"Why can't you wear black shoes like the other mothers?" Preliminary investigation on the Italian language of audio description

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ABSTRACT

According to ITC guidelines (2000), audio description should be as objective as possible, provide only relevant information, avoid any personal judgement and patronising attitude. However, since audio description is relatively young and develops at different paces worldwide, theoretical approaches and practical applications are not homogenous. In Italy, for instance, audio description is not an academic discipline yet and initiatives aiming at increasing its use are very loosely connected. However, the amount of TV audio description is not irrelevant, nor is the yearly production by no-profit associations. The language used seems to be influenced by the relatively isolated, slow and new development of audio description in Italy, but also by its literary tradition and the 'cultural' attitude of professionals towards spoken and written language. Through corpus-driven analysis of an Italian and an English audio description script of the film Chocolat *(L. Hallström, 2000, USA-UK), this contribution aims at drawing attention to some features of the Italian language used, i.e. on the use of a written register and of formal and typically written syntactical structures. In addition, the article challenges relevance and objectivity in the Italian AD script which, although very far from ITC principles, generally seems to meet the expectations of the Italian blind audience.*

Introduction

Audio description is a relatively new practice aimed at enhancing the accessibility of different types of audiovisual products primarily to the blind and the visually impaired, using a pre-recorded or live audio track which 'translates' into words visual elements otherwise only accessible to sighted users. In recent times audio description has attracted scholars from various disciplines (Braun 2007; Orero 2005; Vercauteren 2007) and it has started to be taught as an academic discipline in language and translation-related faculties in a few countries (such as the UK, Spain and Belgium). However, the discussion on the position of audio description vis-à-vis Translation Studies and Audiovisual Translation is still on-going (Braun 2007; Gambier 2004; Hernandez and Mendiluce 2004; Hyks 2005; Orero 2005). On a more practical side, ITC guidelines (2000) are rated among the main references for all audio description professionals, both in the UK and abroad, while the applicability of some recommendations – especially with regard to objectivity, linguistic choices and selection of relevant information – is still discussed (Benecke 2007; Braun 2007; Snyder 2005). Indeed, if a number of articles and presentations have dealt so far with controversial issues of audio description (Braun 2007; Fix 2005; Bourne and Himenez Hurtado 2007; Matamala and Rami 2009), only few research works have been conducted on corpora to find more extensive evidence of the characteristics of the language of audio description (Piety 2004; Salway 2007). In particular, the TIWO (Television in Words) project has analysed 91 film scripts paving the way for a definition of audio description language as a Language for Special Purposes, given the regular presence of highly statistically evident idiosyncrasies, and of grammatical and semantic patterns which are rather unusual in general language. Nevertheless, if regularity and specificity of "actions" (Salway 2007; Vassiliou 2006) are typical of the English audio description language, it may not be the same for other languages. Drawing on this first research hypothesis, this paper opts for a comparative approach for a very preliminary investigation on linguistic aspects of Italian audio description and puts forward hypotheses on the reasons for the differences found. It provides some information on blindness and audio description in Italy and it draws on a comparative analysis of AD scripts, preceded by a short description of both the film and the methodology used. The text analysis, conducted by means of the software AntConc 3.2.1, is divided into two main parts. The first one is meant to position the language(s) used in the scripts against the background of spoken and written language by focusing on the most frequent verb entries and on the sentence structure. The second part focuses on the information selection process and analyzes relevance and objectivity in the description of colours and characters.

Before analysing the scripts, it seems useful to briefly provide some information on the situation of blind and visually impaired people and of audio description in Italy, since the existing academic literature on audio description does not cover the Italian situation. In Italy, degenerative diseases are the most prominent causes of blindness and low vision. Today there are over 352,000 blind people in Italy (about 1.7% of the whole population), with the highest incidence among those aged between 65 and 90[1]. Italian law provides for rehabilitation services and subsidies to people who are totally blind or affected by severe low vision only; no protection is guaranteed to people with low or moderate low vision. When it comes to media access, very little attention is paid to audio description. The national 2007-2009 agreement between the Government and the Italian Public TV and Radio Broadcaster (RAI) states that the number of programs audio described should increase to up to 60% of all programs, and that RAI should make efforts to enhance the quality of medium wave radio signals on which audio description today is still received by most households (though streaming mode is also available on the RAI website)[2]. Apart from RAI, blind people can enjoy audio description only on a few occasions[3], unless they subscribe to the service offered by the Trento-based social cooperative *Senza Barriere Onlus*[4]. A number of associations are striving for audio description to be considered not only for DVD and TV, but also for cinema and other forms of art (theatre, sport, museums, etc.). Among them, it is worth mentioning that associations like *Consequenze* and *Blindsight Project* have succeeded in having some films audio described for important festivals (Rome Fiction Fest, International Film Festival in Rome, Venice Film Festival); the newly born association *CulturAbile* brought audio description for the first time ever in Italy to a dance performance by Susanna Beltrami in Rome on the 5th December 2010 during the *Prima giornata nazionale dell'arte senza barriere.*

On the research side, in Italy audio description is not yet an academic discipline: so far, no academic articles have covered audio description and only a few dissertations have dealt with it (Antifona 2002; Pini 2005)[5].

No research has been conducted on the linguistic features of Italian audio description, but the idea of RAI is that audio description should use "essential, simple and clear terminology, so as to leave suitable room for personal interpretation and emotional involvement" and that it should help "understand why silent pauses occur, discover hidden *nuances* of the plot and possible hidden meanings of the characters' behaviours"[6]. The blind associations generally agree on the fact that the percentage of programs should be increased and that more types of programs should be audio described[7]; however, from a linguistic point of view, no evidence of complaint can be found, so we believe that the blind are generally happy with the service provided and that all other audio description providers are looking at RAI's example.

THE FILM

The analysis is based on the comparison of two audio described versions of the film *Chocolat*, one in Italian, the other in English. The choice of this film is due to the availability of both audio described versions at the time when the research work started (mid 2009). *Chocolat* is a romantic feature film based on the 1999 novel by Joanna Harris and starred, among others, Juliette Binoche (in the role of Vianne) and Johnny Depp (in the role of Roux) as protagonists. The film is the story of a young single mother, Vianne and her little daughter Anouk who arrive in the stubbornly religious and conservative French village of Lansquenet-sous-Tannes. Here, Vianne opens the *Chocolaterie Maya* in a disused bakery facing the church just before Easter. Conte de Reynaud, the opinionated mayor of the village, makes every effort to have the *chocolaterie* go bankrupt, hoping to preserve the morality of his citizens, tempted to over-indulge by Vianne's chocolate specialities. Vianne is willing to organise a chocolate party on Easter Sunday and soon the village is split into two factions. Through the ancient art of chocolate – Vianne's origins are Maya – Vianne feeds the art of getting to know the people around her and women in particular. Josephine is one of them. She is the battered wife of Serge, a rude bar tenant; thanks to Vianne, Josephine leaves Serge and learns the art of chocolate. The other woman is Armande, Vianne's landlord; depicted as an old, distrustful and suspicious woman, soon she turns out to be open-minded, free and tolerant. Thanks to Vianne, Armande meets her nephew, whom her daughter had never allowed her to see fearing that her zest for life and refusal to conform could have influenced the child negatively. While the inhabitants of Lansquenet refuse to welcome a group of gypsy people arrived in Lansquenet, Vianne shows true curiosity and a sense of friendship towards them. Indeed, she falls in love with Roux, a gypsy who lives on a boat. After Armande's birthday is celebrated on the gypsy's boat and the fire caused by jealous Serge, Vianne and Roux seem to be forced to separate forever. Meanwhile, Conte de Reynaud desperately tries to resist chocolate temptations until Easter but he is victim of his own insecurity and preconceptions: now fooled, he eats chocolate in the window of Vianne's shop and falls asleep. When Vianne finally decides to leave Lansquenet, the soul of her dead mother suggests her to stay. Indeed, Roux comes back to her, and they finally settle in Lansquenet with Anouk. The film closes on the successful party organised by Vianne at Easter. *Chocolat* is a film about indulgence and guilt, pleasure and fears; chocolate is a mood-changing substance, and plays as a *leitmotiv* in the whole film. The smell of chocolate is the key to the heart of people and has magic properties, though it always remains something quite ordinary.

Though the story is simple and linear, the plot is more articulated: indeed, events are narrated by adult Anouk, whose voice represents an omniscient narrator who often steps into the film narration to comment, make explicit,

anticipate or postpone some clues. In addition, her voice is clearly that of an old woman, which adds something magic to the narration. The narration opens with the arrival of Vianne and Anouk in Lansquenet, the external voice explaining that Comte De Reynaud is inviting all citizens to come. Events are then narrated with the same time progression as the story, except for a few feedbacks and digressions. From an audio description perspective, some form of description is already provided by the external narrating voice and audio description should harmonise the information provided in a consistent progression. Indeed, the voice of the external narrator and the audio description are kept well separated in both versions, due to the fact that audio description is performed by a male voice in both cases.

Methodology

The analysis has been conducted on the scripts of the audio described versions of the film *Chocolat* in Italian and English. The English script analysed was made available by RNIB, while the Italian one was produced by the social cooperative *Senza Barriere* and it is not a translation of the English version. The English version was accessed through the TIWO project after special authorisation for research purposes. The Italian script was transcribed from the film DVD itself by means of a speech recognition software (Dragon Naturally Speaking 10). The dictation was followed by a revision and editing phase; all time-in and time-out codes, information about the casting and credits were removed from the English script. Finally, the two texts were analysed using the software AntConc 3.2.1 which provides fast and reliable results for corpus driven text analysis[8]. However, a pure corpus-based text analysis was not the main goal of our analysis; the use of a corpus-analysis software has to be considered as purely 'instrumental' to our research purposes. Due to limited availability of data (only 2 texts were processed), all hypotheses are a preliminary research stage to be double-checked and verified against more extensive comparative research. Quantitative and qualitative observations have been combined, as in paragraph 3.3.1. Examples about sentence structure, relevance and objectivity (respectively § 3.3.1.2 and § 3.3.2) have been retrieved manually, because the software does not allow for Part-of-Speech tagging.

Text analysis
Audio description between written and spoken language

Audio description is written to be read: any audio description production process has a written phase but the final product is an audio track produced orally. However, the language of audio description does not entirely match with spoken or with

written language (Piety 2004). These are not only linguistic phenomena but also situational, proxemic, sociolinguistic and, more generally, cultural events which require a very complex representation. If, as stated by Chafe (1982: 45-49) "while speakers interact with their audience, writers do not", even though AD is actually meant to have a strong interactional function and a feedback effect on the target audience, it cannot be defined as 'spoken'. Indeed, according to Chafe (1982: 45), while the written language is more detached, spoken language is more involved and "more concerned with experiential richness". Evidence for the detachment of written language could be found in a statistically higher use of passive forms compared to spoken language (Chafe 1982). In addition, spoken language shows a higher frequency of the first person pronoun ('I'), which is related to the control of the information flow during the communication process (Chafe 1982: 47 and *passim*). Audio description makes consistent use of the third person but usually opts for active instead of passive forms. Rhythm, intonation, volumes, voice tone variations, pauses and reformulations are prototypical of spoken language (Halliday 1985) but cannot find relevant equivalence in the written language. In fact, differences between spoken and written language cannot be reduced to the presence/absence of given (para)linguistic features but need to be 'measured' on the degree of representativeness of those features in the phenomena analysed[9]. Indeed, while Bazzanella (1994) states that differences between spoken and written language have a formal nature and Marcato (1985) says they are more situational, Lehmann (1988) stresses that linguistic phenomena should be described as part of a *continuum*: texts are not spoken OR written, they stand in between spoken-spoken texts (spontaneous, non-planned conversation) and written-written texts (formal, planned written texts). In such a perspective, also the linguistic features of audio description would be considered more from a qualitative than from a quantitative point of view. Benecke and Dosch (2004: 24) state that in audio description "formal, written language must be avoided as this hinders a lively description following the motion and life of the movie". Similarly, Orero (2007) stresses that "AD should be a neutral discourse written to be read aloud and narrated, rather than a description of the film which by its very similitude to the filmic discourse appears part of that film".

The following paragraphs provide some examples to show how the Italian language used in the script of *Chocolat* strongly tends to be close to written language. Therefore, it seems useful to provide some insights into spoken and written language in Italy.

For many years written language has been considered as prevailing on the spoken language, described in some sort of negative ontology (Biber 1988; Cortelazzo 1985; Dardano 1994; Sabatini 1990; Sobrero 1993; Voghera 1992). Over recent years, however, the phenomenology of spoken and written phenomena has been investigated also thanks to the analysis of various spoken language corpora . Indeed, drawing on an elaboration of the distinction made by Bazzanella (1994), the most outstanding differences between spoken and written language in

Italian have been recently listed (Arma 2007). From a phonological/graphemic point of view, written language is characterized, for instance, by a pre-organized structure, by the graphemic/visual channel, by low incidence of supra-segmental, deictic and paralinguistic features, as well as by a reduced phatic function and no immediate feedback. Italian spoken language, on the contrary, appears to be characterized by low pre-organization, by the use of the phonic/acoustic channel, by a high level of suprasegmental features and immediate feedback. These macro- and micro-features trigger syntactical, morphological, grammatical and lexical aspects, typical of spoken and written language. In particular, word order in written language is subject to organization, is characterised by a Subject+(passive)Verb+(Agent)Object structure, a large number of verbal units, explicitness, reduced variation in discourse organisation, high lexical density, higher use of specific terminology, strategic repetitions and pronominal anaphoric expressions. From the same perspective, Italian spoken language is characterized by marked word order within a sentence, dislocations and topicalisations, a high incidence of noun strings, higher variation in discourse organisation, pauses, hesitations, low lexical density and lexical choices belonging to general language, as well as repetitions, (self)corrections, modal particles, and an extensive use of the phatic function. These features refer to standard forms of spoken and written language, however some forms could be unusual in standard written language (Arma 2007), and some others are much more frequent in the standard written language than in the spoken one. Of course the range of Italian variants should also take into account sub-standard, regional, popular, dialectic, social and diaphasic language varieties (Sabatini 1985; Arma 2007).

To look or to be?

The analysis of the scripts started with frequency lists. We decided to look at the most frequent verbal entry in both scripts, as there appears to be a correlation between the use of these words and the text semantics.

The number of tokens is 4,840 in the English version (with 1,258 different types), and 6,108 (with 1,925 types) in the Italian one. This makes 3.17 for the type/token ratio field in Italian and 3.85 in English. Although such data should not be considered as reliable *per se*, they are useful to make some hypotheses on language variation. Indeed, the first most frequent verb in the English script is the third person of the verb 'to look'[10]. For this reason, we have chosen to analyse the semantic environment of this KWIC both in English and in Italian. 'Looks' ranks 23rd among the most frequent words, and recurs 34 times. It is always used as a verb throughout the script; indeed, it always indicates the directionality of a character's eye movement on the scene. Table 1 below shows some collocations of the word 'looks' in the text.

Table 1. Collocations of 'looks' in the AD script of *Chocolat*.

Indeed, 'looks' mainly collocates with prepositions such as 'at', 'around', 'up', 'down', 'across', 'towards'. These results are in line with those obtained on the bigger TIWO corpus (Salway 2005, 2007). In that case, too, 'looks' was seen to be the most frequent verbal occurrence (Vassiliou 2006). Looking at the Italian script, we observe that the most frequent item is the third person singular of the verb 'to be' (i.e. '*è*', from the infinitive '*essere*'), ranking 25th with 33 occurrences in the script. From a contrastive perspective, this could mean that the directionality of eye movement is not primarily outlined in the Italian AD script. In order to check this hypothesis, we looked at the occurrences of the Italian verb *guardare*, which primarily translates the English verb 'to look'[11] and occurs only 5 times in the script:

Table 2. Occurrences of *guardare* in the AD script of *Chocolat*.

However, these results are not sufficient to prove our hypothesis, since the semantic spectrum of the English 'to look' and the Italian 'guardare' is quite extended. Indeed, 34 occurrences of 'looks' should be added to 6 hits of 'stare*', 5 hits of 'gaze*', 6 hits of 'watch*', 1 hit of 'glance*' and 'peep*'; 4 expressions contain 'catching sight'; 14 hits are registered for 'see*' but do not express eye movements[12]. This makes a total of 56 verbal hits expressing eye movements on the scene. The Italian version shows 5 hits of *guarda* and 10 hits of *osserva*. However with a closer analysis, it becomes clear that the semantic field is split into a variety of verbs and expression, such as *fissa** ('stares', 11 hits), *rivolge** (1 hit), *squadra** (3 hits), *scruta** (4 hits), *sbircia** (1 hit), *volge lo sguardo* (1 hit*), *lanciare uno sguardo* (3 hits), *posare lo sguardo* (1 hit), *abbassare lo sguardo* (1 hit), *far scorrere lo sguardo* (1 hit), *scambiarsi uno sguardo* (1 hit). If we look at the KWIC *eye** (in Italian *occh**), we notice that it produces 14 hits (among them 'to catch the eye on', 'to keep one's eye on', 'to close eyes', 'to open eyes'). The Italian *occh** produces 19 hits; among them, we find *lanciare un'occhiata, posare gli occhi su, cercare con gli occhi* and incrociare *con gli occhi*. As a preliminary observation, evidence shows that where the English audio description makes consistent use of 'look*', the Italian often chooses different high register verbal expressions – unusual in spoken language and rather typical of written literary language. To this end, various written and spoken language corpora were interrogated (CoLFIS, CORIS/CODIS, CLIPS)[13].

Sentence structure

From the syntactical point of view, both English and Italian sentences tend to respect the Subject+(passive)Verb+(Agent)Object; however while there are few secondary clauses in the English script[14], the Italian one is characterised by many embedded secondary clauses, mostly noun phrases or temporal/causal clauses, typical of the Italian written language. Indeed, in the Italian script there are 339 subordinate clauses out of a total number of 853 clauses. Table 3 shows a few parallel examples:

English AD	Italian AD	Back translation
1a) As they pass the *chocolaterie*, Vianne is arranging the window display. She waves to them.	1b) *Vianne intanto sta sistemando la vetrina e vedendoli passare sulla piazza li saluta con un gesto della mano affacciandosi alla porta.*	In the meantime, Vianne is arranging the window display and as she sees them passing by in the square, she waves at them leaning by the door
2a) Reluctant to speak, they silently nod their appreciation of the succulent food.	2b) *Tutti sorridono estasiati, ogni tensione si scioglie finché esplode un riso liberatorio pieno di gioia semplice e autentica.*	Everybody is smiling, happily, the tension is gone bursting into a liberating, joyful, simple and genuine laughter.
3a) At home, the Comte de Reynaud takes a summer dress from the wardrobe and starts to cut it to ribbons with a huge pair of scissors.	3b) *In quel mentre il conte colto da un'irrefrenabile attacco di rabbia fruga nell'armadio della moglie per tagliuzzare i suoi vestiti con un grosso paio di forbici sperando così di vendicarsi per il tradimento subito.*	In that moment, the Comte de Reynaud is prey of an unstoppable rage and is searching his wife's closet to cut through all her clothes with a big pair of scissors. Doing so, he hopes to get revenge for the betrayal.
4a) As he draws the sweet morsel into his mouth his eyes close and he sighs with ecstasy.	4b) *La lingua allora come mossa da volontà propria fuoriesce a leccare quel dolce con una sensazione meravigliosa, paradisiaca.*	As if moved by its own will, the tongue reaches for the sweet and licks it, with a heavenly, blissful sensation

Table 3. Comparison of the English and the Italian sentence structure in the two versions of the audio description.

Interestingly, many examples (41 out of 126 adjectives in noun groups) in the Italian script show that the adjective in the noun group is put before the noun it refers to, such as in *graziosa signora* ('nice woman'), *strani disegni* ('strange

drawings'), *candidi fiocchi di neve* ('white snow flakes'), *aperta campagna* ('vast countryside'), *pessime condizioni*"('bad conditions'), *antiche terre* ('ancient places'), *vigorosa stretta di mano* ('strong handshake'), *vecchi fogli di giornale* ('old newspapers' pages), *delicati petali di rosa* ('delicate rose petals'), *inquietanti scene di morte* ('worrying death scenario'). Indeed the standard position of adjectives in Italian in the noun group is after the noun they refer to (Scarano 2000). Though both in spoken and written language the percentage of adjectives put before the noun is around 13% (Scarano 2000), differences in their use do not emerge from purely quantitative analysis but from considerations on their 'qualitative' use. In spoken language, adjectives put before the noun are frequent in formulaic expressions and generally with adjectives which explicitly require that syntactical position, where they lose their original meaning and therefore cannot be considered as lexical choices. In written language, the adjectival position before the noun stands for a more creative and free use of the language. Ultimately traditional grammar assigns to the choice of this position a non-restrictive function and a subjective value. Postponed adjectives in the noun group are assigned a more restrictive function in the identification of the properties described (Scarano 2000).

INFORMATION SELECTION: RELEVANCE AND OBJECTIVITY

Relevance in audio description is a central but controversial issue. On the one hand, only relevant information should be selected and provided in a way that fits into the time spans allowed by the dialogues and the sound track; on the other hand, the same film could be audio described in many different ways, since audio description is an "inexact science" and "there are many ways of getting to an end result" (Hyks 2006). Indeed, practices change from country to country and even from company to company. Audio describing indeed appears to be a complex activity which requires "intense assessment and decision processes" (Braun 2007: 6). Taking into account the cognitive load triggered by audio description could help to improve the information selection process. Often, *how* information is selected depends greatly on the skills of the audio describer, on his/her personal taste, or on the requirements of the target audience. In addition, as stressed by Pujol and Orero (2007) the output is influenced by the individual interpretation of reality. Once the primary information has been selected and prioritised, another problem is how objective or subjective is the description provided, to what extent the audio describer can add information and what type of information he/she can add. In the following paragraph, we will see how the Italian audio description of *Chocolat* deals with the selection of relevant information and to which extent the description can be considered subjective; to this purpose, we will deal with the description of colours and characters.

According to ITC guidelines (2000), colours need to be audio described for a fully enjoyable description of objects and characters on the screen. For this reason, as an example, we have compared the occurrences of 'black/dark' in the English script to *ner*/scur** in the Italian one. Dark is the colour of chocolate, dark are the clothes of many inhabitants in Lansquenet, dark are the shoes of all women in the village, dark is the storm announcing the arrival of Vianne and Anouk. 'Dark' is a recurrent colour and there are reasons to believe that as it is a semantically relevant element it should not be neglected.

In the English script, 'dark' occurs 10 times, against the three occurrences of 'black'. It is used, in nearly all cases, to characterise an object or a character (e.g. dark-haired, dark skinned). In a single case only is it used in some kind of dead metaphor to tell that a person is very angry:
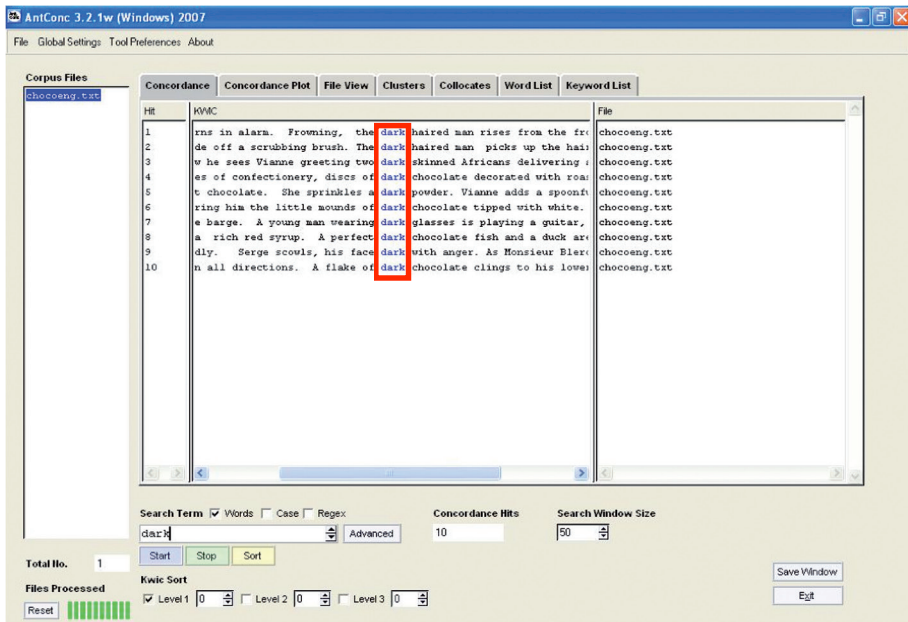

Table 4. Occurrences of 'dark' in the AD script of *Chocolat*.

Table 5. Occurrences of 'black' in the AD script of *Chocolat*.

The same colour, in the Italian script, occurs fewer times than expected:

Table 6. Occurrences of *ner** in the AD script of *Chocolat*.

Out of 7 occurrences, only 3 refer to the colour 'black' (the query 'ner*' was made without specifying masculine or feminine preference). *Scur** only occurs once.

Another crucial colour in the story is red. Red are the clothes of Vianne and Anouk when they first arrive in Lansquenet, red is the colour of Vianne's shoes (against the black shoes of all other women in the village), red is the colour of the flames in the fire caused by Serge to kill Vianne and Josephine, *Roux* in French means 'red' and is the name of the gypsy man whom Vianne falls in love with. The next table shows the hits of 'red' in the text:

Table 7. Occurrences of 'red' in the AD script of *Chocolat*.

Occurrences of Italian *ross** ('red') are shown in next table:

Table 8. Occurrences of *ross** in the AD script of *Chocolat*.

The Italian script contains only 2 occurrences of the hit *ross**, one referring to the coat of Vianne and Anouk, the other to the pepper which Vianne puts into the chocolate. The Italian script seems less concerned with colour details and their semantic frequency and importance throughout the text.

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

The most outstanding differences in the approach to AD are in the characters description and in the selection of relevant physical or mental states to audio describe. As an example, we will show how Roux is described the first time he appears in the story. The second box contains the description of Serge, Josephine's husband.

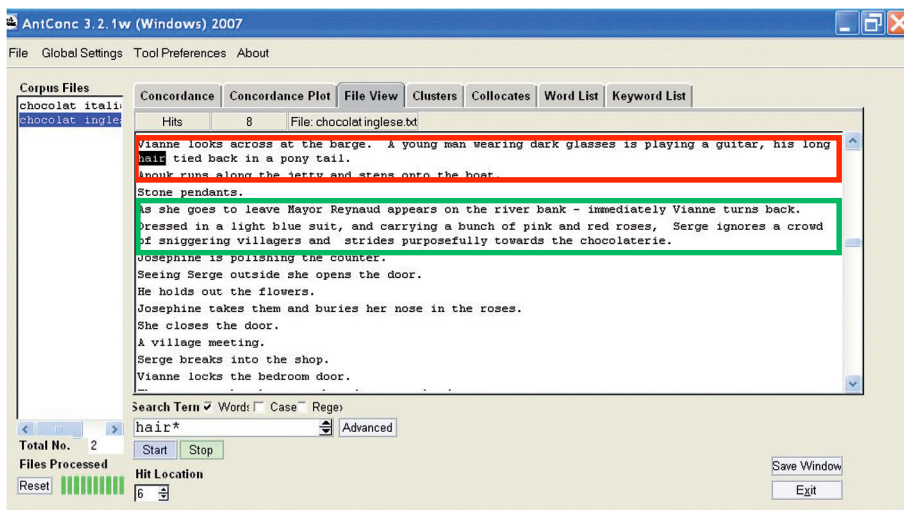Table 9. Description of Roux and Serge in the English audio description.

Serge is described as "dressed in a light blue suit", bringing "pink and red roses"; the villagers around him are "sniggering". In addition, the English audio description describes the most relevant features of Roux's appearance: "dark glasses", "long tied hair", "young man".

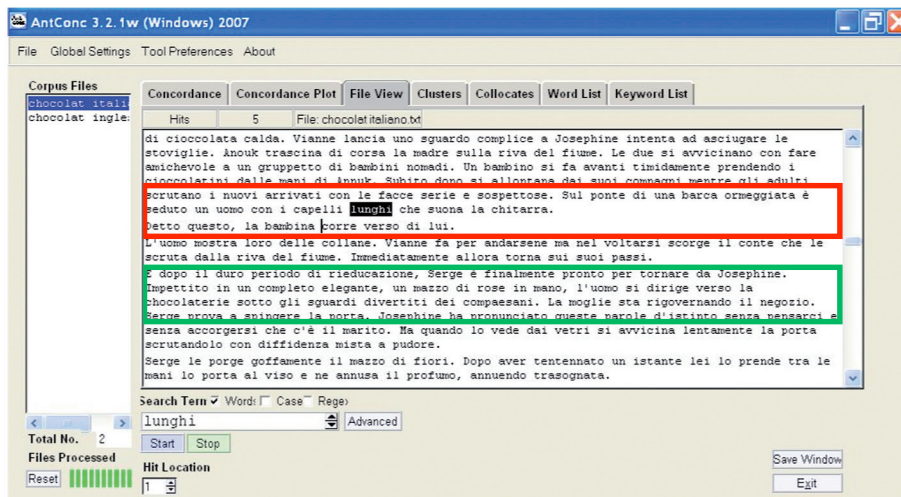The Italian version describes the scene as follows:[15]

Table 10. Description of Roux and Serge in the Italian AD script of *Chocolat*.

The Italian version only describes Roux as a man with long hair, playing a guitar on a small boat. Serge is described as "*impettito in un completo elegante*" ('proudly wearing an elegant suit'); the colour of his roses is not mentioned at all (*"un mazzo di rose in mano"*, i.e. 'carrying a bunch of roses'). Moreover, the Italian version adds a narrative explication for Serge's behaviour, and stresses that after very hard time for re-education to good manners, Serge is ready to go back to his wife.

Closing remarks

This article drew on preliminary observations on the comparison of two audio described versions of the same film, i.e. *Chocolat*. We have stressed that the development of audio description in Italy does not only depend on the relatively isolated position of the country with regard to audio description, but it also seems to rely on the written literary tradition of the country. Both from the lexical and syntactical point of view, the Italian language used in this script tends more to variety and complexity than it does to regularity and simplicity. On the lexical side, we have analysed the collocations of the verb 'to look' in English and *guardare* ('to look') in Italian: the analysis has stressed that the Italian semantic spectrum is covered by a number of linguistic choices (mostly belonging to higher written register). On the syntactical side, we have shown that the Italian script contains a higher number of secondary clauses if compared to the English one. As to objectivity and information selection, we have shown how the Italian audio description is filled in with subjectively orientated interpretations rather than with objective observations and maintains a more 'narrative' mood if compared to the English one. More corpus-based comparative analysis and

reception studies would be needed, with specific regard to the relation between written language and narration, the 'hearing habits' of blind people (the role of radio could contribute to the analysis) and the satisfaction of the audience towards different approaches to audio description. This article is intended to be a first step in this direction.

1 http://www.sedesoi.com/ index＿eng.asp (accessed 1st December 2009).

2 In the first semester of 2009 RAI audiodescribed 6 films/ fiction for TV and 17 sit-comedies (accounting for 120 episodes).

3 Apart from TV, AD in Italy is available at the Teatro di Messina (Sicily). In summer 2009 an AD team coordinated by Elena di Giovanni provided two ADs for opera in Macerata. The association Cinema senza Barriere ('Cinema without barriers') yearly organizes barrier-free performances and has audiodescribed many films.

4 The blind associates are asked to pay an annual subscription fee; they are entitled to receive audio described films on a DVD containing the AD track.

5 As far as we know, no PhD thesis has dealt so far with AD. The first one should be discussed by the author of this article in 2011-2012.

6 Own translation of "[...] l'uso di una terminologia chiara e precisa, ma essenziale, che lasci il giusto spazio all'interpretazione personale e alla partecipazione emotiva di chi ascolta." And: "[...] capire il 'perché' di momenti di silenzio, scoprire "sfumature" della storia e delle relazioni che legano i personaggi".

7 http://www.superabile.it/web/it/ CANALI＿TEMATICI/Viaggi＿e＿ Tempo＿libero/Inchieste＿e＿ Dossier/info561554978.html (accessed 1st December 2009).

8 This is a freeware for Windows, Macintosh OS X and Linux. It can be downloaded from Laurence Anthony Laboratory website (http://www.antlab.sci.waseda. ac.jp/software.html).

9 Source: http://www. parlaritaliano.it/parlare/ (accessed 1st December 2009).

10 Entries from 1 to 24 include grammatical words like (from the most to the less frequent) 'the', 'a', 'and', 'her', 'of', 'to', 'at', 'in', 'on', 'with', 'into, 'The'; characters, personal and possessive adjectives/ pronouns rank before the entry 'looks' and respectively: 'Vianne' (97 hits), 'his' (81 hits), 'He' (46 hits), 'She' (46 hits), 'she' (46 hits), 'Anouk' (41 hits), 'chocolate' (41 hits), 'Reynaud' (36 hits), 'Josephine' (35 hits), 'he' (35 hits).

11 To this end, we used the Oxford-Paravia (2006) bilingual dictionary.

12 To find out the English verbs covering the semantic field of the verb 'to look', we used the Oxford Dictionary of English (1971). To find out the Italian verbs covering the semantic field of guardare, we used the Italian Dictionary by Devoto and Oli (2003).

13 The corpora that we mentioned are respectively accessible at: http://www.istc.cnr.it/material/ database/colfis/, http://corpus. cilta.unibo.it:8080/coris＿ita.html and http://www.cirass.unina.it/ (accessed 29 December 2009).

14 AntConc does not provide for Part-of-Speech tagging nor for counting primary and secondary clauses. The predominance of secondary clauses in the scripts has been verified against manual check and could therefore be subject to errors. In the English script, only 147 out of 707 are subordinate clauses.

15 Back translation of the description of Roux: "The villagers peer at the newcomers with serious and suspicious glances. On the deck of a moored boat, a man with long hair, playing guitar, is sitting. Once said that, the girl runs towards him"; back translation of the description of Serge: "And after the long re-education period, Serge is now ready to go back to Josephine. Proudly wearing an elegant suit, carrying a bunch of roses, the man heads towards the chocolate shop among the fellow citizens' amused glances. His wife is tiding up the shop".

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