

Metaphor as Creativity in Audio Descriptive Tours for Art Museums: From Description to Practice

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Abstract

In a previous corpus-based descriptive study, we concluded that a linguistic metaphor is a frequently used technique in audio description (AD) for art museums and proposed a set of categories to describe this resource. These results led us to compose increasingly creative and subjective ADs for a series of audio descriptive guided tours of art exhibitions carried out within the Words to See accessibility project. In the present study, the same categories are applied to the analysis of the ADs created for these guided tours. In these ADs, metaphors are used to describe both representational and abstract art, while some categories of deliberate metaphor are more frequently used to describe abstract works. These results are discussed in relation to our and other authors' studies in this field, as well as to theories of art education and gallery teaching.

Key words: art museum, audio description, audio descriptive guided tour, metaphor, creativity, subjectivity.

Citation: Luque Colmenero, M.O. & Soler Gallego, S. (2020). Metaphor as Creativity in Audio Descriptive Tours for Art Museums: From Description to Practice. *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*, 3(1), 64–78.

Editor(s): A. Matamala & J. Pedersen

Received: February 4, 2020

Accepted: July 28, 2020

Published: December 18, 2020

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1. Creativity and Subjectivity in Art Museum AD

According to Eisner (2002), the goal of art education programs should be to help learners develop their capacity to have aesthetic experiences in their daily lives; he states that aesthetic seeing “requires the ability to slow down perception so that visual qualities can be inspected and savored. It requires one to search for qualitative relationships and to note the quality of experience they engender” (p. 26). This view of art education is also at the center of cultural mediation, an approach to teaching and learning which is defined as “the process of gaining and negotiating knowledge about the arts and social and scientific phenomena through exchange, reaction and creative response” (Pro Helvetia, p. 14). Individual interpretation and dialogue are also essential components of the interpretive-experiential method of gallery teaching promoted and implemented by Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011), who state that “When the interpretation is shaped into ‘an experience,’ we make it possible that our viewers will leave the museum changed, perhaps transformed” (p. 65).

All these voices coincide in the importance given to individual and subjective experiences, creativity and dialogue in museums and art education. However, in the field of AD, subjectivity has long been a controversial element due to the inconsistency between some guidelines that recommend a neutral or objective approach, and the benefits that more subjective descriptions seem to have for some blind and partially sighted (BPS) visitors. While Spanish, American and French AD guidelines recommend an objective approach to audio description in general including the visual arts (AENOR, 2005; Morisset & Gonant, 2008; Salzhauer Axel, Hooper, Kardoulis, Stephenson Keyes & Rosenberg, 2003), British guidelines indicate that more subjective descriptions are preferred by some BPS visitors to museums (RNIB & Vocaleyes, 2003, pp. 48–52).

In their analysis of literary ekphrasis and narration for silent films and the performing arts as precursors of AD, Orero and Pujol (2007) discussed the subjectivity present in these two antecedents. For film AD, Dosch and Benecke (2004, p. 24, as cited in Mazur & Chmiel, 2012, p. 178) had proposed that detailed physical descriptions be used instead of making explicit the emotion supposedly felt by the character. In contrast, Vercauteren and Orero (2013, p. 193) argued that emotional language could be used to describe facial expressions that are more universal, while Kruger (2010, p. 233) advanced the use of audio narration (AN), moving away from strict fidelity. Subjectivity has also become an object of study in reception studies of AD. For theatre (Udo & Fels, 2009; Udo, Acevedo, & Fels, 2010), the results indicate that audiences of subjective ADs receive them positively. For film (Walczak & Fryer, 2017), the results indicate that more creative ADs may stimulate “presence,” which in turn would result in a more immersive experience of the film, and that ADs that use emotional language elicit stronger emotional responses (Ramos Caro, 2016). With regard to visual art AD, in their proposal for a method to describe paintings and sculptures, De Coster and Mühleis (2007) highlighted the need to translate both clear and ambivalent visual signs, including the sensations produced by the visual sign in the viewer. Along these lines, Neves (2012, p. 290) stated that including more subjective interpretations was necessary so that visually impaired people could experience visual art as sighted people do. In addition to this, three corpus-based studies have shown that

subjective language is present in the AD of visual art (Lima & Magalhães, 2013; Luque Colmenero, 2016; Soler Gallego, 2018).

As stated by Fryer (2016), the reasons underlying the objectivist approach, namely avoiding patronizing practices and allowing BPS individuals to build their own interpretation, are positive (pp. 165–166). In our view, subjective ADs do not necessarily lead to patronizing practices. On the contrary, they could foster BPS individuals' understanding and experience of visual art. This hypothesis lies at the basis of our study of metaphor, which we consider to be an indicator of subjectivity and creativity in AD for art museums and exhibitions. The goal of this article is to offer an analysis of how our corpus-based study of this element has influenced our AD practice for an accessibility project entitled Words to See. More specifically, it focuses on the use of metaphor in the ADs for a series of audio descriptive guided tours given of the Alhambra temporary art exhibitions and the CajaGranada Foundation permanent art collection between 2014 and 2019, in Granada, Spain. A fundamental element of both our descriptive research and practice is our close collaboration with generous individuals, museums, companies and organizations involved, in one way or another, in accessibility to the arts.

2. The Words to See Project: AD for Art Museums and Exhibitions

Words to See is an ongoing project on museum accessibility carried out by the non-profit organization Kaleidoscope since 2014 in collaboration with the Spanish National Organization of the Blind (ONCE). This project follows similar initiatives by the Thyssen-Bornemisza and the MNCARS museums, among others, as well as the Access Friendly audio description company, which pioneered providing this type of resource in Spain. The project consists of a series of audio descriptive guided tours, whose main goal is to improve access to museums and exhibitions for BPS people. To date, we have carried out the following tours:

- Museo Sorolla, Madrid: “Describing Sorolla” and “Learning How to Look”
- Art Collection of the Museo CajaGranada, Granada: “Describing Picasso”, “Describing Guerrero”, “Identities” and “Multisensory Gardens”
- Museo de Arte Naïve, Jaen
- Fundación Rodríguez Acosta, Granada
- Temporary art exhibitions at the Alhambra, Granada: “The Tendillas, Lords of the Alhambra” and “Bab Al-Saria: Welcome to the Alhambra”
- Museo Íbero, Jaen: “The Lady, the Prince, the Hero and the Goddess”
- Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid: “The Museum in Your Hands: Prehistory in Spain”

In this project, we create translations to improve the existing situation, namely the lack of accessibility to art museums for BPS people. This practice is informed by our own and other researchers' studies of AD. Based on these studies, we have developed a method to create

multisensory guided tours for BPS visitors in art museums and exhibitions. The following sections focus on the linguistic metaphor as an accessibility resource to create visual art ADs.

3. Metaphor in Art Museum AD: Creating Subjective Connections

Metaphor is defined here as a cognitive operation where an element of reality, known as the target domain, is compared to a different conceptual domain, called the source domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 41, 120). This conceptual or cognitive definition of metaphor is central to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which “builds on centuries of scholarship that takes metaphor not simply as an ornamental device in language but as a conceptual tool for structuring, restructuring and even creating reality” (Kövecses, 2017, p. 13). In AD, metaphor is a tool to translate the visual components of artistic texts for BPS people. For our research, the visual component being described is considered to be the target domain in the metaphor operation, while the conceptual domain used to describe it is the source domain. This resource is thus carried out through a comparison between two elements or domains and can be classified according to the novelty, directivity and deliberateness of the resulting mapping. Novel metaphors are not conventionalized in our conceptual nor language systems, so we cannot find their meaning in most dictionaries, and therefore the transfer of meaning between domains is likely to be created by comparison. Directness refers to the quality of simile-like metaphors that include both domains, such as in “A is like B.” A deliberate metaphor is expressed consciously with a communicative goal and requires a feature to alert the addressee that it is intended as a metaphor. Therefore, language users are aware of its use in making a cross-domain comparison (Steen, 2014). These metaphors are usually flagged with a marker such as “like,” “suggesting” or “with the shape of,” that catches the recipient’s attention and, most of the time, are novel metaphors (Steen, 2011). A key distinction can be made between deliberate metaphors, which are used to a greater extent in specific educational and ideological discourses, and conventional metaphors, which are not novel and appear as part of the everyday resources of language, often for interactive and organizational purposes (Cameron, 2003), such as qualifying adjectives (colours, shapes, synaesthesia) and movement verbs (personifications).

The PRAGGLEJAZ Group has developed a method to study cognitive metaphors known as the MIPVU method (Steen et al., 2010). In this method, with the help of different dictionaries and parallel texts, expressions whose basic meaning is different from the meaning they have in the analysed text are marked as potentially metaphorical. The phases in this analysis can be summarised as follows: 1) reading and comprehending the full text; 2) identifying potentially metaphorical lexical units; 3) identifying a meaning that is more basic than the one they have in the text; and 4) identifying the contextual meaning and checking whether it contrasts with the basic meaning. If it does, but the relationship between the two can be understood from their comparison, the unit is marked as metaphorical. The MIPVU method has been used to study the use of metaphor and, especially, of deliberate metaphors as an accessibility resource in audio descriptions for BPS people in art museums (Luque Colmenero, in press, 2016, 2019; Soler Gallego & Luque Colmenero, 2018). The main

components of these studies are discussed in the following section, as they are the basis for our use and study of metaphor in the ADs for the Words to See project.

4. Corpus-Based Studies of Metaphor in Art Museum AD

In a previous analysis (Luque Colmenero, 2019), we were able to determine that metaphor is used in the audio descriptive guides of art museums with the communicative function of transferring through the linguistic code that which cannot be perceived through the visual channel. We compiled and analysed a corpus of approximately 35,000 words consisting of the intersemiotic translation text segments found in the audio descriptive guides of four museums, namely the Tate Modern in the United Kingdom and the MoMA, the Whitney Museum and the Brooklyn Museum of New York in the United States. The results of this study indicated that metaphors, and especially novel, direct and deliberate metaphors, are widely used throughout the corpus and appear in all types of visual texts (sculpture, painting and installation). An example of a deliberate metaphor found in the corpus is “the face like *a wild mask*” (The Three Dancers, Picasso, Tate Modern), and an example of a non-deliberate metaphor in the corpus is “*soft white light*” (Home, Mona Hatoum, Tate Modern) (metaphors in italic). General appearance of direct and deliberate metaphor in the academic genre is only 0.1%; in fiction, 0.4%; in conversation, less than 0.1%; and in press, 0.4% (Herrmann, 2013, p. 101). According to our analysis, more than 5.14% of the language used in the corpus is made up of metaphors of this type. The analysis also showed that higher levels of abstraction and conceptuality of the source text seem to be connected with higher percentages of deliberate metaphors in the target text.

In this previous study, a taxonomy of metaphors was proposed with the following categories: personification, synaesthesia, cultural reference, form, technique, participation, optionality, opposition, double marker, and vocal emphasis. This previous classification also included a colour category for metaphors used to convey this visual component in the AD. The description of colour is relevant to visual art AD, but this type of metaphor is widely used in other genres and so we decided not to deal with it here. In the first five categories (personification, synaesthesia, cultural reference, form and technique), the classification criterion is the type of conceptual domain the work is compared to, while in the remaining five (participation, optionality, opposition, double marker and vocal emphasis), the criterion is the linguistic strategy used to convey the metaphor. The remainder of this section is devoted to introducing these categories with examples from the corpus analysed in the previous study, while in the next section we discuss them in relation to the Words to See project.

1) Personification

As a literary resource, personification is the projection of characteristics that normally belong only to humans onto inanimate objects, animals, deities or forces of nature. These characteristics are perceived in action verbs related to humans, adjectives that describe a human condition, situations related exclusively to human beings or through emotions and feelings given to objects incapable of

thinking. This type of metaphor has been studied within cognitive or conceptual approaches to metaphor in relation to body parts and nature (Steen et al., 2010, pp. 101–103). In the following example, the verb “to celebrate” is assigned to the pictorial work itself, giving it an anthropomorphic and dignified character.

His paintings *celebrated* the dignity of skilled manual labor (*Louisiana Rice Fields*, Thomas Hart Benton, Brooklyn Museum)

2) Synaesthesia

Synaesthesia deals with “confusion” between the bodily senses, although “exchange” between concepts and senses fits better within our area of study. Synesthetic metaphors, which have also been studied within cognitive approaches to metaphor (Steen et al., 2010, p. 175), recreate a sensation through a sense that, while being alien to it, helps to understand it through body experience. In the example, the adjective “fluid,” related to both a tactile and a visual experience, is introduced to describe the physical appearance of the figures and the technique, which are both clearly visual in nature.

The figures in his paintings appear *fluid*... not drawn with hard edged lines (*Louisiana Rice Fields*, Benton, Brooklyn Museum)

3) Cultural reference

Translation of cultural references has been investigated extensively in Translation Studies and, to a lesser extent, in relation to film audio description (Maszerowska & Mangiron, 2014). In our study, this category consists of known characters, objects, places, etc. that are introduced to compare them with an iconic component of the work, such as a character depicted on it. In the example, the AD begins by comparing Cézanne's work with a traditional painting from an old time that may typically be in the minds of the receivers.

... just imagine in your mind *a traditional painting* from an earlier century (*The Bather*, Paul Cézanne, MoMA)

4) Form

Form, or shape, is one of the basic elements of visual communication and is defined as a two- or three- dimensional area within a composition with boundaries that make it distinct (Fichner-Rathus, 2015, pp. 47–48). This type of metaphor is created through comparing the form of a visual component of the work with the form of another known element. The metaphor does not directly allude to an element that is similar, but to one that has some formal characteristic that serves as a link in understanding a complex image. In the example, the size of the body of a five-year-old child serves to clarify the size and overall shape of a sculpture.

The sculpture itself is smaller than adult life-size—nearer the form of *a five-year-old child* (*Unique forms of continuity in space*, Boccioni, MoMA)

5) Technique

Techniques are the methods to handle, control and apply a medium, understood as the material and tools used to create a visual composition (Fichner-Rathus, 2015, p. 19). Audio describers use comparisons with techniques to explain how a work or visual component was or may have been created. In other words, they illustrate the movement of brushes, the placing of the canvas or the artist's position in order to understand the final result before us. In the example, the arc drawn on the canvas is compared to Pollock's arm and the movement he probably made to achieve it.

... the sweeping arcs give a real sense of *Pollock's arm swinging* just above the canvas (*Number 27*, Pollock, Brooklyn Museum)

6) Participation

This category refers to visitors' participation and is related to individual interpretation and dialogue as essential components of the interpretive-experiential approaches to gallery teaching mentioned in the introductory section. This type of metaphor is realized through three modes: (a) questions that suggest a comparison but leave the interpretation open while they create a dialogue with the visitors, (b) spatial movement and guidance within the work, as if the receivers could traverse it or travel around it with their gaze and their minds, and (c) references to the visitors' experience.

(a) *Is she* a nice, well brought up child from a bourgeois society? (*Street Dresden*, Kirchner, MoMA)

(b) *If you follow* its path through the painting, you'll see that actually Pollock carefully and deliberately constructed the painting, painstakingly building up the surface (*Number 27*, Jackson Pollock, Brooklyn Museum)

(c) ... *you realize that you're* not in some kind of specific place that can be identified, but rather some kind of ideal place in the mind's eye (*Dance (I)*, Matisse, MoMA)

7) Optionality

This strategy, whose goal is to introduce two or more comparisons with the same visual, offers options to the receivers and tries to make their experience as individual and selective as possible. This way, the audio describer separates himself or herself from subjective judgments related to images that do not have a clear translation. It is related to "mixed metaphors," i.e. metaphors that occur in textual adjacency and do not (for the most part) share any imagistic ontology (Kimmel, 2010, p. 98). In the example, an abstract and cubist form that can be interpreted in many ways is translated using various new and subjective comparisons that result in a novel, more open and unique mental image. Three possible source domains are offered to the receiver: a boomerang, a hand and a melon.

...a large ambiguous form recalling a *boomerang*—it might be *her hand*, or a *piece of melon* she is eating (*Les demoiselles d'Avignon*, Picasso, MoMA)

8) Opposition

If we look back at Saussure's theory of opposition (Susen, 2018, p. 2003), we see how in some units of language meaning is born out of a binary opposition: each unit is defined in reciprocal determination with another unit. It is not a contradictory relation but a structural, complementary one. Instead of translating the visual image into a linguistic expression, a reference to an element outside the work is made and this element is denied or opposed. The description explains that it is not like it, but the opposite of it. An opposition is created by contrasting an element that appears in the work, which may be unknown, complex or simply alien to the image, with an element that is easier to process. It is usually created through expressions such as "less ... than," "nothing at all," "in no way" and "is not." In the example, the human form contains an alien element: its face is not human, but similar to an African mask.

Her nose... suggesting *less the face of a human... than* an African Mask (*Les demoiselles d'Avignon*, Picasso, MoMA)

9) Double marker

This case serves to emphasize that the interpretation of the work is subjective. The audio describer does not intend to give indications of what to imagine or see, but to open options or paths to imagine or see. The same way mixed metaphors are related to a stronger incongruity and are thus interpreted as deliberate (Nacey, 2013, p. 172), a double marker reinforces the audio describer's subjectivity. In addition, the use of two markers facilitates metaphor understanding by providing more than one cue to the receiver: he or she is witnessing a description that is related to an interpretation, that is, to the more subjective character of the AD. In the example, two markers ("I feel" and "gives you the sense") are used, thus emphasising the idea that it is a hand-crafted work, according to its interpretation.

But *I feel* that *it gives you the sense* that this is a very homemade work of art (*Quarantania*, Bourgeois, MoMA)

10) Vocal emphasis

These are deliberate metaphors in which the marker is paralinguistic and, more specifically, vocal. The modulation of the voice can oscillate from expressions of astonishment to expressions of humour through changes in the tone or pitch. In addition, dramatic pauses or voice breaks support the idea of "subjectivity" by leaving the receiver free to process the information. This kind of marker has not been studied in relation to metaphor. However, the tone of voice has been analysed as a prosodic cue for a different type of figurative language, namely irony (Kreuz, 2014, p. 42). In the AD scripts

analysed, the vocal emphasis is indicated with quotes or underlining, whose function was clarified in an interview with the audio describer or when analysing the audio file.

The deeper the “pit” the greater the variety of contrasting colour (*Cage*, Richter, Tate Modern)

5. Metaphor Use in the Words to See Project

In the Words to See project, one of the main tools we chose to develop and make use of was metaphor, with a special emphasis on novel, deliberate and direct metaphors. The importance and presence of this type of metaphor in our corpus led us to transfer its use to our AD practice for art museums and exhibitions. Thus, corpus studies and descriptive research are key to our AD practice, as without them we would not have been able to critically consider and apply well-known and useful resources within our field of work.

The first type of metaphor we have implemented is the personification metaphor. While we implement it in different ways, one interesting example is related to light, which becomes a being that participates in the configuration of the work: “the shadows and the small lights that wisely illuminate,” “furtively illuminate” and the “absent light” are used to audio describe a painting entitled *Conde de Tendilla*. In another figurative work, *Diego de Mendoza*, the materials and the light depicted in the work are translated through contrasting synesthetic comparisons: “we can imagine the hardness and softness of the smooth marbles,” “the warmth of the light on the stone” and “the brilliant coldness of the rings.” The sense of touch serves here to translate Titian's use of light and his realistic technique. In yet another figurative work, *La salida de los moriscos*, we find another example of a synesthetic metaphor built upon the touch-vision connection: “they offer a sensation of warmth, of powerful sunshine.” This is directly related to the guidelines of Art Beyond Sight (Salzhauer et al., 2003), which recommend the intersensorial translation of the artwork components and, specifically, suggest using tactile sensations to describe the surface of sculptural pieces and light in paintings. The synesthetic metaphor therefore contributes to creating a multisensory experience of the exhibit. This, according to a recent reception study by Eardley, Mineiro, Neves, and Ride (2016), seems to help BPS museum visitors create autobiographical memories, which are for these authors “the end product that the visitor is seeking... a memory which feeds in to and enriches their notion of self” (p. 283).

The opposition metaphor is mostly related to abstract works. In this metaphor, basic or recurrent characteristics of real elements are alluded to in order to deny them, as in the following AD of Picasso's *Corps Perdu*: “our leaf does not have the characteristic nerves or different textures.” Thus, a mental image of a prototypical leaf is created in order to deny it and understand it differently. Likewise, participation metaphors are mainly related to more abstract works and to complex works with many layers and components. These two types of paintings share the complexity of facilitating the creation of a mental image of the work. For the abstract work *Cuadro rosa*, the opening invitation to become a bird in “Let’s imagine a bird flying over the Gate of Justice” attempts to establish a new

prism through which one can understand the complexity and abstraction of a point of view and a technique based on spatial and kinetic experiences. In *Cuadro verde*, equally abstract, the deliberateness of the participation metaphor is created by suggesting first a “journey” through the painting. Then, metaphors like “if we move”, “we advance” or “we continue going down” mark the subjectivity of embarking on a journey to see the work. These invitations call for visitors’ mental, rather than verbal, participation. Still, the use of linguistic constructions that include both the audio describer and the visitors (“let’s,” “we”) helps to facilitate a more dialogical, participatory and inclusive experience. In other cases, metaphors are formulated as questions, as in “Could it be a flower?” in the AD of one of Picasso’s *Corps Perdu* engravings. The participation metaphor becomes a useful tool to implement the fundamental principles of New Museology (Marstine, 2006; Hooper Greenhill, 2007), which considers the museum to be a place of encounter and growth. Within this paradigm, Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011, p. 59) propose a method for gallery teaching in art museums that draws on Gadamer’s (1960/2004) hermeneutics and Dewey’s (1934/2005) experiential approach to art education. In this method, dialogue and intense contemplation are the means to foster a transformative aesthetic, personal and intellectual experience of art: “Through dialogue knowledge is constructed and ideas and speculations are encouraged, with the objective of opening possibilities, not limiting them. The results for all participants are, we hope, complex and rich experiences” (Burnham and Kai-Kee, 2011, p. 61).

The more conceptual, abstract and far from reality the work is, the more the optionality metaphor is used. Let us look at the AD of a tapestry of geometric and cut-out shapes entitled *Repostero*: “we find two thin and elongated rectangles 15 cm wide, only on the left and right sides, with geometric motifs that resemble a crown of thorns or some twigs that go up or down in a zigzag” or “there are pieces that look both like tears and drops of water.” The irregularity of the shapes gives rise to a double comparison. The same happens in one of Picasso’s work, *Corps Perdu*. The subjective forms are recreated through double and even triple comparisons: “smaller bouquets, like the arms or the flowers that small children draw” or “the flower, like hair, like stamens or like a mixture between the vegetable and the feminine.” This enumeration of possible interpretations of the visual components of the work can be considered as an indirect application of the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) method for aesthetic development (Visual Thinking Strategies). Instead of starting a discussion on the work by asking the group the three foundational questions used in this method, namely “What is going on here?”, “What do you see that makes you say that?”, and “What more can you find?” (Housen, 2001–2002, p. 100), and having visitors respond, the audio describer multiplies the offered interpretations, thus creating several voices and perceptions. This practice is not completely new. Our interview of the accessibility coordinators and educators of the Museo Picasso in Malaga revealed that their guides use questions to elicit BPS visitors’ interpretation and participation, and that this technique had been borrowed from VTS.

The double marker metaphor is a widely used tool in our visits. This metaphor increases as abstraction does. For instance, in the segment “a white star, almost like a snowflake used for decoration at Christmas” from the AD of the previously-mentioned tapestry, the “snowflake” translates an image that can be interpreted or looked at from different angles thanks to the

introduction of “almost” and “like”. In the AD of Picasso’s surrealist and cubist engravings of the *Corps Perdu* series, we find examples such as “perhaps they represent the leaves,” which warns the receiver that the comparison is only an idea on which to build knowledge. The same happens with more complex and interpretable images: “two straight lines that appear sober, as if the plant were still growing, and there are more leaves and more flowers to be born.” In the same work, we can see this resource clearly in the following example: “the leaf, which is almost heart-shaped,” with the markers “shape” and “almost” complementing the previous comparison, “the leaf, which is egg-shaped.” Clearly, the leaf resembles an egg more than a heart, so the egg comparison has a lesser degree of interpretation. However, by introducing a second, less clear option, the mental image can grow and become more similar to the original. The double marker can be related to the audio describer’s status. This rhetorical resource makes the audio describer more visible, as it emphasizes the interpretive and creative effort and freedom of this mediator in the intersemiotic translation process. According to Hutchinson & Eardley, “rather than being minimised and discouraged, [this visibility] might be usefully explored in the context of the translation ethics debates in which visibility and traceability of decisions can be regarded as an alternative, and advantageous, ethical position” (2019, p. 52).

Technique metaphors are used, both in the corpus we have analysed and in the AD created within our project, to transfer the visual information of abstract works made with complex techniques, far from the conventions of figurative painting. By reconstructing the way they were created, the image itself is clearer: “as if the artist had given unequal brushstrokes without covering the whole background,” in the AD of a work by Guerrero titled *Zoco*, and “It gives the impression that the author first slipped his brush wet in this particular green colour all over the canvas and then let his imagination fly with the brush and the colour white,” in the AD of an abstract painting from the Alhambra exhibition titled *Cuadro verde*.

Cultural reference metaphors are typically used to describe different elements of the work, be it an iconic or symbolic sign or a visual component, such as colour. We see this in “a form similar to a jamsa,” where the cultural reference describes a geometrical piece of cloth attached to the tapestry, and “typical of Nasrid architecture,” again referring to a piece of cloth, both in the AD of *Reposterero*. This type of metaphor is also present in “it is an indigo blue, like that of ceramics from Granada,” where the cultural reference refers to one of the colours of the abstract painting *Azural*. These ceramics are not directly related to Guerrero, the artist, but are probably well known to the visitors from Granada, and so are the previous Islamic cultural elements. Thus, these references help to create mental images by making use of known resources of a particular culture. Similarly, when using form metaphors, our goal is to make use of some of the characteristics of everyday elements, as in the example of “a rounded shape, the size of a coin,” where the coin is used to show the size of a figure in *Corps Perdu*. Here, only some characteristics of the coin are transferred, namely its rounded shape and size, but not others like colour, material or ornaments.

Vocal emphasis metaphors are used for the abstract, surrealistic and subjective work of Picasso, *Corps Perdu*. In these engravings, there is a palpable dichotomy between the vegetable and the

human worlds on the visual level, which we decided to translate through the superposition and comparison of these two conceptual domains. Such is the case of the direct metaphors, with both domains present, of “character/flower,” “plant/man” and “plant/woman,” which were expressed by modulating the voice to emphasise the map between domains. Also, it intended for the artistic experience to be contrasted with both references to imagine and see the image. Voice is an essential component in AD, yet very little has been written about this parameter. Some studies indicate that human voices (Walczak & Fryer, 2018), versus text-to-speech voices, and more interpretive voices (Iglesias Fernández, Martínez Martínez, & Chica Núñez, 2015) are preferred by BPS receivers of film AD for fiction, while more neutral human voices and even synthetic voices are acceptable and sometimes preferred for the documentary genre. Interpretive voicing is found in the audio guide for children in the MoMA, in New York. It is also found in the audio descriptions for the Brooklyn Museum and the Whitney Museum available in Art Beyond Sight’s website, where the audio describer, who has a background in radio communication and sound editing (Luque Colmenero & Soler Gallego, 2019, p. 170), notably modulates his voice.

6. Conclusions

In a previous corpus-based descriptive research, we concluded that linguistic metaphors and especially deliberate metaphors are a frequent resource in the audio descriptive guides used in art museums. Likewise, the study showed that the level of abstraction in the works seems to be related to a type of metaphor that we can categorise as novel, deliberate and direct. To further understand and explain this intersemiotic translation resource, a set of categories was proposed and applied to its analysis. The presence of metaphors in the corpus led us to progressively include them in our AD practice for art museums and exhibitions. In the Words to See project, metaphors are used to describe both representational and abstract art; however, the opposition, participation, optionality, double marker, and technique metaphors are more frequently used to describe abstract works.

The design, creation and assessment of accessibility resources for art museums should be coherent with the principles of museum and art education, where more and more “The point is not to fill in lacunae in understanding with specialized knowledge, but to understand the lacunae as a point of departure for dialogue and aesthetic experience” (Pro Helvetia, p. 18). More subjective descriptions, including but not limited to metaphors, could help those institutions to convey the message that visiting art museums should be an experience that is built collectively, based on both visitors’ and experts’ impressions and knowledge. An important aspect of subjectivity in visual art AD could be how to flag it by means of linguistic devices so that receivers perceive it as an invitation to experience art, and not as an authoritative voice. This is why the deliberate metaphor becomes a powerful accessibility resource in this context.

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