Representation in Media Accessibility:
On the Adoption of a Queer Feminist Perspective

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Abstract

This article is a theoretical essay discussing the potential for the analysis of media accessibility contents and practices (AD, SDH, Sign Language Interpreting, etc.) through a queer feminist lens, which makes it possible to tackle the representation of diversity and non-normativity. Based on a literature review of previous works on the intersection of Queer and Feminist Studies, and Media Accessibility and Disability Studies, it shows the need for this approach based on the nature of media accessibility services, which primarily cater for people with disabilities, a historically excluded minority actively involved in the claim for socio-cultural space and representation.

It then proposes a method of work and analysis that combines queer and feminist translation strategies – a method, which is subsequently applied to commercial instances of audio description of diversity. The conclusions highlight the need to bring accessibility closer to contemporary concerns in research, i.e., gender, queer, feminist, and postcolonial issues. Some future lines of research are proposed, such as the expansion of this model of analysis to other accessibility services or the call for interlinguistic studies.

Key words: media accessibility, audiovisual translation, gender, queer, disability, feminism.

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1. Introduction

Recent audiovisual pieces have featured non-normative characters and narratives that show more complex non-normative identities (Martínez-Pleguezuelos, 2020), whose representation has increased in the last decade (GLAAD Media Institute, 2023). In the field of translation, the representation of minorities, subalterns, or oppressed subjects as put by Spivak (1988), has been seen as a motor for change in the heterosexual system (Rodrigues Júnior, 2004). As put by Castro and Ergun, "translation (as a feminist praxis) is embraced as a tool and model of cross-border dialogue, resistance, solidarity and activism in pursuit of justice and equality for all" (2017, p. 1). With this holistic approach to feminism, disability as an identity-making factor is added to other minorities historically marginalised and excluded, such as women, racialised and queer individuals, since "social norms related to gender, sexuality and disability co-construct one another" (Kimball et al., 2018). This approach to translation highlights the role of the translator as an active agent, making translation a deliberate and intentional act (von Flotow, 2012). This is particularly relevant for audiovisual translation (AVT), which has become a mainstream bridge between cultures and is potentially responsible for the reproduction of stereotypes (de Marco, 2006).

Since the cultural turn in Translation Studies (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990), in which attention shifted towards the cultural and social aspects of translation, the discipline has opened up to a diversity of fields to understand how texts impact present and future rewritings in what Gentzler (2017) has coined as post-translational approach. With the permeability described in post-translational perspectives, Bassnett and Johnston (2018) establish an outward turn in Translation Studies that expands its purposes and limits to diversify debate, transforming the discipline into a necessarily interdisciplinary research space. The present paper wants to move this meeting point for debate to the contents of media accessibility services by opening to feminist and queer theories and strategies.

Important works have been published on feminist (Castro & Ergun, 2017; von Flotow & Kamal, 2021) and queer translation theory (Epstein & Gillett, 2017; Baer & Kaindl, 2018), and although some scholars have focused on AVT exclusively (Martínez-Pleguezuelos, 2018; Villanueva & Chaume, 2021), the application of queer feminist perspectives to media accessibility has rarely been addressed and, if so, only to services for the blind and visually impaired (Villela & Iturregui-Gallardo, 2020; Stangl et al., 2020; Bennett et al., 2021). This article aims to create a theoretical framework able to establish synergies between Media Accessibility and Gender Studies. It combines fields such as Feminist, Queer, and Disability Studies with Translation Studies to approach media accessibility contents by means of a gender-conscious lens with the aim of ethically portraying diversity. Such portrayal will have an impact on the understanding of minorities that people with disabilities may receive through the forced mediation found in accessibility services.

The literature review springs from the co-construction of disability, queerness, and feminism, that not only explores non-normativity within the heterosexual, patriarchal, ableist, and racist system, but also its entanglement in intersectionality, which accounts for the complexity of the different kinds of oppression exerted on a subject (McRuer, 2006, 2018; Kafer, 2013; Smilges, 2022; Garland-Thomson,

2005). Based on works on disability and representation (Bennett et al., 2021; Stangl et al., 2020), the article goes on to discuss models of representation in the media (Clark, 1969; Hall, 2018; Casey et al., 2007). It then moves to Translation and AVT Studies that have dealt with representation through works on feminist and queer translation (cf. Castro & Emek, 2017; Baer, 2020; Baer & Kaindl, 2018).

This theoretical framework serves as an introduction to fruitful models of analysis and translation proposed by both feminist and queer translation scholars who have worked to bring to the fore non-normative identities and narratives otherwise hidden or misconceived (Démont, 2018; Castro, 2008). The article will also explore the scarce studies that discussed gender in media accessibility services (Singh, 2019; Villela & Iturregui-Gallardo, 2020; Oppegaard & Miguel, 2022; Bennett et al., 2021; Iturregui-Gallardo, 2023a). Finally, the theoretical and methodological framework proposed is applied to relevant instances of media accessibility contents, particularly AD. The conclusions are wrapped up with a call for further research on other accessibility services and languages.

2. Co-Constructing Identities: Disability, Gender, and Queerness

Resistance against the compulsory normativity resulting from a social system that has historically left non-normative subjects, identities, practices, and communities in "peripheral spaces in relation to cisgender and heteronormative matrices" (Villanueva-Jordan & Martínez-Pleguezuelos, 2021, p. 77), first materialised through feminist ideas. However, initial postulates were later questioned due to their homogeneous white (Crenshaw, 1989), straight (Wittig, 1992), and ableist (Kafer, 2013) nature. Different waves of feminism(s) included new marginalised identities and revealed the entanglement of different axes of discrimination by refusing to consider them as separate categories (Crenshaw, 1989). In this sense, feminist scholarship focuses not only on women's issues but goes further "to critically analyze the entire gender system" (Garland-Thomson, 2005, p. 1557). Intersectionality explains how "individuals located perilously at the interstices of race, class, gender, and disability are constituted as non-citizens and (no) bodies" (Erevelles & Minear, 2013, p. 355).

Garland-Thomson (2005) suggests that if feminism questions the borders of the term woman, disability as a category of analysis provides "fresh ways of thinking about the complexity of embodied identity", "a vector of socially constructed identity and a form of embodiment that interacts with both the material and the social environments." (p. 1559). It is then important to observe minorities to see what discourses disabled, queer, and racialised bodies produce (Kafer, 2013). McRuer (2006) maintains that "the system of compulsory able-bodiedness, which in a sense produces disability, is thoroughly interwoven with the system of compulsory heterosexuality that produces queerness" (p. 2). Accordingly, queerness has been intimately related to disability as an identity-constructing feature through failure (Halberstam, 2011), temporality and death (Edelman, 2004), and silence and absence (Smilges, 2022), which articulate a discourse of negativity contrary to the desired normativity: queerness, disability, and feminism stand as "meaning-making strategies enacted by minoritarian populations to defend themselves against dominant discourses" (Smilges, 2022, p. 8).

Drawing from Anzaldúa (1987), these non-normative bodies are bodies that are atravesados [traversed], depicted as "the other, heterogenous, [and] out of the norm" (Vidal Claramonte, 2015, p. 348). In the field of translation and media accessibility, such non-normative bodies travel from one language to another, from one cultural space to another, or from one semiotic code to another. Understood as texts and discursive constructions (Baer & Massardier-Kenney, 2016), non-normative bodies enter a boundless process of rewriting that can provide visibility and "promote integrative social change" (Martínez-Pleguezuelos, 2021, p. 109), which places great emphasis on the importance of the role of the translator (or accessibility professional) as constructor of bodies and their representation (Villanueva-Jordan & Martínez-Carrasco, 2023).

It is essential for the translator to adopt "a critical sense of translational dynamics", to think of identities not as self-evident categories but situated constructs (Bassi, 2014, p. 299). Understanding translation as a metastatement of a source text, a statement that constitutes an interpretation of the source text, the ideology of the translator, or accessibility professional here, as well as their approach to the content and its relation to the final user will necessarily define the mediated message (Tymoczko, 2002). The intersemiotic nature of media accessibility, through which we aim in most cases to substitute and strengthen the channel that the final receptor of the translated text cannot (fully) access, calls for a social perspective on both the original and the target mediated product. Naturally, for this approach to exist, the translator/accessibility professional is forced to rethink their own ideological position and understanding of the text, its content, and its end user. The way non-normative identities are portrayed in contents that are going to be consumed by people with disabilities, who might have partial access to the contents and who might have shaped their identities through their disabilities or intersectional nature, is going to have an impact on their own identity, meaning-making processes, and understandings of other identities.

3. Representing the Non-Normative: From Race to Queerness

Fiction is unable to show a real and impartial representation of reality; on the contrary, it guides audiences to make sense of the subjects and their significance by assigning them meaning (Casey et al., 2007). Hall (1996) rejects the idea of a completed and defined subject and calls for a constant dialogue with discourse-making in a historical, cultural, and social context.

> Identities are constructed through, not outside, difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, (…) that the 'positive' meaning of any term—and thus its 'identity'—can be constructed. (p. 4)

In fact, he proposes a critical approach to traditional universal identity policies since most often, dominant groups in society determine how identities are represented in relation to gender, class, or race (Hall, 2018). Moreover, Dyer (2002) stresses the material impact that representations can have on the lives of marginalised social groups.

How minorities have been represented by the media has attracted the interest of scholars since the beginning of the 20th century and most particularly between the 1960s and the 1990s (Fitzgerald, 2010). Such studies focused primarily on the representation of race, particularly African Americans, on which Clark's work (1969) set a precedent. Clark's representation model describes four stages (as summarised by Fitzgerald, 2010): (a) Non-recognition: a given minority group is not acknowledged by the dominant media to even exist; (b) Ridicule: certain minority characters are portrayed as stupid, silly, lazy, irrational, or simply laughable; (c) Regulation: certain minority characters are presented as enforcers or administrators of the dominant group's norms; and (d) Respect: the minority group in question is portrayed no differently than any other group. Interracial relationships would also not appear extraordinary.

Clark's model has also been applied to LGBTQ+ minorities (Raley & Lucas, 2006; Moore, 2015), which serves as rationale to extend it to other minorities, such as disabled people. As a matter of fact, McRuer (2006) claims that certain discourses are reproduced for both disabled and queer people: people with disabilities have been either completely erased or ridiculed, and also regulated, as in slogans or advertisements in which they are shown as heroes or fighters. Likewise, gays and lesbians have been represented reproducing heteronormative homogeneity, leaving aside more queer representations of gay and lesbian experiences.

How professional practice in media accessibility services mediates for users that only partially access the contents of an audiovisual product (visual component or aural, for instance), will have an impact on the representation of said identities. When using feminist and queer translation approaches to media accessibility services, such non-normative identities defined traditionally by "monolithic categories", find "openings that allow for the overcoming (…) of preconceived ideas, irreflexive readings or inherited stereotypes" (Martínez Pleguezuelos, 2021, p. 693). Different approaches can be taken when representing diversity in texts produced as part of accessibility services (e.g., subtitles for the deaf or AD for the blind) in the same way as different perspectives can be adopted when translating written texts or the main AVT modes. The mediation of the original content should ethically convey diversity so that the rereading of non-normativity offers a critical vision of the established traditional ways of representation. In here, what is ethical refers to the ethos, as presented by Amossy (2014), which deals with the traces of the identity construction of the producer of discourse in actual discourse. In the field of translation, Sporturno (2022) talks about collective ethos in relation to the understanding and portrayal of certain groups and identities, which can be critically analysed through feminist and queer postulates.

4. Translating the Non-Normative: On Feminist and Queer Translation

In the context of postmodernism, the awareness of the multiplicity of feminisms questions the possibility of creating faithful and objective translations intended as a neutral ideology, since this passivity might lead to the continuation of the established patriarchal system. Queer theories, in turn,

arise from feminist theory but detach from it in that they aim to go beyond the old binaries (von Flotow, 2012). After overcoming prescriptivist postulates towards the more descriptive approaches, translation becomes the ideal space to identify the discursive power dynamics that contribute to the formation of non-normative sexualities (Martínez-Pleguezuelos, 2018). If feminist translation tries "to actively validate the different types of feminisms (in plural) and ultimately eradicate (the also plural) gender discrimination" (Castro, 2008, p. 286, my translation), queer translation aims to bring to the surface sexual and gender diversity to unmask essentialist ideas, to use the potential inherent in the fluid concepts of translation and sexuality, and understand the practices and discourses involved in negotiating identities (Baer & Kaindl, 2018).

Butler (1993) claims, however, that for queer theories to be effective and critical modes of thinking, they must cultivate a self-critical dimension that will secure their elasticity as a political practice, guarantee their dynamic and plural form, and thus also provide the means to counter their critics. Along these lines, the convergence of translation with Sexuality Studies has materialised in the "queer turn" in translation described by Santaemilia (2018). Recent publications are proof of the potential of this line of research, such as the volumes by Baer and Kaindl (2018), Baer (2020), and Epstein and Gillett (2017), and Rose (2021) with text translation; or Martínez-Pleguezuelos (2018) and Villanueva and Chaume (2021) in the field of AVT. I call for an analysis of media accessibility services and practices through the lens of feminist and queer translation strategies, since both feminist and queer translation share the emphasis on hidden, stereotypical, and/or harmful discourses and narratives belonging to social minorities such as women, queer, racialised, and disabled bodies and identities.

4.1. A Queer Feminist Methodology in Translation Studies

With the aim of understanding how non-normative bodies and identities are rewritten in media accessibility, I propose a methodology that draws on concepts from both feminist and queer translation. Such methodological approach advocates for the portrayal and visibility of minorities with more collective ethos, as used by Spoturno (2022) to make reference to the understanding of everything that is put on stage, which is inevitably given by discursive, social, and political aspects and present in all discourses that shape the representation of any social group and that are articulated by an individual and that reach a plurality. This collective ethos is intimately attached to the community image that the narrator/speaker composes in their discourse, and it calls for a critical observation of the stereotypical representations previously attached to certain groups, particularly non-normative individuals.

The method here proposed combines both queer and feminist translation strategies, applied to text translation recently in Iturregui-Gallardo (2023b). It is first based on three modes of translating the queer component of texts proposed by Démont (2018). In the first mode, which misrecognises the queer, the translation is "subject to the normalizing and 'straightening' power of translators" and "by being connected to a whole new set of semantic associations, the potentially subversive content is

turned into a conservative strategy to hide a queer sexuality." (pp. 158–159). The second mode, which minoritises the queer, reduces the text's queerness "to the terms of the contemporary identity politics" supressing "the potential discontinuities, associations, and uncouplings around which the original text, and its own sexual rhetoric, are organized." (p. 162). Finally, preserving the queer encompasses the recognition and transference of all the nuances that characterised the queer essence in a text.

Démont's modes can be made effected through feminist translation strategies. Such strategies are primarily used to bring the feminist component to the fore to subvert their patriarchal component, recognising diverse and intersectional identities (Castro & Emek, 2017). Castro (2008) names four strategies: compensation, where the translator directly intervenes and counteracts the differences between the source and the target in terms of connotations, gendered wording, etc.; metatextuality, a strategy that assembles paratexts such as forewords, or translator's notes, among others, to allude directly to the political intent of the translation, justify their interventions, and explain underlying meanings that could be lost in translation; abjunction, where the translator reclaims a text without feminist intent by introducing neologisms, changes or parodies in the plot, inclusive grammatical forms (such as sticking to a generalised grammatical female distinction), etc.; and close collaboration with the author, resulting in a process of co-authorship.

The feminist strategies, when interwoven with the modes described by Démont (2018), can provide space for more collective ethos. Such methodologies of analysis have been applied mostly to written texts (e.g., Castro & Emek, 2017; Baer & Kaindl, 2018). However, feminist and queer practical approaches to translation have rarely been applied to accessibility services. The next section will provide a literature review of studies that have taken a gender-conscious perspective to the contents consumed by users of media accessibility.

5. Media Accessibility and Gender Perspectives

In the context of Media Accessibility Studies, the preferences of users have become central to the field. However, even if new models of accessibility call for the introduction of accessibility from the very beginning of the creation of the content, little attention has been paid to the representation of minorities and their reception by users. Several scholars have focused on the representation of diverse characters and narratives in the main modes of AVT, which are subtitling and dubbing (von Flotow & Josephy-Hernández, 2018; Martínez-Pleguezuelos, 2018; Villanueva-Jordán & Chaume, 2021). When it comes to the services for people with disabilities, it is only recently that some scholars have conducted studies on the topic, thus showing the potential of this research avenue.

Studies have focused mainly on services for the blind and visually impaired, most probably due to the implications of the visual component in the representation of diversity in audiovisual material. It is true that I could delve into the significance of accessibility as a service for anyone (including translation from one language to another), but for the purposes of this article I am focusing on people

with disabilities accessing the representation of other minorities. Therefore, it is worth noting that research on subtitling (both intra and interlinguistic) (cf. Martínez-Pleguezuelos, 2018) is to be also considered as a service for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Also, there have been some studies on the gender-conscious approaches to sign language interpreting (Artl, 2015; Schmitz, 2021).

As for the gender dimension in content targeted primarily at blind and visually impaired audiences, the AD of non-normative characters and their representation has been studied through qualitative research in Villela (2019), and Villela and Iturregui-Gallardo (2020), who discussed the implications of the audio describer as a mediator of images that can be sexual, or depicter of non-normative characters; they also noted that product might potentially be biased by (self)censorship and paternalism. More recently this was investigated in Iturregui-Gallardo (2021), who presented a case study of applying a systematised framework for AD analysis based on the feminist translation strategies proposed by Castro (2008) to a documentary on lesbophobia. The newest, on-going studies on AD, diversity, and ideology include Iturregui-Gallardo (2023a), Campbell (2023), and Ramos and Meseguer Cutillas (2023). The differences in the way in which the visual messages attached to human gender or racial, and body diversity are transferred can obviously be linked to the lack of research on reception and the lack of clear directives.

In this regard, Singh (2021) and Hutchison et al. (2020) proposed some guidelines for professional practice on the description of race and other features of diversity, such as gender, sexuality, and disability. Even if their recommendations are a good guidance when creating AD for certain contents, existent ADs show different approaches when it comes to features such as race or sexual identity. Even if the contribution made by these works initiates the negotiation of the portrayal of diverse identities, their outcome falls short of clear solutions. This might be explained by a series of reasons based on two key factors: the very recent appearance of more diversity on screen and the development of a new and stronger social awareness on the topic.

On the other hand, some research has been conducted on other services for people with visual impairments. Some work has recently focused on automatic descriptions of images produced by artificial intelligence and the requirements and preferences of users (Stangl et al., 2020), and (self)(mis)representation in relation to race, gender, or disability (Bennett et al., 2021). This last experiment, conducted mainly through interviews with queer and racialised blind and visually impaired people, brings to the table important issues in terms of audiences' needs, understanding, and comprehension of gender and race. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study conducted from the point of view of the user on the matter. Similarly, Oppegaard and Miguel (2022) carried out a study based on interviews with queer blind and visually impaired people on the importance of gender in description and asked them to provide self-descriptions. Their results showed the wish for these subjects to participate in debates around gender and how they rely on descriptions to construct and share gender self-expressions. The authors claim that there is a risk these subjects are socially excluded due to inadequate ADs.

6. Applying Queer Feminist Strategies to Media Accessibility Contents

As suggested before, the strategies proposed for feminist translation are applicable to queer contents since both approaches share common ultimate goals. Analysing the way in which information about non-normative characters and narratives is portrayed in media accessibility services will provide insights into how minorities are represented by applying the taxonomies described by Clark (1969) and adapted by Fitzgerald (2010) and Raley and Lucas (2006). In this way, this article proposes a multi-faceted working method to understand how the original (aural and/or visual) contents are transferred to audiences who rely on only one of the two components, that is, deaf and hard of hearing and blind or visually impaired audiences.

The examples presented here serve as an approximation of how the proposed methodological framework can be applied to commercial AD. A preliminary survey was conducted on the on-demand platform Netflix, which includes recent contents with diverse characters and narratives. The contents analysed were the British *Heartstopper* (Walters et al., 2022), *Sex Education* (Campbell et al., 2019–present), *Feel Good* (Farrell et al., 2020–2021), the American *Special* (Dokoza et al., 2019–2021) and the Spanish *Las de la última fila* (del Campo et al., 2022). The ADs analysed are mostly in English which is, in most cases, the only language version available even on the Spanish platform. For *Las de la última fila* the AD is in Spanish. The survey focused mainly on first episodes since this is where in common practice the first descriptions of characters appear. For *Sex Education*, the focus was also put on season three where a non-binary character is introduced. Likewise, for *Feel Good*, the example expands from the first episode to the second season when the main character comes out as non-binary. The examples are classified according to the meaning-making identity features to which they refer.

As far as race is concerned, the AD in *Heartstopper* introduces characters by mentioning race (white, black, mixed-race Asian, etc.) and seems to be consistent with practice. On the other hand, in series such as *Sex Education*, information regarding race goes unsaid until later comments are made on the physical appearance of the protagonists, such as Eric's "black chest" in the third season. Contrarily, the Spanish AD just refers to Olga's afro hair without ever mentioning she is black. Three different strategies can be seen as three ways of gathering information about diversity in the material. While *Las de la última fila* just avoids mentioning the skin colour of the only black character in the series, thus hiding or ignoring racial diversity (which echoes Démont's first mode), *Sex Education* mentions it only sporadically, which can come as a surprise to the audience. This reduces the amount of description referring to racial diversity in the contents presented to blind and visually impaired audiences. Finally, *Heartstopper*, characterised by a very diverse cast, uses a strategy related to compensation (Castro, 2008) to carefully preserve racial diversity in the AD script (Démont's third mode). These three approaches to racial diversity are intrinsically linked to the way race is represented for the blind and visually impaired audience, which might be quite different from the way this diversity is represented for sighted audiences.

Discussing queer visual features is difficult to define. However, for the purposes of this study I refer to those appearances that defy what is culturally read as stereotypically binary and heterosexual. Most particularly, the examples presented here are descriptions of characters who self-identify as non-binary. I focused on the protagonist of *Feel Good*, Mae, played by actor Mae Martin (who is also the creator of the series and identifies as non-binary), and on Cal in *Sex Education*, played by another non-binary actor Dua Saleh. As far as Cal is concerned, they are a secondary character; thus, their interventions and appearances are not very common. However, the AD always uses neutral pronouns they/them to refer to them, even if they announce they are non-binary after their introduction. The AD avoids using pronouns until then. On the other hand, Mae is the protagonist of the series and thus is present almost all the time on screen. When the character is introduced, the camera follows her (my emphasis) from behind as she walks on a street. The AD introduces her as a "slender person" with "trimmed hair" in "a pixie haircut". She then enters a bar—we have not seen her face yet—and one of the characters gives her a beer for which the AD uses "hands them a can". Once her face is visible, the AD states that she is a "young woman" and goes on with she/her pronouns. It is only in Episode 6 of the second season, when the character herself comes out as non-binary, that the AD changes to they/them pronouns.

In these two cases the approach taken by the AD script is to respect the queer dimension of the contents by waiting for the self-identification of the character before using certain pronouns when the character expresses their identity. The same goes for CC subtitles for both TV series, which change pronouns whenever the character identifies as non-binary. These are to be understood as strategies that point out the diverse sexual identities that appear on screen, thus preserving the queer of the original content in the contents of accessibility services (Démont's third mode). There are other instances, however, in which the AD has not provided information on the way certain characters present and move, even though it might have given a great deal of information about their identities to AD users. I relate these silenced features to the power of absence and silence theorised by Smilges (2022), by means of which certain unsaid aspects can provide large amounts of information. Interesting descriptions of queer characters would be those of Eric or Ola in *Sex Education*, and Elle and Darcy in *Heartstopper*, who show non-normative gender expressions.

Finally, I focused on the portrayal of disability, which is treated at length in *Special*, created by and starring Ryan O'Connell, who is gay and has cerebral palsy, like Ryan, the character he plays in the show. In fact, this show's main topics interrelate queerness and disability in diverse narratives by presenting, apart from Ryan, other intersectional characters. Ryan is introduced in the first episode, and he himself announces what kind of disability he has and how he developed the condition when he was born. Therefore, users of AD are informed about the condition of the protagonist; however, they never receive any of the visual information provided to sighted audiences. I am referring to certain features of Ryan's corporality and body movements that make him non-normative. These features are used in the imagery of the series, which makes use of close-ups depicting Ryan's eyes, hands, or feet. This is what happens shortly after the first episode starts, when the first credits are shown to the audience. After telling a kid who is staring at him about his cerebral palsy, several close-

up scenes of his limping against different images of Los Angeles are presented. The AD never refers to the way he walks when it is clearly intended by the creator(s) of the series to show that very identifying feature of the main character.

Although further research to understand the decisions of the audio describers is required, what is clear is that the blind and visually impaired audience might well obtain a different understanding of Ryan's condition, either ignoring the visual dimension of the condition or reproducing certain stereotypes related to his condition. In this case, and by applying Démont's modes on the queer, the treatment of disability, the non-normative body, is hidden or reduced, failing to preserve an accurate representation of Ryan's appearance and ways of moving. Some strategies, as proposed by Castro (2008), could have brought to the fore these characteristics, such as compensation, abjection, or the use of paratexts in the form of audio introduction, thus providing a gender-conscious AD able to capture diversity.

7. Conclusions

The framework proposed in this theoretical essay springs from the outward turn in Translation Studies (Bassnett & Johnston, 2019), which calls for the permeability of the discipline to other scientific fields. While such a shift in research has greatly influenced the most popular formats in translation, namely text translation and main AVT modes, it has barely expanded to other (less prestigious) translation practices, such as media accessibility services. Besides, the way in which discourses related to minorities are depicted in translation has a great impact on representation, which is something that has been studied in the main AVT modes. However, the number of studies on the representation of these minorities in media accessibility services is scarce. It goes without saying that by accessing audiovisual contents partially through just one channel (either aural or visual) will also reduce the opportunities of accessibility users to collect all the information offered to sighted and hearing audiences. Therefore, the mediating ideology exerted by professionals will certainly influence the understanding of the portrayal of non-normativity.

Disability is tightly linked to other aspects that co-construct one another in intersectional identities that have historically been positioned in the margins (McRuer, 2006; Kafer, 2013). Based on this premise, the way non-normativity is negotiated and represented in contents to be consumed by people with disabilities should carefully include a gender-conscious practice able to depict diversity and avoid stereotypical representations of sexuality, race, queerness, and disability (Martínez-Pleguezuelos, 2021). Such approach allows for the mediated text to maintain collective ethos, as discussed in Spoturno (2022), highlighting the social understanding of what is received by final users of accessibility services. As put by Vidal Claramonte (2015) translations are versions of realities that are fragile and ambiguous, and that are constantly in a process of contextualization and rectification. As a result, hiding or reducing certain characteristics provided by either the aural or the visual channel

in media accessibility services will shape the way in which diversity is understood by accessibility users.

This paper proposes a working method and framework of analysis based first on the three modes described by Démont (2018) on the transference of queerness to the translated text, which have here been applied to media accessibility services and expanded to other minorities. These three modes are combined with the translation strategies used primarily in the context of feminist translation theories (Castro, 2008), able to bring to the fore certain aspects of the original text that would otherwise be ignored. The use of the strategies described by feminist translation scholars would subsequently fall into one of Démont's modes. The result of the translation process (which is intersemiotic in the case of media accessibility) provides an understanding of the way minorities are represented. Here, the methodological framework draws on Clark's stages of representation (1969), also used in more contemporary studies (Fitzgerald, 2010; Raley & Lucas, 2006). The observation of representation will tell how identities are depicted: features that are ignored or reduced because they are considered not relevant to the plot, or carefully gathered and expressed for the preservation of diversity.

The proposal of this queer feminist approach has been put to the test with some cases of AD produced for selected shows. This first approximation has proved useful when identifying how information about diversity is portrayed and how it can shape the final understanding of people who use AD. For the present paper, examples of the treatment of race, queerness, and disability have been presented. For race, the examples have shown that while some ADs have systematised mentioning the skin colour or ethnic group of the characters in their first appearance, others just ignore this aspect with the risk of failing to capture racial diversity in the series. For queerness, the examples provided show how AD generates fluid descriptions of the gender expression of a character and use non-binary pronouns only when this is mentioned or shown in the story, thus expressing the nuances of the queer experience of the character. Finally, for disability, a character with cerebral palsy is described and nothing is mentioned about his way of moving or the shape of his body, something that is captured in close-up shots for sighted audiences. Whether or not these choices have been biased by political correctness, (self)censorship, or ideology remains unclear, giving rise to important questions on the existence of patronising attitudes towards users of accessibility services.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that most works are related to services for people who are blind or visually impaired. However, there are no studies on services for people with hearing disabilities (subtitles for the deaf or sign language interpreting) or for users of easy-to-read and plain language. Representation of minorities in the contents of these services will help to create a clearer picture of how accessibility deals with diversity, the reproduction of stereotypes, and the mediating agency of professionals. Furthermore, research could be conducted on contents in different languages. Subsequently, both intra- and interlinguistic studies could be carried out, which would most likely contribute remarkable insight into the way certain minorities are depicted and represented in media accessibility services across cultures and societies.

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