twice and other verbs, such as “dance”, “dramatize”, “embrace” and “kiss” also help to describe the intimacy of the couple. As these changes happened during the storyline of the movie (from “The Drowned Man's Embrace” to “A Hero Cut in Half”), the audio description scripts must also reflect these changes. Only with a rich amount of details it is possible for

a person with visual impairment to notice the transition from violence to seduction in the two sex scenes.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

According to movie producer Lara Pozzobon Costa (2013, 2),

As a translation between different signs, audio description inserts itself in a broad context, which presupposes the relevant characteristics of the translation process, and, particularly, the elements that belong to audiovisual and, specially, the temporal element of translation.

In the article mentioned above and in the examples we showed in this paper, audio description is thought as a resource for moving images, in which “duration is a fundamental element to define the possibilities and the limits of this form of translation” (*ibid.*).

In the movie *Future Beach*, the duration of the scenes determines the emotions of each character. Time, in the same way it separates the two brothers, unites two lovers. In this way, the AD has to present to the visually impaired spectator the same sensations that someone that can see experiences while watching the scenes, which have brutality, sensuality and, above all, emotions.

Pozzobon Costa (2013) alerts in her work that the audio description norms and regulations must be permanently revitalized and reevaluated in each case. In the examples presented in this article there is no way for the audio describer to be “objective”, which is a norm widely spread in audiovisual courses and trainings.

The rawness and the sensuality of erotic scenes demand an authorial audio description (translation), open and subjective.

Considering audio description in the perspective of translation as an authorial process we agree with Arrojo (1994) when she states that:

While tradition has generally viewed translation as a transparent, impersonal activity which is expected to recover — and to be blindly faithful to — the supposedly stable meanings of an author, contemporary, postmodern theories of language are beginning to recognize the inevitable echoes of the translator’s voice in the translated text.

We can conclude that *Future Beach*’s audio description is full of subjectivity and the audio describer’s voice is literally noticed even in some scenes where there are landscapes, like in the very beginning of the movie, the interpretation of this scenario represents the personal choices of the professional of audio description.

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