

Neves, Joselia (2011). *Imagens que se ouvem – Guia de Audiodescrição*.**Instituto Nacional para a Reabilitação/Instituto Politécnico de Leiria, 88 pp. 15€. ISBN: 978-989-8051-20-2.**

Although audio description guidelines seem to become more and more a bone of contention among academics, given their often intuitive and personal basis and lack of theoretical underpinning, a decent set of easy-to-use and practical working principles is still an indispensable tool for practitioners active in the field of AD. In countries like the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States, such guidelines have been in use for a long time already, and in recent years 'newcomers' like Poland and Belgium also created their own sets of AD principles.

With *Imagens que se ouvem (Images to listen to)*, Portugal now has its own AD guidelines too. With 88 pages, it is by far the most comprehensive guide so far, dealing not only with AD for film and cinema, but also with many other modalities such as works of art, theatre performances and public spaces. All this presented in a very clear and understandable way.

The first chapter describes in broad outline the objective of the work as well as the general principles and main user groups of AD. The next four chapters define the general framework within which audio description has to be considered. Chapter 2 explains the basic conceptual and technical terms used in the field of AD, after which Chapter 3 provides a detailed explanation of the different competencies a person ideally needs to become a proficient audio describer. The techno-scientific areas – as Neves calls them – that are described, range from a sound knowledge of psychophysiology of the vision and blindness, and of filmic language and visual composition, to linguistic competencies, vocal skills and knowledge of audiovisual production techniques. Neves not only explains what these competencies encompass, but also why they are useful or even necessary. Chapter 4 looks at the different modalities of AD (cinema, television, DVD, websites, theatre, dance and music performances, museums, public spaces and other applications). In addition to describing how AD is created and works in these different instances, the current state of the art is evaluated and pertinent critical notes are made, showing that there is still a long way to go. The last chapter of this part of the guide looks at the different types of audio description. Whereas most existing guidelines simply make a distinction between audio description of static and moving images, *Imagens que se ouvem* adds description of tangible objects and— a very important aspect that is often overlooked—description of the extratextual reality, i.e. the descriptions that allow the blind or partially sighted subject to orient themselves in a given (interior or exterior) space, telling them how that space is organised and how they can get to e.g. the

restroom, cafeteria or exit, a *condition sine qua non* without which any other description of the product itself becomes useless.

The second part of the guide looks in more detail at the creation of the audio described product. Chapter 6 examines the different stages in the creative process, starting with the preliminary phase in which the describer gets acquainted with the product to be described, then moving to the creation of the AD script, the recording of it and the post-production process. Chapter 7 explores one of these four stages in more detail, namely the creation of the AD script. After a general explanation of what, how, when and how much to describe, this chapter looks at some specific difficulties in audio description such as describing the exposition phase of films, the description of characters and narrative spaces, the language to be used and the ever-returning question of objective versus subjective description. These 'theoretical' guidelines are accompanied by very brief examples in the chapter itself but – and this is probably one of the greatest and most innovative aspects of these guidelines and definitely what makes them unique – Chapter 8 refers to the DVD that goes with these guidelines and offers close to 100 different examples (and potential exercises) of the different concepts, modalities and types of AD explained in the preceding chapters.

The guidelines end with five smaller chapters that offer additional information on a few unrelated aspects of AD. Chapter 9 looks at the technology and equipment needed to produce, broadcast and receive audio description. Chapter 10 gives a brief overview of the history of AD in Portugal, pointing out that the service is still in its infancy but that many new projects are under way, an example to be followed in other countries where AD has yet to acquire a permanent position among accessibility services. Chapters 11 and 12 look at AD training and research, and at the profession respectively, while Chapter 13 rounds off this guide with some considerations on legal aspects and copyrights.

To conclude: this guide is a very useful tool for both beginning and more experienced describers in the Portuguese world. It explains all the basic principles in a very clear way and thanks to the DVD that goes with it, you can immediately see how these principles work in practice, or you can use the examples as first exercises and try it yourself. Highly recommended!

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