

AUDIO DESCRIPTION, DIALOGISM AND EXOTOPIA IN THE THEATRE

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- **ABSTRACT:** This study analyzes how the audio description - intersemiotic translation modality - and the sensorial visit can constitute a framework to access the theatrical art to spectators with visual impairment. The research, of qualitative character and grounded under the assumptions of action-research (MONCEAU, 2005), reports the stages of a living experience in the state of Espírito Santo to enable this audience the aesthetic enjoyment of a theatrical show through the remaining senses (KOEHLER, 2017). It develops discussions on cultural accessibility (SARRAF, 2018), Dialogism and exotopia (BAKHTIN, 1997, 2002), and anchors the understanding about the blind person's perception based on analyses of the PhD. in Communication and Semiotics Joana Belarmino (2009). It concludes that the process of planning and executing the audio description and the sensorial tour in a live artistic event demands methodological rigor, exotopic and dialogic, with responsive and multilateral attitudes, to the detriment of improvisation and solitary making. And that the perception of the world, for people with visual impairment, proposes permanent action involving the body, space and events, consisting of an aesthetic activity.¹

- **KEYWORDS:** audio description; cultural accessibility; dialogism; exotopia; art.

Introduction

“What do you notice when you don't see”? The question entitled the article of the teacher and doctor in Communication in Semiotics, Joana Belarmino (BELARMINO, 2009), in response to the theme of visual disability treated in the Colloquium “See and Not See”, comes, as the author clarifies, from his particular niche as blind person.

Belarmino's (2009, p. 180) research innovates by the conceptions she herself develops about the terms “mystery”, “interval” and “shadow zone”. According to her,

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these expressions “lead to the place of emotion, affection, poetics and aesthetics, memory and remembrance”, adding that “what impresses us most, what fascinates us most, what instigates us most, are things, phenomena, everything that we cannot see” (BELARMINO, 2009, p. 181). Belarmino goes on to explain that

Interestingly, the unveiling of the world seems to challenge us with mystery, the gap between what is known and the unknown, a shadow zone where there is always a residue to be communicated, interpreted, explained. A zone of “non sight” that animates and boosts our experience of knowing, understanding, interpreting, touching² (BELARMINO, 2009, p. 181).

And it is in this argumentative path that the semiotician approaches the way of perceiving the blind person, theorizing that culture, different from common sense and science itself, conceiving blindness “as a mystery, a shadow zone, a hiatus, an interval, a situation of incommunication” (BELARMINO, 2009, p. 181). On the other hand, for her:

Science has tried to establish theories that expropriate the subject girded by the condition of blindness of qualities such as imagination, the formulation of images, an adequate perception of the world. Science, art, religion, throughout our cultural traditions, have plunged this subject girded by the condition of blindness into a permanent “night of darkness”, in a place of shadow, silence and mystery (BELARMINO, 2009, p. 191).³

According to Bellarmino, congenital blindness “depends crucially on what semiotics call the embodiment systems of things in text” (BELARMINO, 2009, p. 184), clarifying that these systems, for her, are literature, art and communication.

After this prelude, we propose in the following lines the analysis of an experience of aesthetic enjoyment in the space/time of the theater for which linguistic mechanisms of Italian translations were thought, through audio description (AD) and sensory, via the remaining senses, with the aim of leading a group of forty visually impaired people to attend a play and to perform responsive acts from their own material emotional-volitional orientations (BAKHTIN, 1997).

According to Schütz-Foerste (2004, p.15), the reading of images presupposes a learning process and “the aesthetic-visual literacy of the citizen is today a necessity”,

² Original: “Curiosamente, o desvelamento do mundo parece nos desafiar com o mistério, com o intervalo entre o conhecido e o não conhecido, uma zona de sombra onde fica sempre um resíduo a ser comunicado, interpretado, explicado. Uma zona de “não vidência” que anima e impulsiona a nossa experiência de conhecer, compreender, interpretar, tocar” (BELARMINO, 2009, p. 181).

³ Original: “A ciência cuidou de estabelecer teorias que desapropriavam o sujeito cingido pela condição da cegueira de qualidades como a imaginação, a formulação de imagens, uma percepção adequada de mundo. A ciência, a arte, a religião, ao longo das nossas tradições culturais, mergulharam este sujeito cingido pela condição da cegueira em uma permanente “noite de trevas”, em um lugar de sombra, de silêncio e de mistério” (BELARMINO, 2009, p. 191).

because “contemporary mankind is challenged to read visual messages in a world predominantly permeated by media and images”. When it comes to the theater, this image reading involves the dive into the hybridity of scenic languages in the work visual composition. Since it is a process that involves learning, it can also be considered educational. According to Brandão (2007), in his book *O que é Educação*, it is necessary to correct the narrow view that education is confused with schooling and is found only in what is “formal”, “official”, “programmed”, “technical”, “technocratic”. It must first be “a human adventure” (BRANDÃO, 2007, p. 100).

After this prelude, the following paragraphs present the methodological course of the research, the theoretical ground and the analysis of the results of the experience of accessing a play to people with visual impairment, exploring the possibilities of audio description (AD) and sensory tour.

The research context and the methodological path

This study was materialized from the assumptions of the qualitative research of exploratory approach and also inspired in precepts of action-research. According to Monceau (2005, p. 469), action-research:

[...] constitutes and sets in motion the working device through which the researcher(s) and the others who, according to the case and the theoretical framework, we call practical, partners, subject actors [...]. From part of the action-research, the collaboration arises around a problem for whose ‘treatment’ is summoned by an interested researcher. The common aim is to produce new knowledge and [...] useful tools for the practical.⁴

In this sense, the researchers of this study did not only work in the exploratory phase of the research, but emerged in the problem situation and, in partnership with the participants of the study (people with visual impairment), carried out interventions that produced changes in the reality initially identified (in this case, the lack of experience of the subjects in accessible cultural events). Throughout and at the end of the process, knowledge was produced, according to the results reported in this text.

During the research, there was dialogue with people with visual impairment; an interlocution that, under the Bakhtinian perspective (BAKHTIN, 1997), consists in the space in which the exchange takes place between the subjects who, with and through language, build knowledge, problematize beliefs, desires and constitute subjects.

⁴ Original: “[...] se constitui e se põe em movimento o dispositivo de trabalho por meio do qual colaboram o(s) pesquisador(es) e os demais que, conforme o caso e o quadro teórico, chamamos de práticos, parceiros, atores sujeitos [...]. De parte da pesquisa-ação, a colaboração se coloca de saída em torno de um problema para cujo ‘tratamento’ se convoca um pesquisador interessado. O fim comum é a produção de conhecimentos novos e [...] instrumentos úteis para os práticos” (MONCEAU, 2005, p. 469).

Therefore, the discourses produced in this study are the result of interaction with other statements, with voices linked to different discursive domains, to theoretical perspectives that intersect and produce other ways of treating knowledge.

The process of accessing a play surpassed what was initially intended, which consisted in the production and narration of a script by AD, since this cultural event imposed other interlocutory, problematizing and persuasive attitudes, because it was an audience stranger to attending the theater due to several inaccessibility issues: communicational, attitudinal, financial, geographical, among others. Therefore, it was necessary to strain with these people cultural issues (such as lack of habit and experience with the theatrical genre), geographical (these people lived in different municipalities, such as Vitória, Vila Velha, Serra, Cariacica, Colatina and Linhares and did not have means of transportation or companies to travel with practicality on a Sunday afternoon) and religious (due to the sensual appeal of some scenes of the show posted on the internet, there were religious impasses as to whether or not to watch the play) for them to be interested in participating in the event. Finally, the curiosity to attend a theater show disclosed as accessible, with audio description delivered by radio equipment, sharpened the interest of this group and mitigated some pre-existing fears.

The accessible session of the comedy drama *Ensaio Geral*, directed by actors and actresses of the Grupo Teatral Amacaca and directed by the Uruguayan Hugo Rodas, took place on July 24, 2016, at the Centro Cultural Sesc Glória, in Vitória, ES. The play, open to the general public, was attended by 40 people with visual impairment, and other viewers. The show explored the facets of love with musicality and monologues spoken freely from texts adapted from authors such as Charles Chaplin, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Hilda Hilst and Caio Fernando Abreu. While starring in love, the actors used body theater to seduce and delight the audience, with touches of eroticism and humor, during the 60 minutes of duration.⁵

At the end of the show, the participants voluntarily granted interviews and testimonials, recorded and transcribed with consent, in order to contribute to this study.

Cultural accessibility, translation and audio description

To talk about theatre implies talking about culture. This, in a broad sense, needs to be understood beyond conceptual questions, because it is in constant dialogical relationship with preexisting cultural realities and with historical materiality. According to Bakhtin (2002), in *Questions of literature and aesthetics*, culture is situated on the borders between semiotic communities and between spheres, in human contact and processes, in social changes, in constant transformation, and reflects and refracts man from acts of language: thus, it has no limits, since it also has a previous territory.

⁵ Available at: <https://www.gazetaonline.com.br/entertainment/cultura/2016/07/-ensaio-geral--tem-como-tema-principal-o-amor-1013959483.html>. Accessed: 10 Jul. 2019.

It is only in this concrete systematic feature, that is to say, its immediate linkage and its orientation in relation to the unit of culture, that this phenomenon stops being an existing and plain fact, that it acquires a significance, a meaning, that it becomes like a monad reflecting everything in it, and reflecting itself in everything (BAKHTIN, 2002, p. 29).⁶

In this direction, the theater, as a reflector and refractor of man from his acts of language, consists of an immaterial cultural good and a component of the intellectual patrimony of humanity to which all should have access, what does not always happen between visually impaired people. Before the visual appeal that this art establishes on the viewer, it is necessary interventions for this audience access and enjoy the scenes, costumes and scenarios that make up the work.

Sarrafi, in dialogue with other authors, conceptualizes the term cultural accessibility as “a set of adjustments, measures and attitudes that aim to provide well-being, reception and access to cultural enjoyment for people with disabilities benefiting diverse audiences” (LOURENÇO *et al.*, 2014, p. 93 *apud* SARRAF, 2018, p. 27).

It should be noted that, among the goals foreseen in the National Cultural plan, established in 2010, the goal 29 is the only one focused on the issue of accessibility. According to the text, Brazil must present, by 2020: “100% of public libraries, museums, cinemas, theatres, public archives and cultural centers meeting legal accessibility requirements and developing actions to promote cultural enjoyment by people with disabilities”.⁷

Regarding accessibility to people with visual disabilities, the public notices deal mainly with the resource of audio description (AD). According to Motta and Romeu Filho (2010, p.7), AD consists of “an activity of linguistic mediation, a modality of intersemiotic translation, which transforms the visual into verbal, opening greater possibilities of access to culture and information, contributing to cultural, social and school inclusion”.

In the linguistic field, the AD is inserted in Translation Studies from the foundations of Jakobson (1995), which defends the existence of three types of translation: intralinguistics or reformulation (in which the starting text and the arrival text are in the same language, but in a different way) the language in the middle written in the same language; interlinguistic or translation itself (in which starting text and arrival text are in different languages); intersemiotic or transmutation (in which starting text and arrival text are represented by different semiotic means, one verbal and the other nonverbal, as occurs in the adaptations of novels to the cinema). Under this

⁶ Original: “*É somente nessa sua sistematização concreta, ou seja, no relacionamento e na orientação direta para a unidade de cultura que o fenômeno deixa de ser um mero fato, simplesmente existente, adquire significação, sentido, transforma-se como que numa mônada que reflete tudo em si e que está refletida em tudo* (BAKHTIN, 2002, p. 29).

⁷ Accessed on: <http://pnc.cultura.gov.br/category/metas/29/>. Access on: 25 Sept. 2019.

understanding, AD is audiovisual translation (TAV) intersemiotic type, as defended by Mascarenhas (2012, p.23):

[...] from a revision of the taxonomy proposed by Jakobson [...] for the concept of translation, including visual and acoustic dimensions, we verify that both the subtitling for deaf and deafened (LSE), and the audio description (AD) may be regarded as traditional practices. The first by its intralingual nature [...] - an interpretation of oral verbal codes by means of verbal codes written in the same language - while the second by its intersemiotic essence - in this case, an interpretation of visual codes by means of oral verbal codes⁸.

Regarding AD in the theater, Motta clarifies that

In plays, dance shows, circus, operas, concerts, musicals and others, the audio description is always done live, using the same simultaneous translation equipment, headphones and receivers. The sound information is transmitted by the audio descriptors from inside an acoustic booth, with a previously prepared script, study on the theme and terminology, preferably inserted between the characters' speeches or pauses of the show. In films and other audiovisual products, the audio description can be recorded in studio, mixed and inserted in the original track, respecting the lines of characters or narrators, avoiding overlap (MOTTA, 2015, p. 3).⁹

It should be clarified that the audio description script produced for the theater is recognized, in this study, as a concrete statement pervaded by extralinguistic influences and whose composition, style and discursive project are not sustained outside their production spheres, circulation and reception. Under this understanding, the image reading elaborated from a dialogic perspective should insert in its analysis the “[...]”

⁸ Original: “[...] a partir de uma revisão da taxonomia proposta por Jakobson [...] para o conceito de tradução, incluindo a ela dimensões visuais e acústicas, verificamos que tanto a legendagem para surdos e ensurdecidos (LSE), quanto a audiodescrição (AD) podem ser consideradas práticas tradutórias. A primeira por sua natureza intralingual [...] – uma interpretação de códigos verbais orais por meio de códigos verbais escritos na mesma língua – ao passo que a segunda por sua essência intersemiótica – no caso, uma interpretação de códigos visuais por meio de códigos verbais orais” (MASCARENHAS, 2012, p. 23).

⁹ Original: “Em peças teatrais, espetáculos de dança, circo, óperas, shows, musicais e outros, a audiodescrição é sempre feita ao vivo, usando para isso os mesmos equipamentos de tradução simultânea, fones de ouvido e receptores. A informação sonora é transmitida pelos audiodescritores de dentro de uma cabine acústica, com um roteiro previamente preparado, estudo sobre o tema e terminologia, inserida preferencialmente entre as falas dos personagens ou pausas do espetáculo. Em filmes e outros produtos audiovisuais, a audiodescrição poderá ser gravada em estúdio, mixada e inserida na trilha original, respeitando as falas de personagens ou narradores, evitando a sobreposição” (MOTTA, 2015, p. 3).

context that motivates it and the relations that it establishes with the socially agitated discourses at that time”¹⁰ (BRAIT; MELO, 2012, p. 75).

The task of the translator who acts with audio description, however, cannot be performed alone, under the risk that, when preparing a script parallel to the work, forges undesirable closures to the heroes, the work itself and the understanding that is made of it. Making a Bakhtinian analogy to the figures of the author and the hero – audio describer (for intervening in the original script of the work by creating a parallel script with description of images) and characters of the play (belonging to the original script and the audio described script), respectively - we could problematize the very task of accessing culture by AD. In *Aesthetic Verbal Creation*, Bakhtin explains that

Indeed, the hero lives his life cognitively and ethically: he orients his actions within the open ethical event of his lived life or within the projected world of cognition. The author, on the other hand, orients the hero and the hero’s own cognitive-ethical orientation within a world of being that is in principle consummated, that is, within a world which derives its value, independently of the yet-to-be meaning of the event of a lived life, purely from the concrete manifoldness of its already existing makeup. If I am consummated and my life is consummated, I am no longer capable of living and acting. For in order to live and act, I need to be unconsummated, I need to be open for myself—at least in all the essential moments constituting my life; I have to be, for myself, someone who is axiologically yet-to-be, someone who does not coincide with his already existing makeup. The hero’s consciousness, his feeling, and his desire of the world (his object-directed emotional and volitional attitude or posture) are enclosed on all sides, as if within a band, by the author’s consummating consciousness of the hero and his world; the hero’s self-utterances are encompassed and permeated by the utterances of the author about the hero. The hero’s vital (cognitive-ethical) interestedness in the event of his own lived life is encompassed by the author’s artistic interestedness in the hero and his life (BAKHTIN, 2002, p. 33).¹¹

¹⁰ Original: “[...] contexto que o motiva e as relações que ele estabelece com os discursos socialmente movimentados naquele momento” (BRAIT; MELO, 2012, p. 75).

¹¹ Original: “Com efeito, o herói leva uma vida cognitiva e ética, seus atos se orientam no acontecimento ético aberto da vida ou no mundo pré-dado da cognição; o autor dirige o herói e sua orientação ético-cognitiva no mundo da existência que é por princípio acabado e que tira seu valor, sem levar em conta o sentido por-*vir* do acontecimento, da própria diversidade de sua atualidade concreta. Se eu mesmo sou um ser acabado e se o acontecimento é algo acabado, não posso nem viver nem agir: para viver, devo estar inacabado, aberto para mim mesmo — pelo menos no que constitui o essencial da minha vida —, devo ser para mim mesmo um valor ainda por-*vir*; devo não coincidir com a minha própria atualidade. A consciência do herói, seu sentimento e seu desejo do mundo — sua orientação emotivo-volitiva material —, é cercada de todos os lados, presa como em um círculo, pela consciência que o autor tem do herói e do seu mundo cujo acabamento ela assegura; o discurso do herói sobre si mesmo é impregnado do discurso do autor sobre o herói; o interesse (éticocognitivo) que o acontecimento apresenta para a vida do herói é englobado pelo interesse que ele apresenta para a atividade artística do autor” (BAKHTIN, 2002, p. 33).

And this finish of the hero, according to the Russian author, can also provoke his passivity, “just as the part is passive in relation to the whole that encompasses it and ensures its finishing”¹² (BAKHTIN, 2002, p. 34). In this sense, the audio describer, personal in author of an audio describe script, transits in the fine line between translate images (selected by him from a set) and interpret them, enclosing in the audio described work a finish that can go against the proposal of aesthetic enjoyment from the hero’s world desire in his emotional-volitional material orientation. Thus, the traditional choices of the audio describer, while making the work partially accessible to a specific audience, can also intervene in the original work in such a way as to induce interpretations that inhibit the beauty of the unfinished provided beyond a script, but from the different scenic languages.

In this bias, AD’s script, consisting of multiple voices, from the Bakhtinian perspective, chooses one in particular for its construction, which in this case comes from the figure of the audio description consultant. Felipe Leão Mianes and Baierle (2012) explains that

The consultant in AD is the person with visual impairment - blind or with low vision - who must necessarily be present in any AD production team, acting together with other professionals in all stages of work, from the design of the project to the completion of the final product.¹³

On the importance of this meeting of looks, Bakhtin (1997) explains that the acts of contemplation of the other, arising from what he calls surplus *of internal and external vision of the other*, are properly aesthetic acts. He continues:

But in order that this bud should really unfold into the blossom of consummating form, the excess of my seeing must “fill in” the horizon of the other human being who is being contemplated, must render his horizon complete, without at the same time forfeiting his distinctiveness. I must empathize or project myself into this other human being, see his world axiologically from within him as *he* sees this world; I must put myself in his place and then, after returning to my own place, “fill in” his horizon through that excess of seeing which opens out from this, my own, place outside him. I must enframe him, create a consummating

¹² Original: “*assim como a parte é passiva em relação ao todo que a engloba e lhe assegura o acabamento*” (BAKHTIN, 2002, p. 34).

¹³ Original: “*O consultor em AD é a pessoa com deficiência visual – cega ou com baixa visão – que necessariamente deve estar presente em qualquer equipe de produção de AD, atuando junto com os demais profissionais em todas as etapas de trabalho, desde a concepção do projeto até a realização do produto final*” (MIANES; BAIERLE, 2012).

environment for him out of this excess of my own seeing, knowing, desiring, and feeling (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 45).¹⁴

According to the author, the encounter with what he calls *the pain of the other* can lead to an ethical act of “help, comfort and cognitive speculation” (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 46). But it is precisely the return to ourselves, after this identification with the other, that enables us to think about the elements collected in the ethical, cognitive or aesthetic planes. If there is no return, the encounter is meaningless. For the philosopher, the reaction that the other provokes cannot be of pain, but of “comfort and assistance”¹⁵ (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 46). And then, “the aesthetic activity itself begins precisely when we are back to ourselves, when we are in our own place, outside the person who suffers, when we give shape and finish to the material collected by our identification with the other [...]”¹⁶ (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 46). Therefore, the attitude of the other becomes “a purely plastic value, an expression that embodies and ends the pain expressed, and an emotive-volitional tone that is no longer that of pain; the blue sky that frames it has become a pictorial component that brings solution to the pain”¹⁷ (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 46).

It is therefore the consultant of AD, as professional and person with visual impairment, the other indispensable to the construction of audio described scripts, since it is from this meeting between audio describer and person with disabilities that the former collects elements to return to himself, inhabited by the other, and give plasticity and frame to the script.

In other words, the very construction of an audio described text is an aesthetic activity when performed through the encounter with the other, through the echoing and hearing of other voices, which Bakhtin treats as a dialogical relationship:

The credit granted to the word of the other, the fervent welcome given to the sacred word (of authority), the initiation, the search for the deep sense, the concordance, with its infinite gradations and nuances (without restrictions of logical order or reticence of purely factual order), the stratification of a sense that overlaps with another sense, of a voice that overlaps the other voice, the strengthening by fusion

¹⁴ Original: “*Devo identificar-me com o outro e ver o mundo através de seu sistema de valores, tal como ele o vê; devo colocar-me em seu lugar, e depois, de volta ao meu lugar, completar seu horizonte com tudo o que se descobre do lugar que ocupo, fora dele; devo emoldurá-lo, criar-lhe um ambiente que o acabe, mediante o excedente de minha visão, de meu saber, de meu desejo e de meu sentimento*” (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 45).

¹⁵ Original: “*reconforto e de assistência*” (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 46).

¹⁶ Original: “*a atividade estética propriamente dita começa justamente quando estamos de volta a nós mesmos, quando estamos no nosso próprio lugar, fora da pessoa que sofre, quando damos forma e acabamento ao material recolhido mediante a nossa identificação com o outro [...]*” (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 46).

¹⁷ Original: “*um valor puramente plástico, uma expressão que encarna e acaba a dor expressa, e num tom emotivo-volitivo que já não é o da dor; o céu azul que o emoldura tornou-se um componente pictural que traz solução à dor*” (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 46).

(but not identification), the understanding that completes, that exceeds the limits of the thing understood, etc. These specific relations cannot be summed up in a purely logical relationship, or in a purely factual relationship. It is here that there are, in all their integrity, positions, people (the person does not need extensive revelation: he can manifest himself by a single sound, reveal himself by a single word), just voices (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 350).¹⁸

The construction of the audio described script, in this bias, calls for the presence, the look and the speech of the other: in this specific case, another one whose aesthetic experiences are conducted by the way of senses remaining to the biological sight. And this activity of language, as a socio-ideological construction of interacting subjects, inhabits the boundaries between the discourse of self and the discourse of another. About this, Bakhtin adds that:

The word of the tongue is a semi-alien word. It only becomes its own when the speaker populates it with his intention, with his accent, when he dominates it through speech, makes it familiar with its semantic and expressive orientation. Until it was appropriate, speech is not in a neutral and impersonal language (because it is not from the dictionary that it is taken by the speaker!), it is in the lips of others, in the contexts of others and at the service of the intentions of others: and it is there that it needs to be isolated and made its own (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 88).¹⁹

It should be considered that, although the study of the practices of the masters of the Russian theater of the twentieth century were not directly the focus of study of Bakhtin and of the Circle, the intellectual production on authorship and the relationship between time and space dialogues smoothly with theater, dance and body arts, contributing to the understanding of the functioning of the scenic episode (GONÇALVES; MCCAWE, 2019). Medviédev & Medviédev (2014 *apud* GONÇALVES; MCCAWE, 2019) argue that some authors of the Bakhtinian Circle

¹⁸ Original: “O crédito concedido à palavra do outro, a acolhida fervorosa dada à palavra sacra (de autoridade), a iniciação, a busca do sentido profundo, a concordância, com suas infinitas graduações e matizes (sem restrições de ordem lógica ou reticências de ordem puramente factual), a estratificação de um sentido que se sobrepõe a outro sentido, de uma voz que se sobrepõe a outra voz, o fortalecimento pela fusão (mas não a identificação), a compreensão que completa, que ultrapassa os limites da coisa compreendida, etc. Estas relações específicas não podem ser resumidas a uma relação puramente lógica, ou a uma relação puramente factual. É aqui que se encontram, em toda a sua integridade, posições, pessoas (a pessoa prescinde de revelação extensiva: pode manifestar-se por um único som, revelar-se por uma única palavra), justamente vozes” (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 350).

¹⁹ Original: “A palavra da língua é uma palavra semi-alheia. Ela só se torna própria quando o falante a povoa com a sua intenção, com seu acento, quando a domina através do discurso, torna-a familiar com a sua orientação semântica e expressiva. Até o momento em que foi apropriado, o discurso não se encontra em uma língua neutra e impessoal (pois não é do dicionário que ele é tomado pelo falante!), ele está nos lábios de outrem, nos contextos de outrem e a serviço das intenções de outrem: e é lá que é preciso que ele seja isolado e feito próprio” (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 88).

should appear alongside Constantin Stanislávky and Vsevolod Meyerhold, for the connections of their scientific work with the theater.³²⁰

Regarding the traditional choices of AD in the event in question, conducted between the audio describer and the consultant, two circumstances exemplify the uniqueness of this process: in a certain part of the script, the audio describer described that the characters were positioned as “statues” onstage. However, for the consultant, who from personal experiences as a blind person interprets the extralinguistic information *sui generis*, the word “statues” referred to the literal image of objects (sculptures) on stage, not alluding to a body posture. Then, after understanding the meaning that the audio describer intended to produce, the consultant suggested the replacement of the term “statues” by “inert”; later changed by the consultant to the adjective “immobile”, as she understood that the term would be more understood by visually impaired viewers. In another section of the script, for the same reasons, it was necessary to replace the word “penumbra” with “little light”.

In this phase of the preparation of the script, it was possible to notice that the use of some anaphoric resources of cohesion studied in textual linguistics, as the substitution of words for synonyms, Pronouns, heteronyms or hyponyms to retake information cited in the text and to avoid the repetition of words, do not apply efficiently in AD, since they can interfere in the production of meanings, causing ambiguities on the part of the user of the resource. For example, by replacing the word “boy” with “boy”, the consultant suggested that the use of fixed, even repetitive, nomenclatures, constructed from the characters’ physical characteristics - the play did not name them - would produce more sense for blind people and avoid distortions in understanding. As a result, fixed traditional choices were designated as: “the tall boy with black tights”, “the blonde with striped stockings”, “the woman with the red coat and hat on her head”, “the violinist”, “the woman with the short black dress”, among others.

As previously discussed, this dialogic construction does not subordinate the audio describer to the consultant but is performed exotopically in the dialogic encounter of one with the other and in the return of both, enriched by the existence and by the mutual point of view. As for the exotopia and the dialogic encounter, Bakhtin (1997) explains that:

In culture, exotopia is the most powerful instrument of understanding.
The culture of others is only revealed in its completeness and depth in

²⁰ The August 5, 2019 issue of the magazine *Bakhtiniana: Revista de Estudos do Discurso* gathers a sequence of texts that focus on the subject still little explored by both language studies and theatrical studies: Bakhtin and the Performing Arts. The opening editorial builds on the relationship between theatrical art and the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, Valentin Volóchinov and Pável Nikolaievitch Medviédev, scholars of the Bakhtinian Circle. The text also highlights the studies of the Laboratory of Studies in Performative Education, Language and Theatricality (Elite/UFPR/Cnpq), which investigates speeches and scenic practices from the Dialogic Discourse Analysis and punctuates discussions on this subject in the light of Bakhtinian works. According to Gonçalves and McCaw (2019), this subject has been highlighted in events of the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Letters and Linguistics (ANPOLL - GT Bakhtinian Studies), the Brazilian Association of Research and Post-graduation in Performing Arts (ABRACE - GT Pedagogia das Artes Cênicas) and the National Association of Postgraduate and Research in Education (ANPED - GT Education and Art).

the eyes of another culture (and it does not surrender in all its fullness, because other cultures will come who will see and understand even more). A sense reveals itself in its depth by finding and touching another sense, an alien sense; a dialogue that overcomes the closed and univocal character inherent in the sense and culture considered in isolation is established between them. We asked a culture of others new questions that they themselves did not ask themselves. We seek in it an answer to our questions, and the culture of others answers us, revealing to us its new aspects, its new depths of meaning [...] dialogical encounter of two cultures does not bring them fusion, confusion; each one of them preserves its own unity and its whole open, but enrich each other (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 368).²¹

It is in this sense that audio describer imposes ethically and aesthetically its collective construction to the detriment of solitary making. It presupposes cultural circularity among people whose ways of seeing the world (including from a biological point of view) are different.

So, in summary, and in a didactic attempt to enumerate the actions that made the piece accessible to visually impaired viewers, these were the stages:

- a) first, the audio describer watched the video of the piece, provided by the production of the show, and drew up a first script; at this stage, she recorded character and set characteristics, researched the musical instruments used in the staging and soundtrack, and catalogued the minutes and seconds of scenes in which there were no character lines, in order to elaborate objective descriptions that portrayed the episodes without superimposing the actors' lines;
- b) days later, the audio describer went to the event site to get to know the space, to define the equipment installation locations and also to detect emergency exits, toilet locations, number of chairs, among other details to be included in the preface notes that would be narrated minutes before the play;
- c) during one week, the scripts (of the proemic notes and the piece) were adjusted together with the consultant, when both watched the video;

²¹ Original: “Na cultura, a exotopia é o instrumento mais poderoso da compreensão. A cultura alheia só se revela em sua completude e em sua profundidade aos olhos de outra cultura (e não se entrega em toda a sua plenitude, pois virão outras culturas que verão e compreenderão ainda mais). Um sentido revela-se em sua profundidade ao encontrar e tocar outro sentido, um sentido alheio; estabelece-se entre eles como que um diálogo que supera o caráter fechado e unívoco, inerente ao sentido e à cultura considerada isoladamente. Formulamos a uma cultura alheia a novas perguntas que ela mesma não se formulava. Buscamos nela uma resposta a perguntas nossas, e a cultura alheia nos responde, revelando-nos seus aspectos novos, suas profundidades novas de sentido [...] encontro dialógico de duas culturas não lhes acarreta a fusão, a confusão; cada uma delas conserva sua própria unidade e sua totalidade aberta, mas se enriquecem mutuamente” (BAKHTIN, 1997, p. 368).

- d) in advance of the script, the audio descriptor attended the presentation of a session of the play, open to the general public, two days before the inclusive session; on that occasion, it was accompanied by another blind person, so that the AD would be validated by more than one person, thus making other roadmap changes.

It is worth mentioning that the session accessible for people with disabilities began even before the curtain opened, with the sensory tour to the stage. This episode and the receptibility of the participants to the theater with audio description are detailed in the following paragraphs.

Stepping on stage: sensory visit and audio description in accessible theatre

In addition to the AD, a sensory tour was scheduled by the audience to the stage of the theater minutes before the play, in order to explore the remaining senses, using the tactile-kinesthetic perception, the olfactory, the palatal, tactile and auditory to expand the possibilities of aesthetic enjoyment from knowing the scenario and the artists.

Bellarmino (2009) states that “traditional science has excluded or relegated to a lower plane the senses of smell and touch, enabling the eye and the ear as the priority senses in the inquiry of the world and in the production of knowledge about reality”²². And she complements by saying that the scientific-cultural movement “did not consider the premise of difference, of the singular, privileging a classificatory, homogenizing, standardizing rationality” (BELARMINO, 2009, p. 180). The author cites Restrepo (1998, p. 31 *apud* BELARMINO, 2009, p. 181), according to which:

Faced with a perception mediated by touch, taste or smell, the Western preferred the knowledge of exteroceptors, or receivers at a distance, as are the sight and the ear. Our culture is an audiovisual culture. Conditioning so certain that the Priests of the Church and St Thomas himself conceived heaven as a visual paradise where we would have for all eternity the beatific vision of God, excluding the possibility of a tactile heaven, a sense that they had also censured on earth. Just as our scientific culture relegated tactile and olfactory to lower places in the hierarchy of knowledge production, it also abdicated the difference in favor of homogeneity, normality, and standardization.²³

²² Original: “a ciência tradicional excluiu ou relegou a um plano inferior os sentidos do olfato e do tato, habilitando o olho e o ouvido como os sentidos prioritários na inquirição do mundo e na produção de conhecimento sobre a realidade” (BELARMINO, 2009, p. 180).

²³ Original: “Frente a uma percepção mediada pelo tato, gosto ou olfato, o Ocidente preferiu o conhecimento dos exteroceptores, ou receptores à distância, como são a vista e o ouvido. Nossa cultura é uma cultura audiovisual. Condicionante tão certo que os Padres da Igreja e o próprio Santo Tomás conceberam o céu como um paraíso visual onde teríamos por toda a eternidade a visão beatífica de Deus, excluindo a possibilidade de um céu táctil, sentido

Under that understanding, and in order to explore the remaining senses, it was opportunistic, thirty minutes before the show, for visually impaired participants to take the stage, touch the characters, understand the costumes, sat on the red sofa that composed the setting, smelled the odor and taste of the drink laid out on the table, played the musical instruments and transitioned through the floral curtains and graffiti drawings that composed the setting. This sensorial tour was assisted by all the artists of the piece, the director and the companions of the visually impaired subjects.

Sensory visitation is a practice that has been occurring at some cultural events planned to be accessible. Otherwise, the absence of sensitive experiences with art prevents the development of a culture of aesthetic appreciation of shows and artistic exhibitions by many people who, due to physical and sensory limitations, do not participate in these experiences without motivations and conditions to do so. When visual information is neglected by this public, it is denied historical documents, documentary sources, cultural productions from human work and from which infinite meanings for the knowledge of the world can be inferred. Besides that, the processes of production are also hidden as well as appropriation, preservation and use of images, with all the ideological elements that each one carries in itself, referring to time and space (CIAVATTA FRANCO, 2002).

After the sensorial tour, with the spectators, seated in red chairs facing the stage, carrying radio equipment, heard the proemic notes:

Welcome, everyone, to the Cultural Center [...]. It is a pleasure to have you with us in this fully thought-out session for you [...] who use your own ways to see, feel, hear, touch and be in the world. The audio description is offered so you can watch the show with accessibility. We remind you that the audio description consists in the translation into words of the important visual information so that people with visual or other disabilities have access to various events, shows, movies, meetings, exhibitions, among others, so that they can appreciate in more detail each event[...]. We are in Praça Costa Pereira, at the corner of Avenida Jerônimo Monteiro. The building, today called Centro Cultural Sesc Glória, was the headquarters of the Cinema Teatro Glória, inaugurated in January 1932, project of the German architect Ricardo Wright and belonging at the time to Santos & Cia. There are 4 floors and a panoramic terrace [...] The stage of the hall where you are is located in front of us. Right and left are the emergency exits. The bathrooms are outside the hall, next to the door we enter (Proemic notes. Fragment of audio description script. Welcome Excerpt).²⁴

que também haviam censurado na terra. Assim como a nossa cultura científica relegou o tátil e o olfativo, a lugares inferiores na hierarquia de produção de saber, do mesmo modo abdicou da diferença em favor da homogeneidade, da normalidade, da padronização” (RESTREPO, 1998, p. 31 *apud* BELARMINO, 2009, p. 181).

²⁴ Original: “*Sejam todos bem-vindos ao Centro Cultural [...]. É um prazer tê-los conosco nesta sessão totalmente pensada para vocês [...] que utilizam seus próprios caminhos para ver, sentir, ouvir, tocar e estar no mundo.*”

The concern to explain what the audio description consists of occurred because it is the first contact of some viewers with AD. It was also the first time that many of them entered the theater space, a historical and cultural heritage of the municipality. In addition, the proemic notes were in charge of instructing these people on the location of bathrooms and emergency exits, considering the importance of meeting their needs and ensuring the safety of all; further, to understand that the visual information of the theatrical physical space also integrated the proposed aesthetic activity. The color of the chairs, the curtains, the lighting, the physical dimensions and the number of people that space contained were described.

Throughout the play, the script was narrated (by the audio describer) in the Sections of the characters' lines, taking care not to overlap them, taking advantage of each interval of the artists' speech. When it comes to accessibility of dynamic images for people with visual disabilities, each silence can contain a multitude of information that make up the hybridity of the artistic languages listed to produce the piece. However, despite the zeal for fidelity to the text, some changes occurred at the last minute due to changes in the costumes of the artists or the setting itself in relation to the video version of the play. There was, for example, replacement of artists for the play (which required other physical descriptions), change in the number of characters in some scenes, among other changes.

Another characteristic of the live show is improvisation. At a certain musical moment of the play, the artists got off the stage dancing and went to the audience, touched some people and invited them to the platform. As a dance between artists and auditorium, the stage was entered by new performers who, despite the absence of vision, packed the scene with their dancing bodies in a painterly ball. In the middle of the soundtrack and turns of ladies and gentlemen, the submission of spectators gave place to the protagonists with laughter, touches and delight of the drinks. The hero seemed to enjoy his inaction, outside the circle and the submission drawn by the author, gaining his own life outside his frame. Meanwhile, the remaining senses of the public, since then incarnated with artists, emerged to the sound of the tuba of something clanging, the simple lyre, the horn and the whistle of the rattle, paraphrasing the poet of the stars, Olavo Bilac (BILAC, 1964).

This transit of the spectator through the stage allowed each character to leave marks: in the artistic work, in the heroes, in the author, in the director, in the audio describer, in the consultant and in all who participated in the feast. In this context, how can we not think of the heresy that is the restriction of access to images and cultural goods to any citizen?

A audiodescrição é oferecida para que vocês possam assistir ao espetáculo com acessibilidade. Lembramos que a audiodescrição consiste na tradução em palavras das informações visuais importantes para que pessoas com deficiência visual ou outras tenham acesso aos diversos eventos, espetáculos, filmes, reuniões, exposições, dentre outros, de forma que possam apreciar com mais detalhes cada acontecimento[...]. Estamos na Praça Costa Pereira, na esquina da avenida Jerônimo Monteiro. O prédio, hoje chamado de Centro Cultural Sesc Glória, foi sede do Cine Teatro Glória, inaugurado em janeiro de 1932, projeto do arquiteto alemão Ricardo Wright e pertencente na época à Santos & Cia. São 4 pavimentos e um terraço panorâmico [...] O palco do salão onde você está se situa à nossa frente. À direita e à esquerda temos as saídas de emergência. Os banheiros estão fora do salão, próximos à porta por onde entramos (Notas proêmias. Fragmento do roteiro de audiodescrição. Trecho de boas-vindas).

Benjamin, a German philosopher, once claimed that “there has never been a monument of culture other than a monument of barbarism. And just as culture is not free from barbarism, so it is not the process of the transmission of culture” (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 225). The barbarism of the exclusion of people with disabilities from the sharing of cultural goods is a historical evil that, like others, cannot be perpetuated. This exclusion, in a broad sense, persists in various moments and social spaces: in artistic events, cinemas, workplaces, tours, lectures and school. And, unfortunately, it is still simulated with improvised adaptations, without the methodological, exotopic and dialogic rigor necessary to minimize communication barriers and meet the needs of those who belong to this group. Therefore, it is urgent to think of cultural accessibility as a responsive attitude, in the Bakhtinian perspective, since it cannot emerge from unilateral actions, from those who see for those who do not see, but need to emerge from dialogical interactions, from reciprocal interrelationships, considering the other’s counteraction. Add to this the human corpulence able to see the world in so many ways and senses.

In this regard, spectators with visual impairment were stimulated in their remaining senses: hearing (with the speeches of the artists, music and audio description), touch (during the sensory visit and dance on stage), smell (when they smelled the drink spilled on an artist’s body) and taste (when they could try the drink offered by the characters). Moreover, this festival of kinesthesia led them to perceive the bodily movements on the platform, leaving a passive state of spectators to occupy a position of protagonists, that socially refers to the occupation of their places people with rights and that see the world by their own means and senses.

At the end of the show, some people reported their experience attending the event. For example, this 36-year-old blind participant:

For me, going to the play was fantastic because in other times, if I went to a play, I would never imagine through the speeches, the songs, that the scenes were those. I could never imagine. I was gonna get it into my head that they were dancing... something else, except for those scenes that were narrated to us. And I’m really glad I got the chance. It was like I was actually watching. Thank you so much for providing that. I’ve been to the theater before, but without audio description. At the time I was like this, right... with my imagination. I wondered, for example, when there was a song... that they were dancing or doing something, but I didn’t know what it was. So, it’s like you take parts of a book, loose pages from a book, and you read. Like having... a vague idea of what was the story, but without living the emotions completely (KOEHLER, 2017, p. 142-143).²⁵

²⁵ Original: “Pra mim, ter ido à peça foi fantástico porque em outras épocas, se eu fosse a uma peça, eu jamais iria imaginar através dos discursos, das músicas, que as cenas eram aquelas. Jamais iria imaginar. Ia botar na minha cabeça que eles estavam dançando... qualquer outra coisa, menos aquelas cenas que nos foram narradas. E fico muito

The author of the testimony compares the visual information not accessible to loose parts of a book, which demands of the person the imagination of this content, compromising the very experience of emotions, as stated. Under this understanding, what other compromises can this lack of accessibility cause in the daily life of these individuals?

Another participant, 40 years old, visually impaired, expressed his feeling about watching the audio described play and participating in the sensorial visit:

I came to talk about the exquisite event that we had yesterday at the accessible theater in Vitória. The audio description [...] paused in the same way that people moved on stage, as they gestured... if there was a preparation for a movement, which gave an insinuation, she said: Look, the author is preparing for such a movement'. She had this subtlety, she had this lightness to describe in the most transparent way possible. The actors were very receptive to us before the play. They tried to interact with the audience, nice... invited us to go to the stage to interact, and led us up and down. The actors themselves at the time of the stage recon identified who had no escort and came to help. For me, it was the producer [...] who was guiding me to describe the details of the scenario. Very, very cool! I think that we, after participating in a play like this, with audio description, we no longer want to go to any event without it; you feel part of the show. Nothing is left behind, nothing is lost. Wow, really after I saw how much this work of supervising audio description is extremely necessary. I hope that new plays arise in Espírito Santo and I can go (KOEHLER, 2017, p. 141).²⁶

The testimony highlights several important aspects: the transparency of the audio description, the receptivity and interaction of the actors with spectators, the sensory tour, the importance of attending audio described events, the way the audience felt

feliz por ter tido a oportunidade. Era como se eu estivesse vendo realmente. Muito obrigada por nos proporcionar isso. Antes eu já fui ao teatro, mas sem audiodescrição. Na ocasião eu fiquei assim, né... com minha imaginação. Eu fiquei imaginando, por exemplo, quando tinha uma música... que eles estavam dançando ou fazendo alguma coisa, mas eu não sabia o que era. Então é como se você pegasse partes de um livro, páginas soltas de um livro, e lesse. Tivesse assim... uma vaga ideia do que era a história, mas não vivido as emoções por completo” (KOEHLER, 2017, p. 142-143).

²⁶ Original: “*Vim falar do evento primoroso que a gente teve ontem no teatro acessível em Vitória. A audiodescrição [...] fazia as pausas da mesma maneira que as pessoas se deslocavam no palco, como gesticulavam... se havia uma preparação para um movimento, que dava uma insinuação, ela dizia: ‘Olha, o autor está se preparando para tal movimento’.* Ela tinha essa sutileza, ela tinha essa leveza para descrever da forma mais transparente possível. Os atores foram muito receptivos conosco antes da peça. Eles procuraram interagir com a plateia, bacana... convidaram a gente a ir ao palco interagir, orientavam pra subir, pra descer: Os próprios atores na hora do reconhecimento de palco viam quem não estava com acompanhante e vinham pra ajudar. Eu, foi a produtora [...] que foi me orientando para descrever os detalhes do cenário. Muito, muito legal! Eu acho que nós, depois que participamos de uma peça dessa forma, com audiodescrição, não queremos mais ir a um evento sem audiodescrição; você se sente parte do espetáculo. Nada fica para trás, nada fica perdido. Nossa, realmente depois eu vi o quanto esse trabalho de supervisionar a audiodescrição é extremamente necessário. Espero que surjam novas peças no Espírito Santo e eu possa ir” (KOEHLER, 2017, p. 141).

part of the show, the work of supervision to the elaboration of the AD script (referring to consulting) and the desire of the interviewee to participate in other accessible play.

Resuming the 36-year-old participant's metaphor, which compares a play without the audio description to the reading of loose pages of a book, we dimensioned the importance of the work of the audio describer and the consultant in cultural accessibility. Especially, the interlocution with the participants of this research, in a dialogical and exotopic experience, which allowed us to recreate the theater space for the aesthetic enjoyment of people with visual disabilities.

For this time discussion

Recapturing the initial question of Professor Joana Belarmino, "what do you notice when you don't see?", it is worth mentioning the answer that she herself presents in her text:

Perceiving, within the unseen, thus displays a transaction. A permanent transaction between the body, space and events of the world. The perceiving, within the unseen, is a permanent work, involving the contact with the experience, the phenomena of the world, and a neurosensorial apparatus (BELARMINO, 2009, p. 110).²⁷

The teacher's response indicates that perceiving the world, for people with visual impairment, demands permanent exercises involving the body, space and events. In this sense, perceiving the world consists of an aesthetic activity that also needs to be learned and taught through experimentation and aesthetic education.

It is not intended, in these lines, to demean a primer for aesthetic-visual literacy of citizens with visual disabilities. What these writings propose is the sharing of an experience of aesthetic activity that took place outside the walls of the school and whose learning emerged from the human adventure of planning, execution and enjoyment of an accessible theatrical show.

This human adventure, more than toil or entertainment for some, is an edge of what has been happening in the struggle for the accessibility of material and immaterial cultural goods in Brazil and in the world. And in this text, two elements are explored as possibilities for this accessibility: audio description and sensory visits.

When cultural events themselves exclude people, they constitute monuments of barbarism. Therefore, to work on aesthetic education and to make cultural goods accessible is a systematic and diligent task, to the detriment of improvisation and solitary practice. Planning and executing the audio description and the sensorial visit

²⁷ Original: "*Perceber, dentro do não-ver, exhibe, pois, uma transação. Uma transação permanente entre o corpo, o espaço e os eventos do mundo. O perceber, dentro do não-ver, é um permanente trabalho, envolvendo o contato com a experiência, os fenômenos do mundo, e um aparelho neurosensoriomotor*" (BELARMINO, 2009, p. 110).

demand methodological, exotopic and dialogic rigor, necessary to minimize or break the communication and attitudinal barriers. It demands responsive, multilateral attitudes of people who see by different senses: vision, hearing, touch, smell, taste, now more for one than for the other. It requires looking and listening to the other, learning from, writing with, feeling with. It requires perceiving the world with the body and with the bodies, in a network of reciprocal interrelationships, in a show that, at the close of the curtain, dedicates its applause to the heroes, authors, directors, audio describers, consultants and spectators, foundations of a dialogical and exotopic making of accessible art.

KOEHLER, A.; FOERSTE, G. Audiodescrição, dialogismo e exotopia no teatro. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v.65, 2021.

- *RESUMO: Este estudo analisa como a audiodescrição - modalidade de tradução intersemiótica - e a visita sensorial podem se constituir em arcabouço para acessibilizar a arte teatral a espectadores com deficiência visual. A pesquisa, de caráter qualitativo e construída sob os pressupostos da pesquisa-ação (MONCEAU, 2005), relata as etapas de uma experiência vivenciada no estado do Espírito Santo para possibilitar a esse público a fruição estética de um espetáculo teatral por meio dos sentidos remanescentes (KOEHLER, 2017). Desenvolve discussões sobre acessibilidade cultural (SARRAF, 2018), dialogismo e exotopia (BAKHTIN, 1997, 2002), e ancora o entendimento sobre a percepção da pessoa cega a partir de análises da doutora em Comunicação e Semiótica Joana Belarmino (2009). Conclui que o processo de planejar e executar a audiodescrição e a visita sensorial em um evento artístico ao vivo demanda rigor metodológico, exotópico e dialógico, com atitudes responsivas e multilaterais, em detrimento do improvisado e do fazer solitário. E que o perceber o mundo, para pessoas com deficiência visual, propõe exercícios permanentes que envolvem o corpo, o espaço e os acontecimentos, consistindo em uma atividade estética.*
- *PALAVRAS-CHAVE: audiodescrição; acessibilidade cultural; dialogismo; exotopia; arte.*

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