

**A FUNCTIONALIST  
APPROACH TO AUDIO  
DESCRIPTION:  
PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF  
A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS**

Laura Marra  
University of Salento, Lecce, Italy  
[laura.marra1@studenti.unisalento.it](mailto:laura.marra1@studenti.unisalento.it)

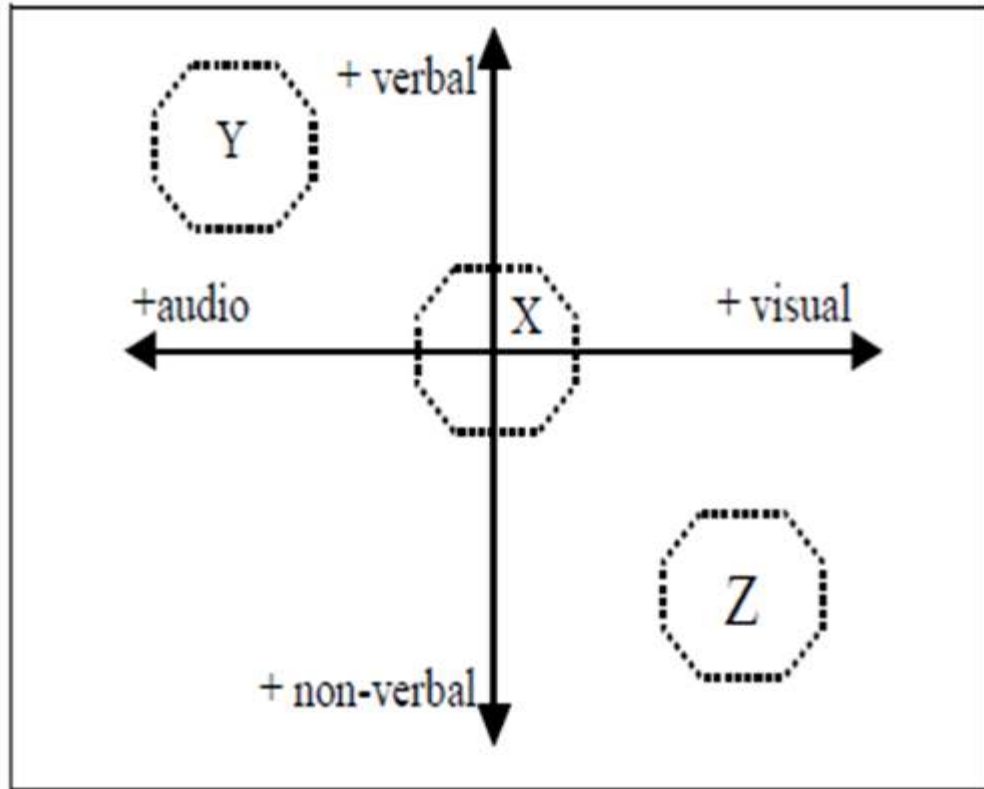
- 1. Audio description (AD) and the audiovisual source text**
- 2. Methodology applied to the functionalist analysis of AD scripts**
- 3. Contrastive analysis: Spanish and Italian AD in *Murder on the Orient Express***
- 4. Preliminary results and conclusive remarks**

# AD: A COMPLEX PRODUCT AND MANIFOLD DEFINITIONS

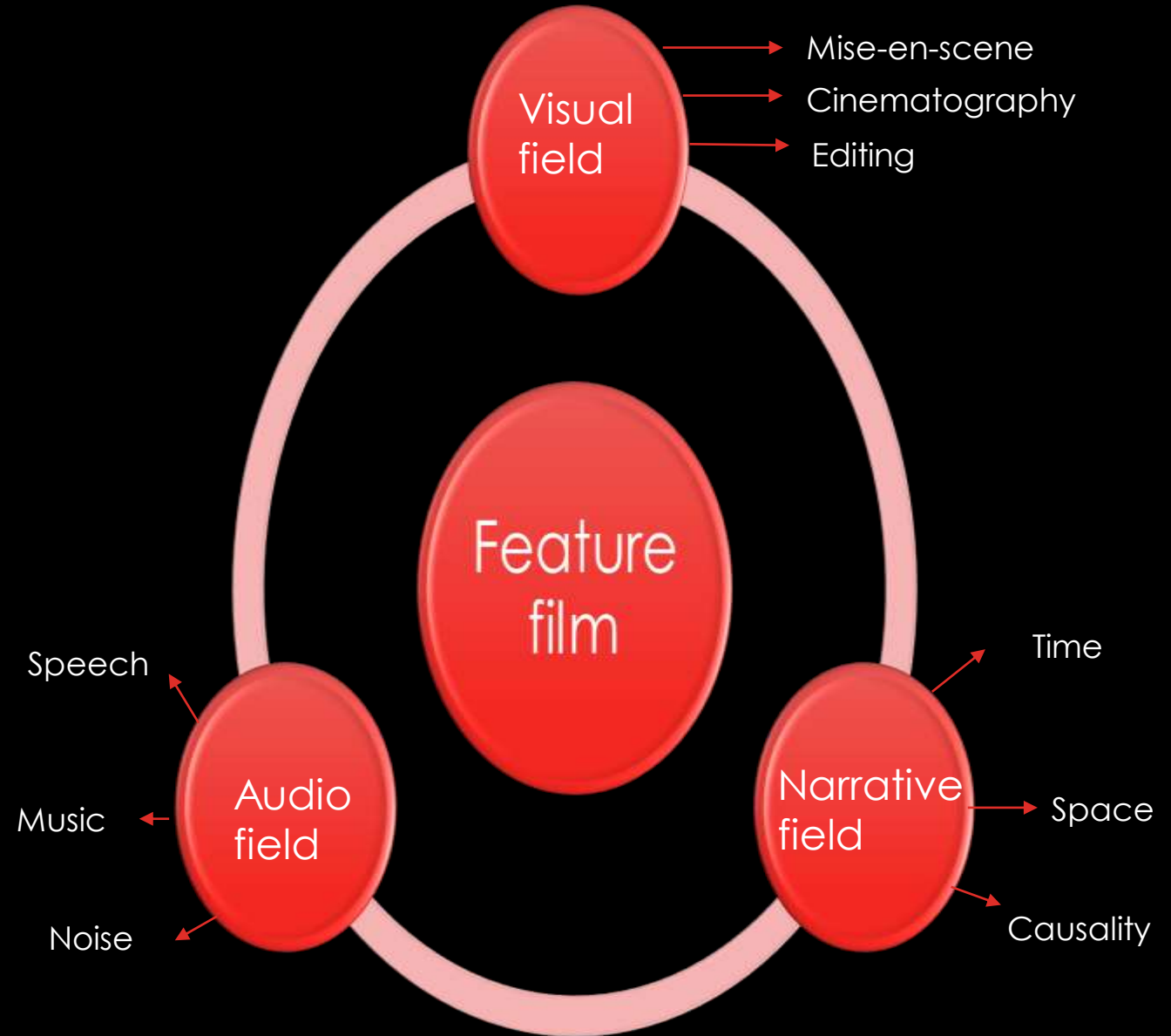
- «the **technique** of inserting audio narration, explanations and descriptions of the settings, characters, and actions taking place in a variety of audiovisual media [...] (Dávila-Montes & Orero 2014)»;
- «An **art of compromise** [which] attempts to verbally account for the visual elements of the moving picture» (Maszerowska 2013: 165)
- «A **verbal commentary** providing visual information for those unable to perceive it themselves (Fryer 2013: 458)»
- «[A] growing arts and media **access service** for visually impaired people (Braun 2008:14)»
- «A **mode of media accessibility** that turns visual elements into a verbal text to provide access for the blind and partially sighted audiences (Bardini 2020: 274)»
- A form of **intersemiotic translation**, intended as «a translation of the **meaning** of a message **formulated in one semiotic system** in such a way that, thanks to the **selection** of the most proper signs from **the other sign system**, and its most proper combination, results in a message **whose meaning is the same** as the meanings of the message that is being translated» (Hopfinger in Jankowska 2015).

# FEATURES OF AUDIOVISUAL SOURCE TEXT (ST)

Figure 3 The double axis of the audiovisual text



From Zabalbeascoa (2008)



# NARRATIVE CONSTITUENTS: CHARACTERS AND THEIR WORLD

	Humankind	Group	Individual
<b>Topos</b>	Cities, states	Public spaces	Private dimensions: rooms, houses, offices
<b>Chronos</b>	Duration	Deadlines	Age
<b>Epos</b>	Past, history	Family tree	Past
<b>Telos</b>	Future	Goals	Destiny
<b>Gramma</b>	Archives, documents, laws	Lists, charters	Memory, signs, documents
<b>Logos</b>	Language	Rules, codes, jargon	Accent, idiolect
<b>Epistéme</b>	Science, technology	Professionalism	Knowledge, know how
<b>Kratos</b>	State administration, productivity, hierarchy	Groups, associations	Income, status
<b>Soma</b>	Nature	Ethnic group	Body
<b>Psiche</b>	Culture	Mentality	Mind
<b>Aísthesis</b>	Fashion	Trends	Disposition, taste
<b>Ethos</b>	Ideology	Shared values	Values, choices

# DIFFERENT TARGET TEXTS FOR DIFFERENT FILM MEANINGS

Referential and explicit  
meaning of films

Objective, denotative  
audio description (AD)

Implicit and  
symptomatic meaning  
of films

Functionalist audio  
description (AD)



## SCENE 1. PLOT DEVELOPMENT AND PRESENTATION OF THE CHARACTER: MACQUEEN



NARRATIVE FIELD	NARRATIVE CONSTITUENTS
<b>TOPOS</b>	Narrow aisle of the coach emphasizes the fact that MacQueen is under pressure. He seems to reach his cabin to avoid Poirot and Bouc's gaze.
<b>EPOS</b>	Some information on MacQueen and Rachett's past emerges from his words.
<b>EPISTÉME</b>	The lawyer does not show any devotion for his profession.
<b>KRATOS</b>	MacQueen's words reveal his professional subjugation to Rachett.
<b>PSICHE</b>	The man's attitude and body language convey his anxiety.
<b>AÍSTHESIS</b>	MacQueen is often shown while holding flasks. His taste for alcohol is frequently stressed.



## VISUAL FIELD



## AUDITIVE FIELD ES

Poirot: «¿Cuánto tiempo llevaba a su servicio?»  
(How long had you been working for him?)

*Extradiegetic music*

MacQueen: «Dentro de 20 días haría un año. La prohibición, la ley seca no era de mi gusto, de manera que me marché al extranjero y me endeudé.  
(In 20 days it would be a year. I didn't like Prohibition; so I went abroad and fell into debt)

**AD: Coge tembloroso una botella.  
(He shakily grabs a bottle)**

Estudié derecho, pero no por vocación, era un desastre absoluto». (I studied law, but I didn't have a vocation for it. I was really bad at that)

## AUDITIVE FIELD IT

Poirot: «Da quanto tempo aveva questo impiego?»  
(How long had you been working [as a secretary]?)

*Extradiegetic music*

MacQueen: «Tra venti giorni sarebbe stato un anno. Il proibizionismo non era il mio mestiere, e così io mi sono ritrovato all'estero, pieno di debiti.  
(In 20 days it would be a year. Prohibitionism was not my cup of tea, so I ended up abroad, in debt)

**AD: In cabina, prende da bere.  
(In his cabin, he gets a drink)**

Avvocato per titolo di studio, non per inclinazione. Non ero assolutamente adatto». (I am a lawyer, but I am not talented/I have no talent for it. Indeed I was not good at it)

# SCENE 1: SOURCE TEXT ANALYSIS



**NARRATIVE FIELD:** MacQueen's trembling hands seem to convey the character's anxious *psiche*, through quasi-unnoticeable gestures and body movements.



**VISUAL FIELD:** the first two frames mainly focus on the man's hands and are connected to the third through an extensive camera movement, giving birth to an **analytical structure**.



**AUDIO FIELD:** dialogue and music convey dramatic tension to the scene, while revealing useful information on Rachett and MacQueen's past.

# TT CREATION : AD TECHNIQUES USED

AD ES	AD IT
Coge <b>tembloroso</b> una botella (He shakily grabs a bottle)	In cabina, <b>prende da bere</b> (In his cabin, he gets a drink)
AUDIO DESCRIPTION TECHNIQUE	AUDIO DESCRIPTION TECHNIQUE
Iconic description ( <i>psiche</i> )	Reduction



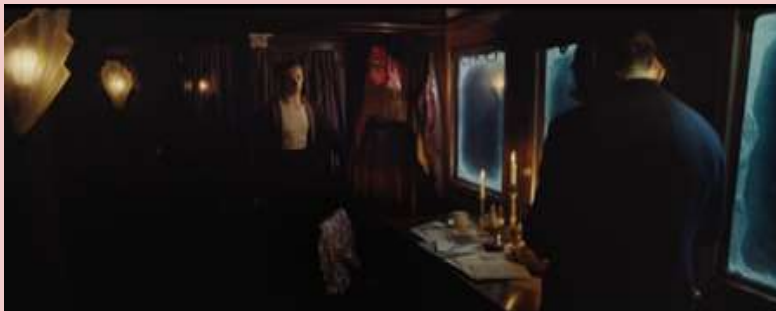
- The use of the **adjective** conveys information on MacQueen's emotional state (*psiche*)
- This lexical choice seems to lead the audience to make inferences on the reasons connected to his trembling
- The lack of this information (provided visually through frames focusing on the character's hands) may result in a translation loss.

**SCENE 2. PLOT DEVELOPMENT AND  
PRESENTATION OF THE CHARACTER :  
THE COUNT AND COUNTESS  
ANDRENYI**



<b>NARRATIVE FIELD</b>	
<b>TOPOS</b>	The setting creates a separation between the characters' public and private spheres. The luxurious interiors also evoke a high social status.
<b>TELOS</b>	The count's attitude is oriented towards protecting his wife. The woman, on the other hand, lives in darkness to shy away from her fear of daylight.
<b>KRATOS</b>	Social power is communicated by their noble title.
<b>SOMA</b>	The woman has some difficulties in standing, due to her abuse of Barbitol.
<b>PSICHE</b>	The countess' aversion for light and her constant fears evoke a troubled past, from which the count wants to protect her.
<b>AÍSTHESIS</b>	Two elements are worth mentioning: the couple's passion for dancing and the woman's taste for yellow.

## VISUAL FIELD



## AUDITIVE FIELD ES

**AD: En el compartimiento de los condes.  
(In the Counts' compartment)**

Poirot: «Si me permite, veré sus pasaportes.  
(If I may, I will check your passports)

**AD: Los ojea. El conde lo observa serio.  
(He glances at them. The count solemnly  
stares at him)**

También debo hablar con ella. [...]».  
(I should also speak to her [...])

Conde: «Ella no se encuentra bien».  
(She is not feeling well)

Poirot: «Si me lo impide, daré parte a la  
policía yugoslava, y no tengo duda de que  
los detendrán a los dos».  
(If you don't let me to, I will inform the  
Yugoslavian police. No doubt they will  
arrest you).

Conde: «¡Cómo se atreve!»  
(How dare you!)

## AUDITIVE FIELD IT

**AD: In una grande cabina lussuosa.  
(In a big, luxurious cabin)**

Poirot: «Se permette, vorrei vedere i vostri  
passaporti.  
(If I may, I will check your passports)

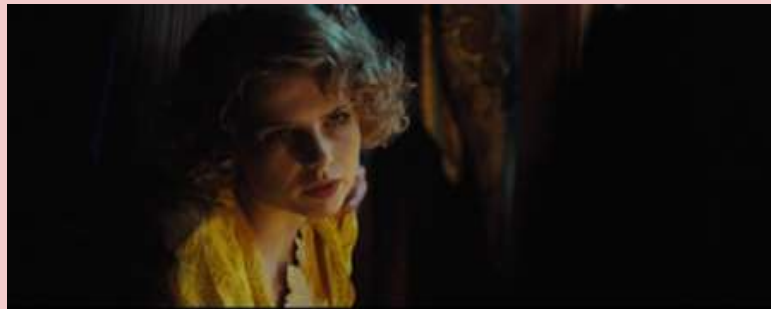
**AD: Il conte Andrenyi protegge una tenda  
chiusa.  
(The count Andrenyi defends a closed  
curtain)**

Sa che devo parlare con la contessa? [...]».  
(I need to speak to her [...])  
Conte: «Elena non sta bene».  
(She is not feeling well)

Poirot: «Se non me lo permette, dovrò  
comunicarlo alla polizia jugoslava; sono  
convinto che sarete arrestati entrambi».  
(If you don't let me to, I will have to inform  
the Yugoslavian police. I am sure they will  
arrest you both).

Conte: «Come osa!»  
(How dare you!)

## VISUAL FIELD



## AUDITIVE FIELD ES

Intradiegetic noise

Condesa: «¡Cariño! Shh...  
(Dear!)

**AD: Ella lo detiene. Tiene ojeras y viste un salto de cama amarillo.  
(She holds him. She has bags under her eyes and wears a yellow negligee)**

Tiene una pinta curiosa, monsieur Poirot. ¿Todos los investigadores tienen esa pinta?»  
(You have a curious look, Monsieur Poirot. Do all detectives look like you?)

**AD: Se sienta.  
(She sits down).**

## AUDITIVE FIELD IT

Intradiegetic noise

Contessa: «Caro! Shh...»  
(Dear!)

**AD: Si confortano l'un l'altra.  
(They console one another)**

Lei è un tipo buffo, monsieur Poirot. Tutti gli investigatori sono così buffi?»  
(You're funny, monsieur Poirot. Are all detectives so funny?)

**[Ø]**

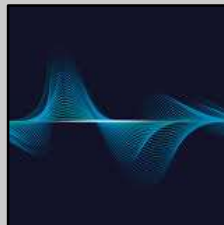
# SCENE 2: SOURCE TEXT ANALYSIS



**NARRATIVE FIELD:** the characters are presented through the combination of *soma*, *psiche*, *topos* and *aísthesis*. These constituents convey the couple's state of fear and anxiety.



**VISUAL FIELD:** mainly medium shots and close-ups foster the intimate relationship between characters and audience, allowing the latter to grasp their feelings. Light source is «the soft yellow of incandescent room lights». The curtain functions as *framing* in the composition and creates a separation between private and public.



**AUDIO FIELD:** the dialogue evokes the countess' past.

# TT CREATION: AD TECHNIQUES USED

AD ES	AD IT
En el compartimiento de los condes. (In the Counts' compartment)	In una grande cabina lussuosa. (In a big, luxurious cabin)
<b>AUDIO DESCRIPTION TECHNIQUE (ADT)</b>	<b>AUDIO DESCRIPTION TECHNIQUE (ADT)</b>
Particularisation	Iconic description ( <i>kratos</i> )

AD ES	AD IT
Los ojea. El conde lo observa serio (He glances at them. The count solemnly stares at him)	Il conte Andrenyi protegge una tenda chiusa. (The count Andrenyi defends a closed curtain )
<b>AUDIO DESCRIPTION TECHNIQUE (ADT)</b>	<b>AUDIO DESCRIPTION TECHNIQUE (ADT)</b>
Iconic description + substitution	Cognitive description (metaphor) ( <i>psiche</i> )

AD ES	AD IT
Ella lo detiene. Tiene ojeras y viste un salto de cama amarillo. (She holds him. She has bags under her eyes and wears a yellow negligee)	Si confortano l'un l'altra. (They console one another)
<b>AUDIO DESCRIPTION TECHNIQUE (ADT)</b>	<b>AUDIO DESCRIPTION TECHNIQUE (ADT)</b>
Iconic description	Substitution ( <i>psiche</i> )



AD ES	AD IT
Se sienta (She sits down)	[Ø]
AUDIO DESCRIPTION TECHNIQUE (ADT)	AUDIO DESCRIPTION TECHNIQUE (AD)
Iconic description	Reduction



- The selection of verbs pertaining to the semantic field of **protection** and **mutual dependence** seems to fit more adequately the attitude shown by the nobles, clarifying that the count's aggressive disposition is connected to his apprehension for his wife's suffering.

# CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

Referential/  
Explicit meaning

Implicit/  
Symptomatic meaning



Integral iconic  
description

**Iconic description**

Technical description

Compensation

Adptation

**Reduction**

Generalization

**Particularization**

Variation

**Substitution**

Amplification

**Cognitive description**

Creative description

Modulation

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**THANK YOU!**