

Contrasting Visual and Verbal Cueing of Space: strategies and devices in the audio description of film

Maija Hirvonen

University of Helsinki, Finland

ABSTRACT

This article studies audio description, a form of intermodal (or intersemiotic) translation that renders visual and, occasionally, auditory information in a verbal-vocal form for the benefit of visually impaired people. It compares visual and verbal representation in the context of narrative film in which space is strongly cued through the visual channel. The focus is on shot distance, which controls the amount of space visible in a shot. The study analyses how shot distance is reflected in audio description by syntactic and semantic means. Four different-language audio descriptions of two films were analysed, contrasting the visual source text with the verbal translation. The study aims to show how audio description can make use of diverse representational strategies and linguistic devices in rendering shot distance. These strategies and devices could be used purposely to compensate for visual cues so as to give an idea of space similar to that conveyed by the visual representation.

KEYWORDS: audio description, film, intermodal translation, linguistic devices, representational strategies, shot distance, spatial cues.