Accessible film festivals: a pilot study

Gabriele Uzzo
University of Palermo, Italy
gabriele.uzzo@unipa.it

Abstract

This work provides an overview of the state of accessibility at film festivals all over the world, identifies its selected audiences and also encourages innovative solutions in relation to linguistic and technical issues emerged during the processes of subtitling. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has resulted in many film festivals all over the world being either cancelled, postponed or moved to online platforms. What has arisen is the question whether and to what extent people with sensorial disabilities, in particular deaf and hard-of-hearing and blind and visually impaired people, have been left behind or have been part of projects of inclusion. The accessibility of forms of art, such as those in the contexts of museums, theatre and opera, has seen unprecedented advances, and research has grown exponentially in recent years. Conversely, the accessibility of film festivals is a relatively new field, still neglected and unexplored. Against the backdrop of accessibility studies and film festivals, this study introduces and discusses accessibility practices within the aesthetic framework of Sole Luna Doc Festival from the perspectives of audiovisual translation norms, conventions and guidelines, and aims to testify to which technical and linguistic strategies of subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing have been adopted within the national (Italian) context applied to the film festival under examination.

1. Introduction

This paper is placed within the context of accessibility and, in particular, its focus is on the state of accessibility at film festivals around the world and, particularly, in Italy. It also takes into account the role and type of audiences at film festivals, the quantity and quality of audiovisual materials that are made accessible to people with sensorial disabilities, with particular reference to deaf and hard-of-hearing people and blind and visually impaired people. In the first and most substantive section, attention is paid to the concept of Accessibility and Accessibility Studies, as well as to the practice of Accessibility in the field of the creative arts, with a particular emphasis on film festivals. Light is also shed upon the audiences of film festivals and upon their preferences with respect to different approaches to accessibility and modes of audiovisual translation, including Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (SDH), Audio Description (AD), and Sign Language Interpreting (SLI).

A pilot study conducted in July 2020 at the international film festival *Sole Luna Doc Fest* in Palermo (Italy) is the core of the second section,

where in-depth analysis is addressed to relevant case studies on the technical and linguistic aspects that are central to the practices of subtitling and audio description.

The corpus of the study under scrutiny is composed of three short films and one feature film. The employed audiovisual mode in the three foreign short films is Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing. Instead, the Italian feature film is marked by the use of Audio Description for the blind and visually impaired persons. The films provide an opportunity to explore the application of the norms of interlingual SDH and intralingual AD at niche festivals, but also to experiment with uncommon solutions how to tackle some of the linguistic and technical challenges relative to both processes.

The theoretical framework of this research includes the most recent and challenging studies in the field of audiovisual translation and also embraces the advances in the area of Accessibility, today recognised as the field of Accessibility Studies (henceforth AS), and the application of AS within domain-specific settings, such as sociolinguistics (Greco 2019). Drawing on audiovisual translation as an autonomous discipline (Romero-Fresco 2006) and media accessibility as an independent field, this scrutiny is set against the backdrop of the growing interest shown by the European Union in increasing and promoting accessibility as a practice of inclusion aimed at people with sensory (dis)abilities and, in general, as a social approach capable of involving every citizen as an integral part of inclusive practices.

2. Mapping the context

In light of recent global events related to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, organisers of large events (from concerts to football matches, from the Olympics to the Oscars, from conferences to conventions) including film festivals, have had to evaluate whether to cancel or postpone their 2020 editions. While at the beginning of the year the inclination was towards cancelling such events[1], later on, most organisers opted for either an online edition or a novel mixed edition, combining online content and physical events, driven by the endless possibilities of technology, on the one hand, and considering the alternatives of future spikes of the outbreak, on the other. This is the case of important film festivals in Europe, including Venice Film Festival, BFI London Film Festival, Locarno Film Festival, etc. These hybrid versions have meant that only a limited selection of feature and short films were made available for the appreciation of audiences both in presence (at the location of the festival) and online nation-wide through streaming platforms.

Given that films at festivals have been made available on online platforms on a nation-wide level only, due mainly to copyright and licensing issues, this inevitably has implied a certain limitation of the audiences

---

[1] https://cineuropa.org/it/newsdetail/386891/. Accessed on: 10 August 2020.

accessing the films. It has also had the negative (if perhaps involuntarily) effect of denying access to a broader audience solely based on their physical location. This may be understood as a first *faux-pas* in terms of 'Accessible Film Festivals', a phrase used in this study to signify those festivals which are accessible to an audience as large and varied as possible, regardless of their physical location, physical (dis)abilities, sensorial (dis)abilities, cognitive and behavioural tendencies and, last but not least, of their language skills and competences. This last standpoint is corroborated by the concept of translation as an instrument of accessibility for all which can mobilise and control cultural, cognitive, linguistic and political experiences, and lies within the idea of translation as a form of accessibility that deals with phenomena of intralingual, interlingual and inter-semiotic nature. This also interrelates with the cultural and creative industries, of which cinema and film festivals are the backbone thanks to their intercultural nature which involves movies, literature, photography, culture, society, political and philosophical ideologies, and the arts in general.

2.1 Accessibility & audiovisual translation

The concept of accessibility, intended as access to the media, i.e., digital web and broadcast content that can be used, read or seen by people with disabilities, in particular by those who are blind or deaf, is closely connected with the diffusion of audiovisual translation. Media accessibility is a branch of audiovisual translation that in recent years has attracted the attention of scholars and researchers and which claims its independence as an autonomous discipline. Its function is to study how linguistic and sensory barriers can be broken down to make audiovisual material accessible (Baños 2017). In the example of a film, Audio Description allows blind people to 'see' what is happening on the screen, while Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing allows them to 'hear' sounds, recognise voices, etc.

Media accessibility usually applies to two audiovisual approaches, such as Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing people and Audio Description for the blind and visually impaired people. However, applications are not limited to films and videos but also to other areas. Indeed, the cultural and creative industries, which rely on creativity, intellectual property and human skills and talent, span a range of activities in at least 11 sectors: "advertising, books, gaming, architecture, music, movies, newspapers and magazines, performing arts, visual arts, radio, TV and design" (Interregeurope 2017[2]). In the area of the visual arts, where greater emphasis is put on niche knowledge as counter discourse universally accessible through translation practices in English as the dominant language and means of global communication, universality goes beyond the well-established concept of MA as the set of services and devices used to provide access to audiovisual media content for people with sensory

---

[2]https://www.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/plp_uploads/event s/TEAM_A_Creative_and_Cultural_Industries.pdf. Accessed on: 10 August 2020.

disabilities (Szarkowska *et al.* 2013). In fact, the idea of accessibility within the arts is twofold: it involves, on the one hand, the spreading of specialist knowledge and, on the other, the diffusion of practices of access that address not only the blind and visually impaired, or the deaf and hard-of-hearing, but any kind of minority group, individuals and a wide portion of amateur audience.

Out of the many possible applications of (media) accessibility to the cultural and creative industries, in recent years, greater attention has been paid to a few of these industries, namely: museums, theatre and opera. A brief overview of the status of these industries in relation to accessibility is provided below before proceeding to a more specialised industry, that is, film festivals.

In the context of the arts and cultures, universal accessibility in museums can be described as the extent to which individuals can access the physical environment and the contents in a museum, regardless of their interests and personal (dis)abilities. Today, at an international level, an exponentially grown number of museums offers accessible resources including, but not limited to, aids for visitors with sensory (dis)abilities, such as listening devices for the hearing impaired, or Braille signage and leaflets with large print letters for visually impaired people. However, in most cases, those resources are circumscribed to the removal of physical barriers for people with physical or motor (dis)abilities. The number of museums around the world that have implemented comprehensive plans to grant access to all types of visitors is still very limited (Hurtado *et al.* 2012).

Options in the field of AVT for museums include audio descriptions for the blind and subtitling for the deaf, voice-narration of panels, multimedia guides, multilingual multimedia guides (with subtitles), tactile and oral descriptions for visually impaired and deaf and hard-of-hearing people. Other forms of translation include interlingual textual translation and textual adaptation, the choice between which depends on the target audience. Both types can be applied to labels, panels, catalogues and leaflets for speakers of other languages (Rizzo 2019).

Accessible theatre has developed through the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, with theatres that have fully integrated access to deaf, blind and disabled spectators and performers, built into the artistic structure of the play (Conroy 2019). As highlighted by Orero (*et al.* 2019, 246), where, when and how we access the services and their content is no longer decided by technology. Accessibility functionalities are no longer included in separate devices for persons with (dis)abilities, but they are integrated in standard devices available to all. It is the duty of stakeholders in opera production to ensure accessibility and to optimise resources.

2.2 Film festivals

With the proliferation of film festivals around the world counted in the hundreds if not thousands (Turan 2002), this ever-growing business and its political, geopolitical, and aesthetic agendas provide a unique network through which all those involved in cinema may view the past, explore the

present and create the future. Festivals constitute a "dynamic system where a specific cultural artefact, cinema, circulates and multiple actors continuously strive to redefine its meaning" (Wong 2011, 2). Film festivals are fertile platforms for retrieving audiovisual material, consisting of feature and short films, as well as for observing and testing the audiences, and conducting experiments with the aid of organisers and, above all, of the audiences themselves.

In the spirit of accessibility and inclusiveness, Reel Access[3] has compiled a comprehensive Accessibility Resource Guide[4] (2019) to be used as a handbook for accessible film festivals and film events in general. The handbook comprises wide aspects of accessibility and scenarios in which everyone, regardless of physical or sensorial (dis)abilities, feels and is welcome to film festivals. The services range from wheelchair-friendly venues to accessible parking, from subtitles and AD to sign language interpreting, from service animals to gender inclusivity[5].

In Italy, 2020 has been a pioneering year for accessibility in the arts thanks to the efforts of RAI *Pubblica Utilità* which, besides increasing the number and improving the quality of audio described and subtitled programmes, including news, films, TV series and shows, has made the 70th Sanremo song contest fully accessible with live subtitles for deaf persons, audio description for blind persons, but also through LIS (*Lingua dei Segni Italiana* - Italian Sign Language) interpreters and performers who, not only signed the dialogues of the events, but also 'performed' the songs through sign language. Given the success of the accessible Sanremo song contest, a similar experience has been repeated within the context of film festivals, at the 77th *Mostra internazionale d'arte cinematografica - La Biennale di Venezia* (Venice Film Festival), featuring subtitles available not only for the films in languages other than Italian, but also with SDH for viewers at home through the Teletext service of RAI, audio description available through a separate channel, and sign language interpreting available through the RaiPlay online platform.

3. The audiences at film festivals

---

[3] Reel Access is an initiative by a working group of festival representatives and disability consultants, artists and activists, whose aim is to bring film festivals together to find solutions for improving accessibility at festival events.

[4] https://www.insideout.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/RA-Accessibility-Resource-Guide-2019-2.0-FINAL.pdf. Accessed on: 10 August 2020.

[5] Here are examples of Disability-Led Film Festivals around the world: Ankara Accessible Film Festival (Turkey), SuperFest Disability Film Festival in San Francisco (USA), Together! Disability Film Festival in London (UK). And here are some examples of Accessible and Inclusive Film Festivals around the world: Reel Abilities Film Fest in Toronto (Canada), Vancouver Queer Film Festival in Vancouver (Canada), Deaffest in Wolverhampton (UK).

It is of paramount importance today to open up and embrace an audience as broad and diverse as possible. This is a concern also for film festivals, as accessibility has now become the buzzword across Europe and North America (Di Giovanni 2018). As highlighted by Di Giovanni in relation to Italian film festivals, "the audience attending a film festival is usually made up of cinephiles and 'movie buffs' prepared for the projection of the film in its original version and with subtitles, therefore not particularly representative of a more general public in a country where dubbing dominates" (my translation 2020, 41). Audiences attending film festivals are very different from audiences accessing television through subtitles, with respect to their preferences, habits, level of education, profession, age, etc.

Therefore, most reception studies involving audiences accessing TV should be repurposed to audiences attending film festivals. With reference to reception studies applied to the subtitling at film festivals, questionnaires administered to the audience are essential for gathering information and data on issues such as: preferences about the fruition of audiovisual material, fair representation of audiovisual material subtitled for the deaf and hard-of-hearing and audio described for the blind and visually impaired, appreciation of subtitling and audio description, knowledge of specificities and technicalities of SDH and AD, advice on improving SDH and AD, etc. This methodological approach will in time stimulate the production of subtitles that take into consideration a broader yet specific audience, such as that of international film festivals.

Nonetheless, in relation to a specific audience, such as that of people with sensorial disabilities, it should be noted that deaf or blind people do not tend to attend film festivals partly because they do not feel that their disability will be overcome with the use of standard subtitles (or, in the case of blind people, the lack of audio description), thus avoiding the social and entertainment aspects of film festivals entirely.

4. Subtitling at film festivals

This section explores the practice of subtitling at film festivals in terms of interlingual subtitling, which is viewed as a form of linguistic accessibility, i.e., a method to overcome the linguistic barriers presented to the audience of festivals when watching a film in a language other than that of the hosting country. Furthermore, there are already other categories of people within the hearing audience who also benefit from interlingual subtitling, such as elderly people, L2 learners, migrants, couples, families and social groups who have at least one deaf person among them, etc.

Translation makes film festivals possible and accessible to an international audience, not only in relation to the films, but also when employed in other occurrences, from press conferences to the presentations of the films. As opposed to subtitling for film and TV contents, subtitling for film festivals is still a relatively new area within the subtitling discipline which could benefit from further research within a linguistic, social and technical framework.

By providing a diachronic evolution of subtitling, it is important to note the milestones in the technology behind this process, starting with introduction of electronic subtitling in the mid '80s, as before then, the creative process of subtitles was both extremely difficult and costly. So-called electronic subtitles, i.e., those that are independently projected with a separate projector at the bottom of the big screen or onto the screen itself, were also used to avoid spoiling the original 35 mm film by burning-in subtitles of a given language, thus rendering the film useless when screened in another country. Most films today are produced with digital technology, which has had a deep impact on the distribution system, with the introduction of the Digital Cinema Package (DCP) which enables audiovisual materials to be distributed more easily and be accessible in other countries. More recently, and especially in an era in which most festivals have a hybrid configuration (i.e., both online and physically present), online platforms have been employed more than ever before, with unprecedented repercussions on subtitling practices and on the traditional consumers' attitude towards subtitling, film festival and cinema in general (Oncins 2013).

As highlighted by Spoletti (2006), subtitling for film festivals is very challenging and the timeframe available to subtitle and translate a vast amount of films is very limited, usually ranging from 20 to 30 days before the film festival. This is also due to the fact that production companies are somewhat 'jealous' of their content and unwilling to release the materials to work with until the very last minute, sometimes even 2-3 days before the screening date.

It is common practice at international film festivals to display two sets of subtitles, one in English viewed as a lingua franca (Nornes 2007), and one in the language of the hosting country. While English subtitles are usually embedded onto the film and therefore displayed at the bottom of the main screen, Italian (or other language) subtitles are usually projected on a small screen placed outside the main screen. They can thus be projected either below or above the main screen (the latter option, more rare and less used, is somewhat similar to surtitles at opera). The films that include such format may present the challenge of the so-called 'Christmas tree effect' (Spoletti 2006), in which the two sets of subtitles (the embedded one and the projected one) may not appear at the same time throughout the screening of the film. In order to avoid or minimise this effect, subtitles in both languages should have the same spotting, although they may present different lengths due to language differences. This process has consequences on subtitling on technical and linguistic levels. Firstly, the embedded English subtitles set the synchrony of any future subtitles in other languages, including in-time, out-time, duration, behaviour around shot changes, synchrony with the audio track, etc. From a linguistic point of view, the embedded English subtitles automatically determine all elements of speech, including false starts, repetitions, hesitation markers, segmentation of the sentence, etc. which should be translated in the second set of subtitles.

Furthermore, the second set of subtitles can be either synchronised, semi-synchronised or not synchronised. This is due to a series of factors, including the projection copy and the subtitle copy of the film not being identical, the film being split into reels, no video being available at the time of subtitling or translation of subtitles, etc. This has an effect on the projection (or 'launching') of subtitles, by adding yet another challenge to an already intricate process.

5. Data and methodology

The comparative dimension of this study, framed within the context of Sole Luna Doc Festival, draws on the standard features adopted in Italian SDH, as described by RAI, the national TV broadcaster in Italy, and on a rather empirical approach to the creation of SDH types, which are applied to the three short films under scrutiny, and where RAI norms and more internationally accepted conventions are blended. In particular, interlingual subtitles have been incorporated and remoulded within subtitles for the deaf (including their technical features), thus providing the viewer with a mixed effect, where SDH and interlingual subtitling collaborate for the benefits of the general audience.

With respect to AD, and bearing in mind that most audio descriptions are intralingual, the preferences and characteristics of the audiences who attended the film festival have been taken into account. Therefore, the chosen methodology relies on a context-based analysis (national TV broadcaster and audiences' expectations), on the one hand, and, on the scrutiny of the modalities and techniques by means of which accessibility has been applied to Sole Luna Doc Festival, on the other.

With the invaluable intervention of the students enrolled in the short course in Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing and Audio Description for the Blind and Visually Impaired persons (*Sottotitolaggio per Sordi e Audiodescrizione per Ciechi*, SOSAC) at the University of Palermo, the festival assigned us the task of producing ADs and SDHs. AD has been applied to Pierfrancesco Li Donni's feature film *(Our Road) La Nostra Strada*, whereas SDHs have been applied to the three short films mentioned in the introductory section, namely, Aidana Topchubaeva's *Ayana*, Eric Esser's *The Angel of History* and Emilio Martí's *Makun (no llores): Dibujos en un C.I.E.* The commitment was very challenging and stimulating and has given light to useful cases of translating strategies applied to niche filmic types through modalities of audiovisual translation (AD and SDH).

With respect to the creation of SDH at Sole Luna Doc Film Festival, the following crucial aspects of analysis have been taken into consideration in terms of defining methodologies and fields of application: reading speed; maximum number of characters per line; maximum number of lines per subtitle, as standard subtitling strictly dictates a maximum of two lines per subtitle, while SDH also allows three, sometimes four (Szarkowska 2013); use of different colours to identify speakers (strategy that is not adopted by all media channels or by all countries); translation quality (often the condensation, decimation or even the partial or total omission of the

dialogues could alter the meaning or generalise it); position of subtitles; lexicon, syntax (use of a reduced vocabulary, elimination of idioms, omitted or simplified metaphors and allegories) and the study of rhetorical figures for deaf people.

What this empirical approach to the creation of SDH types at Sole Luna Doc Film Festival has realised, is the mixture of Italian SDH, as recommended by RAI's guidelines[6] (generally intralingual), and Italian standard interlingual subtitling. As is the case in many guidelines compiled by national broadcasters for SDH in TV, there are certain features which differ from standard interlingual subtitling followed by many film festivals. In this specific artistic context, the Sole Luna Doc Festival's deaf public appreciated the mixture of selected features originating from RAI intralingual SDH and interlingual subtitling at film festivals. Table 1 provides a schematic summary of some of the features, more relevant to this study, which distinguish SDH for TV in Italy. They relate to formatting, style, spelling and punctuation, and paralinguistic elements.

Max number of lines	2
Max characters per line	37 (including spaces) or 36 for coloured subtitles other than white
Alignment and Justification	Left-aligned and left-justified
ID Speakers	Colours: white, cyan, green, magenta and yellow on a black background
Sound Effects	Blue colour on a yellow background (centre-aligned and centre-justified)
Introduction to SDH	Asterisks (*) are used at the beginning of the programme
Off-Screen Audio	Use of < or > depending on the location of the source. < is the default
Songs	The # sign is used in every subtitle with songs
Punctuation	! and ? are preceded by a single space

---

[6] Rai has compiled a fairly comprehensive document which provides detailed guidelines for the creation of SDH for TV broadcasting through Teletext.

Paralinguistic elements	Use of ( ) to indicate paralinguistic elements, such as whispers

Table 1: RAI features applied to Italian SDH

Ad-hoc subtitling for film festivals attempts to present the deaf audience with a form of subtitling similar to that used in Italian TV, i.e., the form to which the audience is most habituated, as suggested and indicated by reception studies in many countries (see Romero-Fresco 2015). To this extent, most of the above mentioned characteristics of Italian SDH, were maintained with the exception of the maximum characters per line, as the technical limits of Teletext did not apply in this context. The same guidelines dedicate a section to the timing of SDH detailing minimum duration, cumulative subtitles, etc. However, since the chosen method for synchronising the Italian SDH is a total alignment with the English embedded subtitles and not with the original audio, this section has been disregarded in this study.

6. Case study: Sole Luna

This section of this study provides a first-hand case study carried out during the 15th edition of the Sole Luna Doc Film Festival held in Palermo, Italy. Due to recent developments of the Covid-19 outbreak, this edition, like many editions of other international film festivals, experimented with a hybrid version that combined both online and physically presence events. Sole Luna Doc Film Festival is an event which aims to unite and promote the encounter between people, ideas, perspectives and aims to bring to the attention of the broadest possible audience, original and courageous points of view through documentary filmmaking. The registered association *Sole Luna - Un ponte tra le culture – A Bridge Between Cultures*, the festival's producer, is a non-profit organisation whose main purpose is to promote documentary filmmaking and independent cinema, as well as to enhance new talents also through training courses organised by the experts in the field.

By starting with the Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing of the three short films, we can note (as mentioned before) that there are various ways in which subtitles can be displayed or projected at film festivals. In this instance, the chosen method was the burning-in of the second set of subtitles, the Italian SDH, onto a black bar digitally added at the bottom of the main screen area of the original video. Such technique, only possible when working with mid-resolution video, i.e., not with DCP, allows the subtitles to be displayed as intended in terms of font, style, colour, position and unconventional characters (for instance # or < or > or °) without the risk of corrupting the formatting, as displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Screenshot of Italian SDH and English subtitles embedded onto the video

The use of unconventional characters, not only is essential to determine and distinguish paralinguistic features (# for songs, < or > for off-screen audio, etc.), but it also proves convenient when dealing with the space and time constraints of subtitling. In the English language, ordinal numbers can be expressed by adding the suffixes -st, -nd, -rd and -th to the numbers (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc.). However, the linguistic equivalent in the Italian language would be the addition of the suffix -*esimo* (or -*esima* with a feminine noun) to numbers from 11 upwards. Taking into consideration that every character counts towards a rather limited number, especially in Teletext SDH, the possibility of using the symbol ° to indicate ordinal numbers (as it is prescribed by the list of symbols allowed in RAI Teletext) permitted the creation the following subtitle in the short film *Ayana*: "< *17° secondo della partita, i Rassvet guadagnano un punto.*" made up of 59 characters including spaces, much in line with the English subtitle: "At the 17th second of the game Russet team earns a point!", made up of 57 characters including spaces.

As mentioned previously, when possible, dual subtitling should respect the synchrony with the English subtitles embedded on the video, as opposed to the synchrony with the original audio. The dual subtitling presented in this study are English standard subtitling and Italian SDH. The short film *Makun (no llores): Dibujos en un C.I.E.,* whose original audio is in Spanish, offers a series of examples in which the English standard subtitles have been created, and then embedded, without a particular respect of the synchrony with the original audio. Furthermore, the dialogues have not been fully translated *verbatim*, even when considered crucial to the understanding and the appreciation of the plot. Table 2 offers a visual example in which, instead of editing the Italian translation, a more accurate and generous synchronisation with the original audio in Spanish would have allowed more space (and time) for a more faithful translation of the dialogues.

This example attempts to show that the English subtitles, embedded with a decreased duration and a condensed/reduced text, forced similar behaviour in the Italian SDH. Alternatively, the suggested extended duration, more in line with the original audio in Spanish (the video and the speed of the original audio allow for even longer subtitles in order to convey more text, or a more faithful translation of the text), shows a more than acceptable reading speed of 15 CPS and a more exact translation (Table 2), which originates from the Spanish audio rather than from the reduced English subtitled version.

	Spanish Audio	English Embedded Subtitles	Forced Italian SDH	Alternative Italian SDH
Text:	A mis padres no les gustaba perder a un hijo, (My parents didn't like to lose a son)	My parents didn't want me to leave	< I miei genitori non erano contenti di perdere un figlio (My parents weren't happy to lose a son)	
Time-Codes:	03:51:11 - 03:54:00	03:51:24 - 03:54:11	03:51:24 - 03:54:11	03:51:11 - 03:54:11
Duration:	2 sec 13 frames	2 sec 11 frames	2 sec 11 frames	3 sec 0 frames
Reading Speed:	14 CPS	11 CPS	19 CPS	15 CPS
Text:	pero fueron los que me animaron a venir a España. (but they were those who encouraged me to come to Spain.)	but they encouraged me to do so.	< ma proprio loro mi incoraggiarono a venire in Spagna. (but it was them who encouraged me to come to Spain.)	
Time-Codes:	03:54:18 - 03:57:07	03:54:18 - 03:56:14	03:54:18 - 03:56:14	03:54:18 - 03:57:18
Duration:	2 sec 13 frames	1 sec 20 frames	1 sec 20 frames	3 sec 0 frames
Reading Speed:	15 CPS	14 CPS	25 CPS	15 CPS

Table 2: Example of a more faithful synchronization (Back translation is provided in parenthesis)

Similarly, later on in the short film, a crucial piece of information is missing when the Spanish audio says: "*Imagina que te vas de tu casa desesperada porque no quieres que violan a tu hija / como te violaron a ti y a tu madre antes que a ti.*" (back translation: "Imagine that you leave your home desperate because you don't want your daughter to be raped / as you were raped and your mother before you.) The English embedded subtitles reads: "Imagine you flee to protect your daughter / from being raped as you were." Such omission of important dialogues has been corrected in the Italian SDH by providing a more accurate translation which, on the one hand, coincides in synchrony with the English embedded subtitles and, on the other hand, facilitates the comprehension and appreciation of the original dialogues. The Italian SDH reads: "*Immagina di fuggire per evitare che stuprino tua figlia, / come è successo a te e a tua madre.*" (back translation: Imagine to flee to prevent your daughter from being raped, as it has happened to you and your mother). A slightly higher reading speed in the first of these two subtitles is small price to pay to convey a more accurate translation.

In the attempt to research and innovate a type of subtitling which benefits from cross-fertilisation of other modalities and disciplines, the following example taken from the short film *The Angel of History* presents an expedient of SDH which draws inspiration from Sign Language Interpreting. The narrator talks about the Évian Conference of 1938 at Évian-les-Bains, France, to address the problem of German and Austrian Jewish refugees fleeing persecution in Nazi Germany. In a clever play of words, he points out how the word 'Evian', the location of the conference, is 'naive' spelled backwards, thus implying a connection between the two words. However, the word 'naive' is not included in the Italian Sign Language (LIS) vocabulary, as sign languages use a simpler vocabulary. To avoid the misinterpretation of the subtitles, but without ignoring the palindrome itself, a deviceful solution has been chosen for the deaf Italian audience. The subtitles read: "*Era come se nessuno di loro capisse che Evian, il luogo di incontro, / letto al contrario diventa 'Naive', cioè ingenuo.*" (Back translation: "It was as if no one realised that Evian, the conference place, spelled backwards reads 'Naive', that is innocent/naive.")

The procedure of explicitation, in which implicit information in the source text has been rendered explicit in the target text, has been used to allow the broadest possible audience to appreciate the narrator's meaning without having to use simpler vocabulary or syntax, thus supporting the request for more faithful and *verbatim* subtitles expressed by many deaf people in different countries (see Szarkowska *et al.* 2015). It should be noted, however, that such enthusiasm for *verbatim* subtitles, as opposed to edited or standard subtitles, is not shared unanimously in a recent reception study made across Europe (see Romero-Fresco 2015).

When it comes to the AD section of this case study, the focus is on the audio description of *(Our Road) La Nostra Strada*, a coming-of-age film narrating the passage from childhood to adolescence among a group of middle-schoolers in the historical centre of Palermo, still a marginalised and difficult social area. The AD audio track of the film has been made available

to a nation-wide audience during the festival following the upload onto MovieReading, an app which allows the public, blind and not, to listen to the audio description (or to read the subtitles) of a film. The main challenge for the AD of this film lies in the description of the city of Palermo (Italy), where the film is set. To a group of local audio describers, the landmarks, places and landscapes of the city appear easily recognisable, and this would normally prompt them to include the names of places and the city in the text. However, a more universal and inclusive approach has been chosen here, with the purpose of involving and engaging an audience as wide and diverse as possible, including those who may not be familiar with the city of Palermo.

According to the majority of scholars and experts in the field of Audio Description, the tendency is to describe the 'who, what, where, when and how' (Snyder 2010) using 'succinct, vivid and imaginative words' (Snyder 2007, 100). The recognisability of a certain city, place or landmark is up for debate in the following example aided by the Figures 2, 3 and 4.
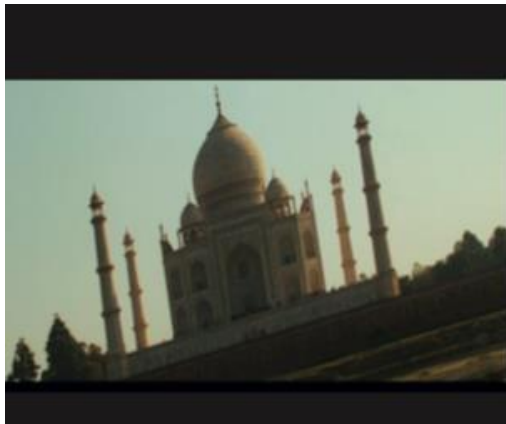

Figure 2: Still frame of the Taj Mahal from *Slumdog Millionaire* (D. Boyle, 2008)

Figure 3: Still frame of the city of Palermo at night from *La Nostra Strada*

Figure 4: Still frame of the Cathedral of Palermo in the background from *La Nostra Strada*

As Perego (2017, 208) outlines: "While generating a feeling of independence, [AD] offers the blind a valuable opportunity to access information and culture, to form a critical opinion and to confront with sighted people on the basis of an equivalent knowledge background." The concept of 'equivalent knowledge background' would dictate that the Taj Mahal, as one of the seven wonders of the modern world, is famous worldwide and therefore a proper description using its name is not only correct, but also welcome. The other stills, however, showing the city of Palermo at night in Figure 3, and the background of its cathedral in Figure 4, call for a generic description deprived of any connotation marking the locations of the city or its cathedral, thus, giving a more generic feeling which aims at allowing a wider audience to access and appreciate the film. Table 3 reports the extracts of the ADs describing the images in the three Figures above:

	Figure 2	**Figure 3**	**Figure 4**
Description	Taj Mahal	City at night	Background of a cathedral
AD	The dust clears, revealing the majestic, white marbled palace of the Taj Mahal in the distance.	*Le luci dei palazzi illuminano la città.*	*La finestra si affaccia su un campo di calcetto nei pressi di una chiesa.*
Back Translation	N/A	The lights of the building light up the city.	The window overlooks a five-a-side football field nearby a church.

Table 3: Texts of AD related to Figures 2, 3 and 4

7. Concluding remarks

This study has aimed to pave the way to further studies in the field of accessibility at film festivals in order to improve the usability of audiovisual products for deaf and blind people, as well as to contribute to the creation of a more inclusive subtitling process that takes into account not only the deaf and the hearing impaired, but the hearing as well. Also audio description practices have aimed at a broader audience, and not only at the blind and visually impaired persons.

Subtitling and audio description for a broader and diverse audience attending film festivals should be designed by scholars, practitioners and users in order to create tools that are truly and effectively useful for carrying out the purpose for which they were designed, i.e., making the ever-

increasing audiovisual material available and accessible to as many people as possible, avoiding that the very concept of media accessibility be limited to a specific group, which might create the so-called "ghetto effect" (Greco 2016a, 2016b).

In relation to dual subtitling practices at film festivals, when the synchronisation of the second set of subtitles is dictated by the English embedded subtitles, further research employing the use of eye-tracking is recommended in order to establish, or at least investigate, fixations and saccades during the screening of films at film festivals, where screens are much bigger than any of the TV sets used for most eye-tracking studies. Smartphones could render the display and visibility of subtitles more effective, especially in large venues, as argued by Oncins (*et al.* 2013). The possibility of having more than one or two languages, along with the possibility of having closed SDH available when needed, as well as audio description at the touch of a button, could overcome accessibility issues faced by people with sensory disabilities, which still remains a problem at many international film festivals.

References:

Baños, Rocio. 2017. Audiovisual translation. In: Bedijs, Kristina, and Maaß, Christiane (eds.). *Manual of romance languages in the media*. Berlin: De Gruyter. pp. 471-488.

Conroy, Colette. 2019. How can theatre be fully accessible? In: Bleeker, Maaike, Kear, Adrian, Kelleher, Joe, and Roms, Heike (eds.). *Thinking through Theatre and Performance*. London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama.

Di Giovanni, Elena. 2018. Participatory accessibility: Creating audio description with blind and non-blind children. In: *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*. Volume 1(1): pp. 155-169.

Di Giovanni, Elena. 2020. *La traduzione audiovisiva e i suoi pubblici*. Napoli: Paolo Goffredo Editore.

Greco, Gian Maria. 2016(a). Accessibility, human rights, and the ghetto effect. Paper presented at: *The Conference Wounded Places: On the Integrity of the Body*. Beirut, Lebanon.

Greco, Gian Maria. 2016(b). On Accessibility as a human right, with an application to media accessibility. In: Matamala, Anna, and Orero, Pilar (eds.), *Researching Audio Description. New Approaches*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 11- 33.

Greco, Gian Maria. 2019. Accessibility Studies: Abuses, Misuses and the Method of Poietic Design. In: Stephanidis, Constantine (ed.). *HCI International 2019 – Late Breaking Papers. 21st HCI International*

Conference, HCII 2019. Orlando, FL, USA: Springer International Publishing. pp. 15-27.

Jiménez Hurtado, Catalina, Seibel, Claudia, and Soler Gallego, Silvia. 2012. Museum for all. Translation and interpreting for multimodal spaces as a tool for universal accessibility*. In: MonTI. Monografías de Traducción e Interpretación*. Volume (4): pp. 1–24.

Nornes, Abé Mark. 2007. Cinema Babel: *Translating Global Cinema*. Minneapolis, MN, USA: University of Minnesota Press.

Oncins, Estel la. 2013. The Process of Subtitling at Film Festivals: Death in Venice? In: *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. Volume (3-14): pp. 70-80.

Oncins, Estel la, Lopes, Oscar, Orero, Pilar, and Serrano, Javier. 2013. All Together now: A Multi-language and multi-system mobile application to make live performing arts accessible. In: *JoSTrans. The Journal of Specialised Translation*. Volume (20): pp. 147-164.

Orero, Pilar, Bestard, Joan, Edo, Miquel, Iturregui-Gallardo, Gonzalo, Matamala, Anna, Permuy, Iris Cristina, and De Solás, Hércules. 2019. La ópera accesible del siglo XXI: nuevos servicios, nuevas posibilidades. *TRANS. Revista de Traductología*. Volume (23): pp. 245-256.

Perego, Elisa. 2017. Audio description norms in Italy: state of the art and the case of "Senza Barriere". In: *Rivista Internazionale di Tecnica della Traduzione - International Journal of Translation*. Volume (19): pp.207-228.

RAI. 2016. *Norme e convenzioni essenziali per la composizione dei sottotitoli televisivi per non udenti* (Essential norms and guidelines for the creation of TV subtitles for the deaf). http://www.rai.it/dl/docs/1521654837138PREREGISTR_22_feb_2016_-_Norme_e_Convenzioni_essenziali_per_la_composiz....pdf. Accessed on: 13 September 2020.

Rizzo, Alessandra. 2019. Museums as disseminators of niche knowledge: Universality in accessibility for all. In: *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*. Volume (2-2): pp. 92–136.

Romero-Fresco, Pablo. 2006. Dubbing dialogues . . . naturally. The translation of transition markers in dubbing. Paper presented at *AFLS Symposium Cross-Cultural Pragmatics at a Crossroads: Speech Frames and Cultural Perceptions*. University of East Anglia.

Romero-Fresco, Pablo (ed.). 2015. *The Reception of Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Europe*. Bern: Peter Lang.

Snyder, Joel. 2007. Audio description: The visual made verbal. In: *International Journal of the Arts in Society*. Volume (2). pp. 99-104.

Snyder, Joel. 2010. Audio Description Guidelines and Best Practices - American Council of the Blind's Audio Description Project. http://docenti.unimc.it/catia.giaconi/teaching/2017/17069/files/corso-sostegno/audiodescrizioni. Accessed on: 14 September 2020.

Spoletti, Federico. 2006. Featured Interviews. In: *JoSTrans. Journal of Specialised Translation*. Volume (6).   https://jostrans.org/issue06/intspoletti.php. Accessed on: 15 September 2020.

Szarkowska, Agnieszka. 2013. Towards interlingual subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. In: *Perspectives Studies in Translatology*. Volume (21): pp. 68-81.

Szarkowska, Agnieszka, Krejtz, Izabela, Krejtz, Krzysztof, and Duchowski, Andrew. 2013. Harnessing the potential of eye-tracking for media accessibility. In: Grucza, Sambor, Płuzyczka, Monika, and Alnajjar, Justyna (eds.). *Translation studies and eye-tracking analysis*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang. pp. 153–183.

Szarkowska, Agnieszka, Pietrulewicz, Joanna, and Jankowska, Anna. 2015. Long questionnaire in Poland. In: Romero-Fresco, Pablo (ed.). *The Reception of Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Europe*. Bern: Peter Lang. 45-74.

Turan, Kenneth. 2002. *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made*. California, USA: University of California Press.

Wong, Cindy. 2011. *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen*. New Brunswick, NJ, USA: Rutgers University Press.

Filmography:

Boyle, Danny. 2008. Slumdog Millionaire.

Esser, Eric. 2019. The Angel of History.

Li Donni, Pierfrancesco. 2019. (Our Road) La nostra strada.

Martí, Emilio. 2019. Makun (no llores): Dibujos en un C.I.E.

Topchubaeva, Aidana. 2019. Ayana.