THE EMBODIMENT OF THE METAPHOR: AN ANALYSIS OF THE METAPHORS USED TO CONVEY THE HUMAN BODY IN AUDIO DESCRIPTIVE GUIDES OF MUSEUMS FOR PEOPLE WITH VISUAL FUNCTIONAL DIVERSITY

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RESUMEN

La audiodescripción es un tipo de traducción audiovisual que permite que las personas con diversidad funcional visual puedan acceder a la experiencia de "ver" a través de otro sentido. Traduce imágenes en palabras y escenas de productos audiovisuales para personas que no pueden ver, y se ha conceptualizado como un tipo de traducción intralingüística, intersemiótica y subordinada (Hernández y Mendiluce 2004). La metáfora es una gran herramienta de acceso al conocimiento (Steen 2009). En base en algunos estudios (Luque 2012), también podemos afirmar que la metáfora es una gran herramienta de acceso al conocimiento en las audio descripciones para personas con diversidad funcional visual. En este artículo se analiza el uso de metáforas para traducir los cuerpos humanos que aparecen en las guías audiodescriptivas de museos de arte, especialmente de arte moderno y abstracto

Palabras clave: traducción, accesibilidad visual, museos para todos, metáfora, cuerpo humano

ABSTRACT

Audio description is a type of audio visual translation, which allows people with visual functional diversity to access the experience of "viewing" via another sense. It translates images into words and depicts scenes of audio visual products for people who cannot see, and has been conceptualised as a form of intralingual, intersemiotic and subordinate translation (Hernandez and Mendiluce 2004). Metaphors are a great tool for accessing knowledge (Steen 2009). Based on a number of studies (Luque 2012), we can also state that metaphor is a great tool for accessing knowledge in audio descriptions for people with visual functional diversity. In this paper, we analyse the use of metaphors to convey the human bodies that appear in the audio descriptive guides of art museums, specifically of modern and abstract art

Keywords: translation, visual accessibility, museums for all, metaphor, human body

1. MUSEUM AS A TOOL FOR ACCESSING KNOWLEDGE

More and more museums around the world are implementing educational programmes on accessibility to respond to the social need of providing a culture for all, and are framed inside the New Museology (Marstine 2006, Hooper Greenhill 2007). Whereas in the past the museum normally was exclusive and elitist, it exists a progressive opening-up, leading to greater accessibility. This climate of increasing reflexivity within the profession is identified as "New Museology". Audio description (AD) is used as a resource for people with visual functional diversity (VFD) and, therefore, becomes a powerful tool that has accelerated this change. Further, the USA and UK have employed this technique for many decades; it is considered a type of intersemiotic (Gottlieb 2005), intralingual, subordinate (Hernández and Mendiluce 2004) and audiovisual translation, which allows people with VFD to access the experience of "seeing"through another sense (Sneyder 2010).

The content of visual products reaches us through the visual channel, and, in the case of VFD visitors to museums, the final visual product must be verbalised, so they can access it.

To carry out such a translation, a number of resources, which serve to communicate the visual product through the linguistic code, must be selected. The following article will focus on a resource that has proven to be a powerful communication tool (Gibbs 1994) and of great help to people with VFD in understanding images (Luque 2012), the metaphor.

Cinema, literature and paintings can share the same mechanisms of cohesion or the same rhetorical devices, for example the same metaphors. The process of interpreting or understanding a metaphor follows the same patterns of thought as the process of interpreting an image (Stern 2000). We "see" something in a certain way: we see something as something else.

Through the analysis of audio descriptive guides from museums in the USA and UK[1], we will discuss the use of metaphors related to images depicting the human body, the main tool people with VFD use to know the world.

2. METAPHOR AS A TOOL FOR ACCESSING KNOWLEDGE

Communication between people owes part of its success to the use of rhetorical devices that facilitate interactions between people and situations, and which also play an important role in improving understanding (Gibbs 1994, 34). These resources can conceptualise and reconceptualise the world through the transfer of meaning from a source domain to a target domain (Fajardo 2006) without inventing new terms.

Throughout history, and even today, metaphors have been very effective and influential forms of communication. The phenomenon of using a term with a specific and precise definition to refer to another, which may have little or nothing to do with the former, produces different effects on communication.

Lakoff and Johnson, fathers of the theories of Conceptual Metaphor and authors of *Metaphors we live by* (1980), introduced a theory that considers metaphor as a general cognitive mechanism at the service of conceptualisation, whose role is essentially to understand and experience one kind of thing in terms of another. In addition, they explain that it allows for the conceptualisation, in a coherent and systematic way, of an abstract or intangible domain via the means of another, more tangible and closely related domain.

The target domain structures the limits that are going to be automatically represented. The source domain is concrete and based on sensory experience. The target domain is abstract and not always easy to assimilate. An example of this is the "time is money" metaphor, where the source domain is money, which is tangible, and used to explain the more abstract and complex target domain, "time".

In the case of metaphors used to describe images that people with VFD cannot access, the notions of target domain and source domain change. In the example "almond eyes", the target domain is the eyes that appear in the work of art, which have visual features unknown to the viewer, so, in one way or another, they are abstract, and features which are difficult to translate. To perform this translation, a metaphor -"almond eyes"- is chosen; the source domain is a tangible concept, known to the extent that it alludes to a real element that viewers with VFD can recognise, and whose meaning has been apprehended by

physical experience. Thus, the visual reality of the work is linked to the reality of the viewers through a metaphor.

The CMT has studied conceptual metaphors to a greater extent than linguistic metaphors. Moreover, linguistic metaphors have been studied in isolation rather than in full and interconnected texts (Kreynmar 2011), which would be more in line with the abstract and conceptual design through which our mind is arranged, as presented in the CMT. It may be noted, therefore, that the analysis of linguistic expressions, which are not isolated, can properly reflect how metaphors work in real language.

Research and analysis such as the works by Alice Deignan (1998) and Steen et al. (2007) have given rise to CL as a way to analyse real metaphorical expressions in a specialised context.

We consider this type of analysis of great validity, and as such, we will focus on it for the central part of this research, with audio descriptive guides of museum as a source of information to work.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this article is based on the method of identifying metaphors created by the PRAGGLEJAZ Group, MIP (Group PRAGGLEJAZ 2007), which was later refined into the MIPVU method (Steen et al. 2010). In this method, expressions, whose basic meaning is not appropriate to the context in which they appear in the text being analysed, are marked as potentially metaphorical.

The phases can be summarised as follows: reading of the full text and understanding; identification of lexical units; identification of its most basic meaning; identification, if so, of a meaning that is more basic than the one in the text; and the decision as to whether the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning, but the relationship between the basic and contextual meanings can be understood by comparison. If so, the unit is marked as metaphorical.

In the MIPVU, direct and deliberate metaphors were added as they work as comparisons. These metaphors are the ones that appear most notably in audio descriptions of art and, especially, in modern or conceptual art.

The concept of deliberate metaphor is truly groundbreaking in the research on metaphor, as opposed to the principal place of conventional, automatic and unconscious metaphor, that is, the metaphor that is discussed mostly in Lakoff and Johnson's work. For this reason, the difference in use between the two types of metaphor, deliberate and non-deliberate, arises. The deliberate metaphor is closely related to the communicative function because when expressed consciously, it is expressed with a communicative goal, "hence it requires some feature which alerts the addressee that it is intended to be realized as a metaphor" (Steen 2009).

At this point, it is vital to consider the relationship of this theory with the topic at hand. If we consider that metaphors are deliberate when a marker is inserted to direct attention to its metaphorical meaning, metaphors being a powerful communication tool, its use in art audio descriptions for people with VFD would be completely justified. In many of the examples of our corpus, we can find rhetorical devices used as a means of translating visual elements into the linguistic code for people with VFD. We found several cases in which an element represented in the work of art is compared with an external element, alluding directly to both source and target domain, and placing them on a parallel, that is, using an analogy with an external reality that is part of the imagination of the receivers and the objective reality of the work.

For reasons of space, this article will focus exclusively on these types of metaphors, comparisons of body parts that appear in the work of art with complex elements of the world. Nevertheless, our corpus also features other types of metaphors related to the human body, which are no less important: comparisons with basic and geometric shapes, lines and movement (*hips forming these nice triangles*), with other elements that have been introduced and are not necessarily similar, familiar or well-known characters (*The two figures are dressed as familiar characters from the old Italian comic theater, known as* Commedia dell'Arte), verbs or metaphorical markers to introduce subjective characteristics of the characters (*A mesh of white crisscross lines below the eyeholes suggests a beard*)and so on.

The principal metaphors for the present analysis relate the world we know with the abstract world that appears in the work of art. With the

term "abstract", we are not referring to a painting technique, but to the fact that we do not know it, and have to apprehend it. Therefore, the way audio describers identify simple and known body parts (to the extent that they are part of the human being), is not by using terms related to such body, but by comparison with external elements of reality. By way of example, let us see how eyes have been described in three different works of art: "almond-shaped eyes", "socket eyes" and "cave eyes". As we can see, the abstraction of the comparisons increases, and this is related to the loss of figuration. “Almond eyes” is drawn from *Street Dresden* (Kirchner 1908), an expressionist work with characters with bodies that are easy to distinguish and understand, close to figuration. However, “cave eyes”, a much more abstract metaphor, appears in *Quarantania I* (Bourgeois 1947), where abstraction takes the focal point of the work.

This happens in a similar way to other parts of the body, such as the head. It is striking how abstraction seizes metaphors, and something as simple as a head may be in the same conceptual mapping as such disparate elements: "the head juts out like the prow of a ship" or "The tusked head". In the first case, we see the target domain "head" is much less abstract than the one chosen to translate the prow of a ship or some tusks. The same applies to other elements of the body, such as arms: "Her long thin arms curve down like bent pipe-cleaners".

Human teeth are also subject to comparisons with external elements, often teeth of other animals, as in the case of "fish-like teeth" and "black dogtooth". Through a comparison with other similar element, metaphors act as a communication tool that simplify an element of the work of art through a more complex element, but also known by the receivers. Through these figures, complex information (shape, colour, size) is transferred in a simple manner, so the power of metaphor as a communication tool is emphasised. As mentioned above, we can observe, in the same way, the ability of metaphors to represent abstract domains of knowledge (time, cause, spatial orientation, ideas, emotions, concepts) in the form of a more specific, familiar and concrete knowledge (Gibbs 1994, 126), in these cases a range of ideas can be expressed (shape, colour, size) through a single term, something that would be impossible to convey without using the juxtaposition of the two elements.

Finally, we highlight those metaphors used to give the entire character a series of characteristic features of a particular element. The main purpose of these is to locate space and provide guidance on understanding its full form, such as "The poles stand upright, like a group of people or a small grove of trees skinny" and "She looks like a chess piece". In works of art of a more abstract nature, a very useful strategy is the use of a metaphor that compares the overall composition of the person represented with an element of reality. This strategy is similar to the identification and categorisation of the elements represented in works of realistic and figurative art. Both project a mental image of an element known by the receiver; this serves as a framework for the subsequent location of the body parts.

4. FINAL REMARKS

The analysis of metaphors used to audio describe human bodies from works of art seems to shed light on how people with VFD conceptualise bodies and understand them. The human body is our main contact with the real world; it is our tool and container to interact with reality, and the individual knows the world through his or her own body (Cagigal 1979, 62). People with VFD might have a broader understanding of their bodies because it is all they can "see" and feel in first place. Awareness of the body and of the self is very important to them as they live and develop in society. When translating physical human bodies through verbal code, metaphors are great tools for understanding their inner nature and their similarities to known elements. By analysing the corpus we have been able to set the first steps to prove that the human body is often conceptualised through metaphors with very similar patterns in audio descriptions of art. Considering its great power to translate in a vivid, concise and creative way the images that people with VFD cannot see, we can conclude that metaphors are very important for translating images, and the human body in particular. Descriptive guides must be created in a joint effort between audio describers and people with VFD. In what follows this initially approach to the use of metaphors to describe the human body, further research should be conducted, since we know

this first approach is very limited, both for reasons of space and size of the corpus. Apart from this reasons, research should delve further into the various types of metaphors we have presented here. Also for reasons of space, we have been unable to explore these in greater depth. Subsequently, research ought to be carried out on other types of metaphors and, above all, case studies should be done to prove their validity with users, who are the true receivers, in order to produce real and valuable audio descriptions based on the feedback and opinions of their users.

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NOTES

[1] We work with a corpus of approximately 50,000 words, consisting of the audio descriptive guides of the following museums of art: Tate Modern in the UK and Whitney, Brooklyn, and MoMa in the USA.