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COMBINING NON-CONVENTIONAL AND CONVENTIONAL AUDIO DESCRIPTION METHODS
The production of a theatre audio description for the play *Fedoriam*

ABSTRACT

This thesis researches the use of conventional and non-conventional audio description methods in an amateur theatre play. Audio description refers to a service provided for Visually Impaired people where the audio describer verbally describes the visual aspects they see. Conventional audio description follows the conventions and guidelines set for audio description, and non-conventional audio description differs from those conventions.

The data for the thesis was gathered in an ethnographic method and consists of audio recordings, written questionnaire answers and an audio description script, as well as my own experiences and insights on working on the project. As the thesis was based on an ethnographic case study, its results cannot be duplicated. However, the results still reveal important new information on the methods that can be used to produce audio description, as well as how the conventions for audio description are followed.

The analysis of the data shows that the audio description production used both conventional and non-conventional audio description methods. While non-conventional methods were more commonly used in the project, the audio describers showed a clear preference for more conventional methods and adhered to them when possible. The non-conventional methods were often used either unintentionally or due to a necessity. When offered the chance, the audio describers typically reverted to conventional audio description methods, although with a few exceptions. The most visible non-conventional aspects of the audio description production process, namely that it was produced simultaneously and alongside the play and that it was delivered to the whole audience and not just those with visual impairments, were decided upon by someone other than the main audio describer team. These decisions were, however, received positively by the audio describers and in their experience the non-conventional aspects of the audio description made it more available and visible

The analysis suggests that while the audio describers preferred conventional audio description methods, they also found the non-conventional methods beneficial for the project and for making audio description more visible. Additionally, the audience feedback for the non-conventional audio description was resoundingly positive, which leads to the conclusion that non-conventional audio description solutions should be further researched. Based on this research the possibility of updating the current Finnish audio description guidelines to include more non-conventional audio description methods should also be considered.

Keywords: audio description, theatre audio description, integrated audio description, audio description guidelines

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tässä tutkielmassa tutkitaan konventionaalisten ja epäkonventionaalisten kuvailutulkkausratkaisujen käyttöä amatööriteatterinäytelmän kuvailutulkkauksessa. Kuvailutulkkauksella tarkoitetaan näkövammaisille henkilöille tuotettua tulkkausta, jossa kuvailutulkki verbaalisesti kuvailee näkemänsä asiat. Konventionaalinen kuvailutulke noudattaa alan konventioita ja ohjeistuksia, ja epäkonventionaalinen kuvailutulke poikkeaa näistä.

Tutkielma-aineisto kerättiin etnografisesti, ja se koostuu äänitallenteista, kirjallisista kysymyslomakevastauksista, näytelmän kuvailtulkkauskäsikirjoituksesta, sekä omista kokemuksistani ja havainnoistani kuvailutulkkausprosessista. Koska kyseessä oli etnografisesti toteutettu tapaustutkimus, ei sen tuloksia ole mahdollista toistaa. Siitä huolimatta tutkimus paljastaa tärkeää uutta tietoa metodeista, joilla kuvailutulkkeita voidaan luoda, sekä siitä, miten nykyisiä kuvailutulkkauskonventioita seurataan.

Aineistoanalyysista selviää, että kuvailutulkkausprosessissa käytettiin sekä konventionaalisia että epäkonventionaalisia kuvailutulkkausmetodeja. Vaikka epäkonventionaaliset metodit olivat yleisempiä, kuvailutulkit suosivat selkeästi konventionaalisia metodeja, ja käyttivät niitä mahdollisuuksien salliessa. Epäkonventionaalisten metodien käyttö ei usein joko ollut yhtä intentionaalista, tai kuvailutulkeilla ei ollut mahdollisuutta käyttää muita metodeja. Muutamia poikkeuksia lukuun ottamatta kuvailutulkit päättivät käyttää konventionaalisia metodeja aina, kun se oli mahdollista. Kuvailutulkkausprosessin näkyvimmät epäkonventionaaliset metodit, eli kuvailutulkkeen tuotto samanaikaisesti ja rinnakkain näytelmän tuottamisen kanssa sekä kuvailutulkkeen esittäminen koko yleisölle, perustuivat päätöksiin, joihin valtaosa kuvailutulkeista ei voinut vaikuttaa. Tästä huolimatta kuvailutulkit kuitenkin suhtautuivat positiivisesti näihin epäkonventionaalisiin metodeihin, ja kokivat, että näiden ansiosta kuvailutulkkaus oli paremmin saavutettava ja näkyvä.

Analyysin perusteella voi sanoa, että vaikka kuvailutulkit suosivat konventionaalisia kuvailutulkkausmetodeja, he myös kokivat epäkonventionaalisten metodien käytön hyödyttävän projektia ja parantavan kuvailutulkkauksen näkyvyyttä. Myös yleisöltä saatu palaute epäkonventionaalisesta kuvailutulkkeesta oli erittäin positiivista. Tämän pohjalta voi päätellä, että epäkonventionaalisten kuvailutulkkausmetodien tutkimista pitäisi jatkaa. Analyysin pohjalta tulisi myös keskustella mahdollisuudesta päivittää nykyisiä suomalaisia kuvailutulkkausohjeistuksia niin, että ne kattaisivat myös nykyisin epäkonventionaalisiksi luokiteltuja kuvailutulkkkausmetodeja, mikä voisi auttaa monipuolistamaan suomalaista kuvailutulkkausalaa.

Avainsanat: kuvailutulkkaus, teatterikuvailutulkkaus, integroitu kuvailutulkkaus, kuvailutulkkausohjeistukset

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1 INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I will analyze the audio description (AD) production process and the final audio description script for the theatre play *Fedoriam.* More specifically, the aim of this research is to analyze how the process and the produced AD followed conventional guidelines for theatre AD and how they incorporated non-conventional AD aspects. Additionally, I will discuss the discussions and debates regarding these decisions and the describers' opinions on them. This research topic is important as the field of AD has not yet been researched very thoroughly, especially in Finland. Theatre AD, in particular, has been researched only scantly. As such, an analysis of how theatre AD is produced and how the guidelines and conventions are or are not followed in the production will reveal important information about how theatre AD in Finland is created and possibly raise the question of whether the guidelines should be updated.

Audio description is an accessibility method that aims to provide Blind and Visually Impaired people access to the same services that sighted people can access (Holland 2008, 170), such as television and theatre. However, the field of AD has not yet been studied very thoroughly, and the field is still lacking in contemporary scientific research. Especially in Finland, audio description research is still a very small field of study in comparison to other translation research fields. While some studies have been published in Finland as well (e.g. Hirvonen 2013; 2014, Reiman 2017), it still remains largely unresearched. Additionally, there are only a small number of audio describers working professionally in Finland, and some of them even feel that audio description should not be taught to students in universities as it is nearly impossible to find work on the field (Roviomaa, n.d, n.p.).

Having worked with disabled people, including Blind and Visually Impaired people, for over four years by now, I find this lack of audio description services and research and especially the commentary of how it should not be taught to students to be very worrying. I believe more effort should be put into providing more and varied accessibility services for all the people who require them. The need for accessibility services such as AD is not likely to decrease, and as such it is also important to train future professionals to the field. To provide those services, it is important that they are properly researched so that they both benefit their users and maintain high quality standards. I believe that with a more thorough understanding of AD services the people working on the field can also make their work more visible. This visibility, in turn, raises awareness of what can be accomplished with AD, which in turn can lead to more work on the field as more people recognize the importance and the possibilities offered by AD.

As a field of study, the study of AD is still new and most research still focuses on answering the questions of *where*, *when* and *what* to describe (Remael et al. 2016, 20). Even universally, the field is still lacking in terminology, practices and education (Reviers 2016, 244). In Finland, the field is even more lacking, and as the professional Finnish AD field is rather recent and the pool of people working in it is relatively small, there is a threat of stagnation on the field that could be budding with new innovations and developments. According to Roviomaa (n.d., n.p.), most of the AD done in Finland is done by the same small group of about five people, due to which Finnish AD has generally been produced in the manner that that group of people is familiar with. As the same people have largely been the ones who train new audio describers, the AD production processes that are taught likely largely mirror the already existing procedures (Ketola 2021, Teams-call). As a result, the standards of Finnish AD are not likely to be questioned nor the production processed updated (Roviomaa n.d., n.p.). This can be seen in the mere fact that the Finnish instructions for producing AD were written in 2013, relying heavily on international research and guidelines that were published in the early 2000's (FAD 2013), and have apparently not been updated since despite the developments made in audio description research since then. Additionally, as some research (e.g. Igareda & Matamala 2012, Gronek et al. 2012) indicates that cultural and linguistic differences affect AD production and should be taken in account in the creation of AD guidelines, having guidelines that are not based on Finnish AD research can affect the quality of conventional Finnish AD.

While the field of AD research is vast and the topic could be approached from multiple perspectives, in my research I focus on AD of performative arts, in particular in theatre AD. In Finland, AD has mostly been produced for television, film and museums (Aaltonen 2007, 2). Other areas where it would be beneficial have been left largely lacking. Theatre is one of these other areas, and the lack of theatre AD is almost ironic as professional AD services have their roots in theatre (Lodge et al. 1994). As such, I felt it important to return to these roots. Theatre AD differs from television and film AD especially in that it is most commonly delivered live. However, this fact is not really reflected in the way theatre AD is conventionally produced, as the guidelines do not advise the audio describer to produce the AD in collaboration with the theatre group that they will be describing, and while the guidelines do not explicitly forbid it, the audio describer is advised to only contact the theatre staff if something is unclear to them (FAD 2013). This distances the AD from the theatre itself, while simultaneously raising the question of whether AD should be produced the same way for live events as it is for recorded shows.

The existing research into theatre AD does not yet provide a comprehensive view of the practicalities of producing AD, and while my research alone will not provide a comprehensive, universal view into the topic either, it aims to broaden the field of study of theatre AD and research and analyze a yet unresearched manner of AD production. The question that lies at the root of my thesis is this: can, should, and is theatre AD produced according to the conventions that rely heavily on the conventions of recorded AD production, or would it be better to produce it in a more non-conventional manner.

In AD research, many researchers have noted the importance of studying AD from the point of view of its audience (e.g., Remael et al. 2016, 71-72). While the reception of AD is an important field of study, in this thesis I have wanted to instead focus on analyzing the actual AD production process and the thoughts and experiences of the audio describers as related to it. While there has been some research into non-conventionally produced theatre AD (e.g. Fryer 2018, Udo & Fels 2009a; 2009b), the research into how the describers choose to use conventional or non-conventional AD solutions in theatre AD seems to have been largely neglected. This may be due to the importance of analyzing end-user experiences, but I believe that the experiences of the AD producers are also valuable and important to research, as the audio describers' experiences directly affect the final AD. Thus, the methods that the audio describers like to use and deem beneficial to the production are an equally important field of study as the experiences of the end-users. It is likewise important to understand why and how audio describers choose the AD methods that they use, as this knowledge can help improve the guidelines for producing AD by taking the audio describers' experiences in account as well. As such, my thesis provides valuable information to a still growing field of study.

In this thesis I will first discuss audio description's history in general and in Finland in particular. I will then briefly discuss both the relevant Finnish legislation regarding AD, as well as introduce theatre AD. That will be followed with a short introduction of previous research of AD guidelines and conventions, after which I will discuss the Finnish AD guidelines, as well as conventional and non-conventional AD. This discussion will be followed with examples of previous research into non-conventional theatre AD.

After the introductions to the theory of AD, I will present my methodology and data in further detail. I conducted my research using ethnographic methods (Angrosino 2011), which will also be discussed briefly. The data consists of both audio recordings as well as written questionnaire answers from the audio describers who participated in the AD production process, as well as the final AD script.

I will analyze the data in relation to the provided theory and show examples of conventional and non-conventional AD methods that were used in the AD production for *Fedoriam*. I will follow the analysis with a discussion of the significance of these results and suggest possible factors that may have affected the results. I will conclude my research by summing up my findings and their relation to other research in the field, and suggesting future research opportunities in the field of theatre AD. The lists of works referenced, the acknowledgements, the appendices and the Finnish summary will be found at the end of the research.

2 AUDIO DESCRIPTION

Translation studies and practices have evolved rapidly within the last decades which has led to the emergence of new translation modes, as stated by Remael et al (2016). There has been a visible trend towards media accessibility, and audio description is one of the new translation modes that has been developed to further equality for all (Remael et al 2016, 65). Audio description has become a popular field of study and a sought-after service whose popularity is growing rapidly (Reviers 2016, 1).

Audio description is an accessibility service primarily meant for Blind and Visually Impaired (B/VI) people. It is the transformation of visual stimuli to spoken language, as described by an audio describer Anu Aaltonen (2007, 2). The audio describer combines different audiovisual elements into a coherent story and verbalizes the crucial elements to the audience, aiming to enable their audience to create a similarly coherent story (Braun & Starr 2020, 1-2). The general aim of AD is to provide B/VI people an equal opportunity to experience and interact with their surroundings that sighted people have (Holland 2008, 170).

The primary audience for AD is Blind and Visually Impaired people, although many, including the Finnish Cultural Services for the Visually Impaired (CSVI), also state that AD is not meant only for the B/VI people but other groups, such as the elderly, the immigrants, and people with autism, can also benefit from it (CSVI s. v., s. d., Braun & Starr 2020, 4-7). The British Independent Television Commission, further referred to as ITC, explains that because AD aims to verbalize the most important visual elements and stimuli and thus point the audience's attention towards them, it can aid people to understand the focal point of what is happening and to focus on it (ITC 2000, 7). Naturally, AD is also available to and can be beneficial for people without any visual impairments or problems in comprehension. According to ITC (2000,7), it is possible that the majority of people who use (television) AD comprise of sighted people who do not always want to watch television but only listen to it, instead of B/VI people.

Although sighted people can benefit from audio description, its main priority is to promote accessibility and equality for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Roughly 3% of the Finnish population has visual impairments [1]. This estimate is in accordance with the research gathered

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[1] There are 50 000 to 55 000 Blind and Visually Impaired people living in Finland. Roughly 8 400 of them are blind and 42 000 are Visually Impaired. In addition, there are up to 173 000 people with decreased visual acuity. The approximation is based on a study by the Finnish institute for Health and welfare from 2011 (Gissler 2015, n.p.)

from other European countries. According to Reviers (2016, 234) between 1.5% to 3.5% of people in the countries she researched have visual impairments. As the population grows older it is likely that the number of Blind and Visually Impaired people will grow considerably (Reviers 2016, 235). Thus, demand for audio description services exists and is likely to grow as well.

In this chapter I will briefly explain the relevant history of AD both in Europe in general and in Finland in particular, discuss how AD has been acknowledged in Finnish legislation, and introduce theatre AD in more detail.

2.1 History of audio description

Although AD has existed for as long as sighted people have described their surroundings to Blind people (Benecke 2004, 178; ITC 2000, 3), the term *audio description* was coined in the 1970's (Aaltonen 2007, 8; Audio Description Solutions 2017, n.p.) when it emerged as a volunteer practice to help the Visually Impaired and Blind people to access theatre plays (Braun & Starr 2020, 1). It is generally thought that audio description as a professional service first started in 1981 when some theatres in the United States began to provide AD for their plays. The exact date and place of the first audio description is under some debate, however, as some sources claim audio description started in the 1940's (Reviers 2016, 232), others place the first audio described performance in the 1970's (Aaltonen 2007, 8), though most agree it started in 1981 in the US (ITC 2000, n.p., Lodge et al. 1994, 140). It is notable, however, that some evidence exists to show that AD was also being provided for some films in Moscow, Russia, around the time theatre AD started to gain popularity in the US (Lodge et al. 1994, 140). It is possible, therefore, that AD began as a mainstream service nearly simultaneously on two different continents, in two different forms.

The practice of AD rapidly spread first in the United States and from there over to Europe and elsewhere in the world. It is commonly agreed that Europe's first audio described theatre play was performed in 1988 in the UK. (Lodge et al. 1994, 140: Kleege 2016, 90.) Interestingly, as AD spread rapidly and rose in popularity, it also evolved at very different speeds across different countries and continents (Mazur & Chmiel, 2012, 6). While AD in Europe in the 1980's was performed in theatres, in Japan the first televised programs with AD were transmitted already in 1983 (Lodge et al. 1994, 140). The evolution of AD has therefore varied greatly from one country to another, even when the practice itself has spread worldwide. While

AD is offered in some capacity in multiple countries ranging from Australia to Russia to Canada, among many others (Lodge et al. 1994, 2), in this thesis I will focus on its history in Europe in general and in Finland in particularly, especially in regard to theatre AD.

2.1.1 Audio description in Europe

In Europe, while there are a few documented examples of AD from Spain from the 1940's (Reviers 2016, 232), it is agreed that AD as a professional service began in the late 1980's. According to Lodge et al. (1994), among others, the first professionally audio described play was performed in the Royal Theatre in Windsor in 1988, with the AD being distributed via a headphone set. The French quickly began their own theatrical productions in Paris with AD, although their AD was not live but pre-recorded (Lodge et al. 1994, 140.) AD also rapidly spread to a service offered in television and museums (Kleege 2016, 90).

In the turn of 1990's, the first movies were audio described in Spain, France and Germany (Reviers 2016, 232). Despite its beginnings in theatre, AD in Europe evolved mostly in television and film. This may be due to many AD research projects having focused on television and film AD. In 1991 the AUDETEL-project began, led by the British Independent Television Commission, the ITC, and gathering participants from various European countries, as reported on by Lodge et al. (1994, 140-146). As a result of the AUDETEL project, AD regulations began to arise and guidelines for AD were created both in the UK and elsewhere in Europe (Reviers 2016, 232). Despite the project's aim to encourage the development of AD across Europe, the result has been lacking and AD practices are at varying stages in different countries (Mazur & Chmiel 2012, 5).

The UK in particular has been a forerunner in AD development and nowadays has national AD standards and practices, with a national quota for at least 10 percent of broadcasted TV programmes to have an AD, although the average has been over 17 percent (MAA n.d., n.p.). In addition to TV quotas for AD, the majority of Hollywood films being released in the UK are also available with AD (Mazur & Chmiel 2012, 6; Greening & Petre 2011, 34-36).

2.1.2 Audio description in Finland

According to audio describer Anu Aaltonen, AD spread to Finland also in the 1980's although by then it was referred to as *kummitusääni*, "the ghost voice". The term *kuvailutulkkaus* (Finnish for *audio description*) has been in use in Finland since the 1990's, when AD began to

be used in some of the events organized by the Finnish Cultural Services for the Visually Impaired (CSVI). In Finland, AD has also been used in theatres and a few times in television in conjunction with sporting events (Aaltonen 2007, 8).

AD for films in Finland began in 2009 with the release of *Postia pappi Jaakobille* (Eng. *Letters to Father Jacob).* The AD was available on the DVD release of the film. The first film that had AD available on it in the cinema was the film *Miekkailija (*Eng. *The Fencer)* (FFVI 2015, s.d.). By 2019, there have been over 30 Finnish films released with AD. (CSVI 2019.) It is probable that the number of films with AD will grow as from 2019 onwards all Finnish drama and document films that receive grants for marketing and distribution from the Finnish Film Foundation (FFF) must be audio described (FFF 2020). The FFF also grants support for the production of AD for the films (FFF 2020). In television, the primary AD provider in Finland is The Finnish Public Service Media Company. According to the CSVI, the first audio described TV programme was *Varpuset* which was broadcasted in 2005. By the year 2019, around 20 other TV programmes had been audio described (CSVI 2019).

It is difficult to know how many audio described theatre plays there have been in Finland as no complete listing of them exists. Often it is the B/VI people/organizations who commission an audio describer to produce an AD for a play, and as such the AD is not provided by the theatre group's initiative. However, at least two theatre plays had AD provided for them by the theatre in 2019-2020 in the city of Tampere alone: *Sokea piste* ("The Blind Spot") by the theatre group Tukkateatteri (Drama Queen oy 2019, s.v.), and *Fedoriam* (Teatteriryhmä Sokkelo 2019, s.v.), which is the play whose audio description I will analyze in chapter 5. Additionally, the Finnish Näkövammaisteatteri (Theatre for the Visually Impaired) regularly produces plays that have AD (CSVI 2019).

In Finland, anyone can become an audio describer and no study programme exists to train audio describers. The CSVI has trained audio describers since 2006 and it keeps a list from the describers who are actively working in the field, as well as helps to connect clients to the audio describers (Aaltonen 2007, 8). The CSVI's list, however, does not name all audio describers working in Finland, and clients can find an audio describer without the help of CSVI as well. The title of audio describer is also not a protected job title, and thus anyone can work as an audio describer if they wish to do so. This makes it impossible to say how many audio describers there are in Finland. However, most (television and film) AD in Finland is produced by a small number of audio describers (Roviomaa n.d., n.p.).

2.2 Audio description in Finnish legislation

The Finnish non-discrimination act from 2014 states that nobody may be discriminated against on the basis of a disability (Finlex 1325/2014, chapter 3 section 8). A visual impairment is a disability. The aforementioned act also makes it mandatory for authorities as well as providers of goods and services to make reasonable accommodations to realize the equality of disabled people. National television stations and theaters are examples of the types of providers of goods and services that should oblige to the law, as they offer cultural services. Reasonable accommodations are described as follows:

> -- (1) An authority, education provider, employer or provider of goods and services has to make due and appropriate adjustments necessary in each situation for a person with disabilities to be able, equally with others, to deal with the authorities and gain access to education, work and generally available goods and services, as well as to manage their work tasks and to advance their career.
>
> (2) In assessing the reasonableness of the adjustments, attention shall also be devoted, in addition to the needs of the person with disabilities, to the size, financial position, nature and extent of the operations of an actor, referred to in subsection 1, as well as the estimated costs of the adjustments and the support available for the adjustments. -- (Finlex 1325/2014, chapter 3 section 8.)

AD could be interpreted to be such a due and appropriate adjustment to help B/VI people to access generally available goods and services. So far, the law has not been interpreted so.

The Finnish Information Society Code (Finlex 917/2014) chapter 25, section 211 further defines how television programs should be made available for the B/VI people:

> Finnish and Swedish television programmes shall be accompanied by subtitling and other programmes shall be accompanied by explanation or service where the text of the subtitled programme is converted to voice *(audio-subtitling and subtitling service)* as laid down in this section.
>
> Audio-subtitling and subtitling services shall be added to public service programme sets referred to in the Act on Yleisradio Oy (Finnish Broadcasting Company).Further provisions on programme sets of public interest referred to in section 26 to which audio-subtitling and subtitling services must be added will be given by Government Decree. Audio-subtitling and subtitling services do not need to be added to music presentations or sports programmes. (Finlex 917/2014.)

This law does not require television broadcasters to use AD, as the requirements of the law can be fulfilled by offering audio subtitling where a programmed voice reads aloud the subtitles visible on the screen (FFVI 2017). However, audio subtitling is often found to be lacking as it does not tell the B/VI listener what is happening on the screen, only speaking aloud the written subtitles often greatly reduce the source-text message and would often require visual input to be understood (Braun & Oraro 2010, 176). Notably, the aforementioned law only applies to television programs, and similar accessibility services are not required from other types of service providers, such as theatres. As such, legislation regarding accessibility services such as AD, audio subtitling or other accessibility devices geared mainly towards the B/VI audiences

is centered on making television and film more accessible while ignoring other cultural services. This trend can also be seen in the recent 2019 legislation requiring all Finnish films and documentaries that receive production grants from the Finnish Film Foundation (FFF) to have an accompanying AD (FFF 2019, 3). No similar requirements exist for other cultural services.

According to research by Ferziger et al. (2020), participation in recreational activities and social events, such as theatre productions, are key components for a person's well-being and it helps promote their overall health. The higher the quality of the experience, the more beneficial it is for the recipient (Ferziger et al. 2020, 300). Additionally, disabled people's right to cultural events is also protected by the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) which states:

> Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities: Enjoy access to cultural materials in accessible formats; Enjoy access to television programs, films, theater, and other cultural activities, in accessible formats; Enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, such as theaters, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services. (UN 2006, article 30, p. 27)

As such, B/VI people have a legal right to accessible services, including cultural services. However, the reality is that these legal rights are yet not often met, and accessibility services may not be offered, which leads to B/VI people not being treated equally to sighted people by many service providers. While legalization of AD services has also spread to the Internet with the EU's recent Web Accessibility Directive (EU Directive 2016/2102) and the Finnish Act on the Provisions on Digital Services (Finlex 306/2019), so far there are no laws requiring cultural services such as theatre plays to have audio description, which leads to B/VI people often being left outside of these services.

2.3 Theatre audio description

While AD is still most common in films and television programmes it is also spreading back to arts and culture, including to theatres (Remael et al. 2016, 67). Even still, only sporadic performances in theatres are on offer for B/VI people, instead of AD being a steady and consistent service available (Reviers 2016, 244).

According to Reviers, in many countries, AD of performative arts is still a recent field where professional practices have not yet been developed. Most of the guidelines for AD are focused on providing AD for television and film. AD for arts and culture has also developed at a slower

pace than AD for TV and films, probably partially due to live arts such as theatre plays constituting only a small part of the market (Reviers 2016, 236-241). AD is also regarded as foreign to creative performances, and therefore perhaps thought to be difficult to create and incorporate seamlessly into the performance, even though research has shown that describers can be taught to create and deliver AD in a short time span (Whitfield & Fels 2013, 223).

Monetary support for production of AD for performative arts such as theatre also varies from country to country, with many countries not supporting the production of AD for performative arts, as researched by Reviers (2016). The biggest exception seems to be in the Flanders area of the Netherlands where organizations can receive grants to make their performances available for certain groups, including the B/VI, thus meaning that organizers can receive grants for producing AD. Such grants are still rare elsewhere in Europe (Reviers 2016, 235.)

Despite AD still being rare in arts and culture it has still been researched, with especially AD in theatres having been researched from multiple points of view. A common research question has been the evaluation of AD from the B/VI audience's opinion (e.g. Udo et al. 2010; Ferziger et al. 2020). Theatre AD had also been studied in relation to inclusivity and increasing the diversity in theatre (Whitfield & Fels 2013), the history and peculiarities of theatre AD (Niedzviegienè 2017), and considering new approaches to theatre AD (e.g. a cognitive approach to AD by Calderazzo 2010; automated theatre AD by Vander Wilt & Farbood 2020), among others. Some of these approaches will be discussed in further detail in section 3.2.

2.3.1 Theatre audio description and its conventions

While AD services first became available in theatres, the development of theatre AD has been slower than that of film and television AD (e.g. Kleege 2016, 89; Aaltonen 2007, 8). Audio description in theatre is usually divided into two parts, as categorized by Holland (2008, 170): the description of the set and costumes, and the description of the actual play. Both of these parts attempt to make the theatre work accessible to Blind and Visually Impaired people by verbalizing the information that sighted people can receive visually. Some guidelines for theatre audio description also encourage the describer to prepare accessible information on how to arrive at the theatre, where to find the headsets for listening to the description, and what the theatre itself looks like (FAD 2013.) As noted by Ferziger et al. (2020), theatre AD can thus include more than just describing the set, the costumes and the play. Some audio described theatre shows also have touch tours where the B/VI audience get an opportunity to feel some of the stage props and possibly talk with the actors (Ferziger et al. 2020, 301). Audio described

theatre performances are also often combined with an audio introduction, which can contain information about the theatre, the play, the actors or the describers, among other things (Remael et al. 2014, n.p.)

Most commonly theatre audio description is conveyed to the audience via a headset, as it has been done since the beginning of theatre AD (Kleege 2016, 89–90). The Blind and Visually Impaired audience members can thus listen to the describer without the audio description being part of the theatre experience of the sighted audio members. The use of headsets to listen to audio description is very similar to the use of headsets for listening to simultaneous interpreting (Holland 2008, 170). This closed manner of delivering the audio description is a part of conventional audio description, as it follows the conventions of the guidelines for AD, and it is still likely the most prevalent way of delivering of theatre AD. However, new non-conventional audio description processes, including other ways to deliver the AD, have also started to emerge, and some of these non-conventional processes and methods will be discussed further in chapter 3.4.

2.3.2 Need for theatre audio description

As noted by Ferziger et al. (2020), for people with disabilities, including B/VI people, the chances of participating in recreational activities are lower than they are for people without disabilities. Full engagement in the activities they do partake in can also be challenging if the activity is not made more accessible for them (Ferziger et al. 2020, 300). Adding AD to theatre productions is one way to make theatre accessible for B/VI people as required by the United Nations' Convention on the Rights on Persons with Disabilities, as discussed in chapter 2.2.

Ferziger et al.'s (2020) research showed that B/VI participants attending theatre performances do enjoy them whether the productions had AD or not. This result does not prove that AD is therefore unnecessary; it only emphasizes the importance of making theatre performances, in addition to other cultural events, accessible to a wider array of people to enhance people's quality of life. The research showed that the participants' satisfaction in the production was significantly higher when the performance had AD (Ferziger et al. 2020, 305–307). Therefore, it can be stated that offering AD for theatre plays increases the B/VI audience's satisfaction in the performance. Making theatre plays more accessible to B/VI audiences is also likely to increase the number of B/VI people who attend theatre plays, thus increasing their quality of life by helping them participate and better engage in more social events.

3 CONVENTIONAL AND NON-CONVENTIONAL AUDIO DESCRIPTION

In this thesis, I use the terms *conventional AD* and *non-conventional AD*. I define conventional AD as AD which follows the general conventions that are in place for the production and delivery of AD. As such, non-conventional AD is used to describe AD that differs from these conventions. Typically, although not always, conventional AD has been researched more, as most AD guidelines a.k.a. conventions are based on research. Non-conventional AD, in comparison, has remained less researched, even if research into it also exists. Neither conventional nor non-conventional AD is the objectively correct type of AD: their main difference lies in conventional AD having been normalized. However, as the field of AD evolves, it is wholly possible for AD methods that are nowadays considered non-conventional to become the new conventions.

3.1 Previous research into audio description guidelines

Audio description has been studied since at least the early 1990's with the aim to create guidelines and conventions for producing high-quality AD. In this chapter, I introduce two research projects, the AUDETEL project and the Pear Tree Project, which both resulted in significant new information on the viability of AD guidelines.

3.1.1 The AUDETEL project

The AUDETEL project, an acronym of Audio Described Television, is often cited as a groundbreaking project in the field of AD research, on the basis of which many present AD practices and guidelines rely on, as reported by Lodge et al. (1994). According to Lodge et al., while the project was spearheaded by the Independent Television Commission of the United Kingdom (ITC), the members and subcontractors for the project included corporations and organizations from Denmark, Italy, and Finland. The project also received EU funding (Lodge et al. 1994, 7).

Started in September 1991 with the aim "to undertake a thorough study of all aspects of audio description and to lay the ground for the introduction of a service on a European scale" (Lodge 1994, 3). The AUDETEL project studied the typical user of AD; the environmental and professional requirements for producing AD; several options for encoding, decoding,

transmitting and receiving the produced AD; and the service economics required to be able to establish AD as a conductive new service for the disabled (Lodge et al. 1994, 1-5). Although many of the findings of the study, especially the ones regarding technology needed for the production and transmission of AD, are nowadays obsolete as technology has progressed tremendously since the AUDETEL project ended, the findings were very significant back in their day and led to new AD regulations and guidelines in various European countries (Reviers 232). The importance of the AUDETEL project in the development of AD cannot thus be overstated.

3.1.2 The Pear Tree Project

Published in 2012, the Pear Tree Project (PTP) was a part of the Digital Television for All project. According to Mazur & Chmiel (2012, 6), the PTP's objective was to research whether it would be possible to create common European AD guidelines. Mazur & Chmiel state that common European guidelines would both improve the quality of AD across Europe and make producing AD cheaper and faster if AD could simply be translated from one language to another (Mazur & Chmiel 2012, 6).

To test whether it would be possible to produce common guidelines, the PTP aimed to answer the question of if the reception of the same visual input and the way that input is verbalized differs across languages and cultures (Mazur & Chmiel 2012, 6). To achieve this end, the PTP had over 200 participants from 11 countries and 12 native language groups view the same 6-minute video clip and write a description of what happened in the film (Mazur & Chmiel 2012, 6-9; Taylor & Mauro 2012, 31). The aim, according to Mazur & Chmiel (2012, 9-10), was to analyse multiple different aspects of these written descriptions in order to find out whether there were significant differences in the way people from different parts of Europe perceive and talk about visual events. If no such difference would be found, it could be assumed that the creation of common European AD guidelines would be possible (Mazur & Chmiel 2012, 9-10).

Mazur & Chmiel's (2012, 21-22) conclusion regarding the project was that while the PTP concluded that generalizations about film descriptions couldn't be made in the researched languages because the analyzed texts manifested huge variations. Mazur & Chmiel noted that the researchers involved in the project did note that the inconclusive results might have been partly due to issues with the methodology used in the research. As such, the researchers did assume that common European guidelines could be developed, provided they consider

linguistic and cultural differences as well as preferences of visually challenged audiences in the countries the guidelines would concern (Mazur & Chmiel 2012, 21-22).

Although the results of the PTP were inconclusive, the project inspired multiple other research projects in relation to the possibility of European guidelines for AD, all using the same 6-minute film clip in their research. Taylor & Mauro (2012, 25) researched the significance of geographico-statistical and linguistic analysis, and how differences within the same language/culture might impact the process of AD. They concluded that several the analyzed variables do not fit into national/cultural/linguistic categories, while many theme choices are common to all studied groups. Taylor & Mauro's (2012, 40-41) research would support the creation of common European AD guidelines, as similarities observed in descriptive techniques outweigh the differences.

Opposing conclusions were reached by Gronek et al. (2012, 43) who researched intercultural comparison of the film descriptions. The focus of their research was on sense-conveying, non-verbalized cultural information indicators, such as gestures (Gronek et al. 2012, 44). Comparing English and German written descriptions, they concluded that AD should be conducted for each language area individually, and translations should not be used as they could result in coherence gaps or information overload as the same gestures can be interpreted vastly differently in different cultures (Gronek et al. 2012, 49-51). Also Igareda and Matamala (2012), researching different variables in comparison to the original PTP and how they might affect the production of verbal description (Igareda & Matamala 2012, 103-104) concluded that culture and language play a more significant role in the process of producing AD than specific target audiences and the describer's previous training (Igareda & Matamala 2012, 119). As such, common European guidelines might prove to be a challenge as cultural and linguistic differences between different countries are significant. Igareda and Matamala's research does note, however even a limited period of training in AD shows in the results, with the students trained in AD providing more specific descriptions and a greater number of actions in their description (Igareda & Matamala 2012, 119-120).

In conclusion, the Pear Tree Project and other projects inspired by it have provided plenty of research data in relation to AD and the possibility of common European guidelines. Although the conclusions between different research projects vary, all call for further empirical research in the field of AD guidelines.

3.2 Guidelines for theatre audio description

Over time, as AD services have become more available, AD practices have also become more standardized. While no one denies the need for professionalism and a level of consistency, some, such as Kleege (2016, 90) have criticized that the codified rules and guidelines are based on an erroneous idea: problematic assumptions about what B/VI people can understand and what they should know of visual phenomena. Despite there being various rules and guidelines for creating AD, both nationally and internationally used, which will be discussed in more detail in the following sub-chapters, scholarly studies of these AD standards have been lacking (ibid.).

According to Lodge et al. (1994), producing AD requires a wide variety of knowledge ranging from knowledge of time management and prioritizing, skill in describing visual humor, a clear voice that can convey different emotions and tensions, and a wide vocabulary so that the description is lucid, concise and accurate. Therefore, it can be said that production of AD is both a skill and an art form (Lodge, 1994, 141). As AD has become more common, and since the European Commission's Audiovisual Media Services Directive from 2007 explicitly mentioned AD as one form of accessible media services that B/VI people have the right to, the need for common and clear AD guidelines has become clear throughout Europe (Mazur & Chmiel 2012, 6). Several guidelines have therefore been presented for the production of AD, such as the ADLAB (Remael et al. 2014) and ITC guidelines (ITC 2000), as well as national AD guidelines.

As my analysis focuses on how the describers did or did not follow conventional AD guidelines, I will only introduce the parts of the AD guidelines which are relevant to creating theatre AD. This includes both guidelines specific for theatre AD as well as general guidelines for language, cohesion and the role of the audio describer. While there are many guidelines for creating AD, perhaps most notably the European ADLAB guidelines (Remeal et al. 2014), in my analysis, I have chosen to only focus on the Finnish AD guidelines (2013) as they were the only ones the audio describers were given for the production that is the main focus of my thesis, and the theatre play and its AD were produced and performed in Finnish, in Finland. I will analyze both general guidelines for AD which are relevant to theatre AD as well, and the theatre specific AD guidelines.

3.2.1 General Finnish audio description guidelines

The Finnish AD guidelines (*Kuvailutulkkaustoimikunnan ohjeet kuvailutulkeille 2013*, further referred to as FAD) were compiled based on the Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired's courses for training audio describers, and international AD guidelines. The Finnish guidelines are presented as a tool to help and support audio describers to create AD. They offer an overview of the general conventions of AD.

When describing AD, the Finnish guidelines firmly state that the AD is "always subordinate to the target that is being described, and the AD cannot direct too much attention into itself" (my own translation, FAD 2013, 1). This guideline clearly differentiates the AD from its target. AD is not supposed to be, for example, an integrated, equal part of a theatre performance but subordinate to it, only there to provide accessibility in a way that is as unnoticeable as possible. In theatre AD, this could be understood as an advice to deliver the AD via headsets or other "closed" method so that the AD does not draw extra attention to itself.

In terms of language, the guidelines (FAD 2013, 2-3) advice for the use of simple, clear language that is easily understandable yet descriptive. The use of dialects is not encouraged. The AD should aim to use full sentences, and first describe the general overview before describing any details.

According to the FAD (2013), the AD should be non-subjective. The audio describer should not censor what they see, nor offer their own interpretation or comments. They should be reserved yet respectful towards the object they describe. The audio describer also needs to make sure that the AD, either with its contents or its delivery, does not cause confusion, mislead the audience or disturb the event in any way (FAD 2013, 3). As such, the audio describer should need to be able to make both themselves and the AD nearly invisible in the situation.

The guidelines (FAD 2013) do not directly mention whether the audio describer should produce the AD by themselves or with the help of others, such as other describers or the creator of the art they are describing. However, the guidelines do refer to the describer with the second person singular pronoun, implicating that the describer should produce the AD by themselves. While the describer is advised to ask the people who work with the describable art project for help if something is unclear to them (e.g. FAD 2013, 5), they notably are not advised to ask the others to participate in the production of the AD.

3.2.2 Theatre specific audio description guidelines

When producing AD for theatre, the audio describer should reserve enough time to produce the AD (FAD 2013, 5). However, it is not further specified how much time this production process should take. It is advised that the audio describer familiarizes themselves with the play. Although the guidelines do not directly state that the AD should be produced for a play after it is completed, that is implied by the way the guidelines advise the describer to ask for a recording of the play, as well as the script, main program and hand program. They should also familiarize themselves with the costumes, setting and lighting to be able to describe them (FAD 2013, 5). All this implies that the audio describer is not assumed to start producing the AD before the aforementioned aspects have been decided upon.

When describing the theatre performance, the guidelines give the instruction to describe everything that cannot be deduced without seeing it and which can affect people's reactions (FAD 2013, 7). In practice, describing everything that cannot be otherwise deduced by the B/VI audience is nearly impossible, as the time the describer has for the descriptions is often short and describing "everything" would require a long time. Despite this, the guidelines also advise the audio describer to also stay silent at times to let the audience experience the background noises and the general atmosphere (FAD 2013, 8).

The guidelines state that the AD should ideally be performed in between the characters' lines, although if necessary, the AD can overlap them. In these cases, the audio describer should choose to speak over the least important part of the dialogue (FAD 2013, 7-8). This contrasts with the guidelines' previous requirement for subjectivity, as it forces the audio describer to decide which parts of the dialogue are more important than others, which is a subjective decision.

In terms of language, the theatre AD guidelines encourage the use of full sentences and simple, short descriptions (FAD 2013, 7-8). The use of descriptive word choices is therefore not encouraged for theatre, unlike in the general guidelines. The theatre guidelines advise to avoid the use of third person singular pronouns if there is a risk that they may cause confusion and to instead use the characters' names (FAD 2013, 7-8).

The guidelines advise the describer to avoid describing obvious aspects of the play. These include using words to refer to the stage itself, as well as descriptions of the characters' actions or expressions that can be deduced from the other context of the play (FAD 2013, 7). In comparison, things that should be described include aspects such as the characters on the stage,

the visible props, the sources of unknown sounds, entries and exits of the characters', the characters' facial expressions - which are even told to be of particular interest to the B/VI audiences -, movements and actions, as well as possible dances, fights and other group action scenes. Interestingly, the guidelines also advise the describer to tell who is speaking, even while they advise against describing facial expressions if they can be deduced from the characters' tone of voice (ibid.).

In terms of delivering the AD, the guidelines shortly tell the describer to use the microphone correctly to avoid static and clicking noises. While the theatre guidelines do not explicitly state whether the AD should be delivered open to all audiences or closed only for those who have opted to use the AD, the underlying implication seems to be that the AD should be closed. This can be deducted from the way the AD is discussed, as if the AD would be "open" it should not overlap the characters' lines at all. closed AD is also the most often used convention in theatre AD, as mentioned in the ADLAB guidelines among others (Remael et al. 2014). As the guidelines do mention the use of headsets in its other sections that focus more on AD technology (FAD 2013, 9), and even advise the describer to prepare a guide for the audience for where to receive headsets, it is fair to assess that the theatre AD is also thought to be delivered via a closed system.

3.3 Conventional audio description and its challenges

Conventional audio description is AD that follows the established conventions set to it, in this case the guidelines and general practices for producing and delivering AD. As stated before, theatre AD began as a voluntary practice, often provided by a B/VI audience member's friend or family member who whispered to the B/VI person the things they deemed most important out of everything that was happening on the stage. By its nature, this voluntarily produced AD was non-conventional as conventions for it did not yet exist.

While theatre AD began to be professionally delivered in the early 1980's (e.g. Whitfield & Fels 2013), it was only in 1985 when Pfanstiehl and Pfanstiehl developed simple guidelines for theatre AD, which stressed the importance of avoiding subjective interpretations of visual stimuli (Pfanstiehlf & Pfanstiehl, qtd. in Whitfield & Fels 2013, 221). This aim of producing non-subjective AD and not making interpretations of the things happening on the stage can lead to the AD misrepresenting the intended meaning of the director and thus giving the B/VI audience a different vision of the performance, as argued by Whitfield and Fels (2013, 221).

The possible misrepresentation of the director's meaning is not the only issue that can arise from following the conventions – the guidelines – for creating AD. According to Udo and Fels (2009a), even nowadays the guidelines for creating theatre AD tend to not be validated by published research, and instead rely on anecdotal evidence and the historical use of the AD processes. This might be due to most AD research projects being focused on television or film AD, instead of theatre AD. Due to the limited research on the theatre AD, it is therefore impossible to determine whether the conventional approach to producing AD is appropriate for theater as the topic has not been researched. Nonetheless, conventional AD practices have been widely adopted for the production of theatre AD (Udo & Fels 2009a, 178–179).

AD guidelines often aim for the objectivity and neutrality of the description (Whitfield & Fels 2013, 220). The British Independent Television Commission's AD guidelines (ITC 2000) do not allow for the describer to produce subjective AD and they do not recommend involving the director of a theatre play in the process of creating AD for the play in question. Similarly, the American AD standards guide the describer to produce the AD based on what they see without any interpretations or comments. (Whitfield & Fels 2013, 223). The Finnish AD guidelines also promote a non-subjective approach to the AD (FAD 2013).

As conventional AD practices' aim for neutrality can prevent the director and actors' involvement in the process of creating AD, the conventional practices often lead to a less entertaining AD (Whitfield & Fels 2013, 220). Additionally, the practices themselves are foreign to the expressive artistic medium of theatre and interfere with the principles of inclusive design, according to Whitfield & Fels (2013, 220). As conventional AD concentrates exclusively on the visual pieces, rather than the director's intention or the aesthetic experience, a conventionally produced AD may lead to reinforcing the audience's lack of access to and their dependence on the visual stimuli (Udo & Fels 2009a, 179).

Therefore, some researchers such as Andrew Holland (2008, 183), argue that audio description cannot be transparent, nor can it have a direct equivalence between what the audio describer sees and what they say. The sighted audio describer constantly processes what they see on the stage, interpreting and re-interpreting it all the time, often unaware of doing so (Holland 2008, 179). It is impossible for the describer to verbalize each and every interpretation of the actions that they see as the audio description has very strict time limits, as the description must fit around the dialogue of the play, and it cannot overlap the actors' dialogue or important sound effects. Due to the short amount of time the describer has, their words must be chosen carefully. As stated by Holland, by choosing what to describe, the describer gives prominence to the

things they mention, leaving the things they do not mention unavailable for the Blind and Visually Impaired audience members who rely on the description. As such, the audio describer is choosing what the audience should focus on. This act, by its very nature of prioritizing certain information over another, is subjective. The audio describer is therefore making an artistic decision and contributing to how the art is experienced (Holland 2008, 179).

Unlike in television and film where the source material stays the same no matter how many times it is viewed, theatre performances may change from one performance to another as the actors may do things differently. An example of this, given by Holland (2008 170, 177–178), it that the timing of the actors' actions may change, or some actions may be added or left out completely. This is yet another reason why it is important for the audio describer to be able to change the audio description as they see fit – to make subjective decisions – and not blindly follow a premade script. This, however, goes against many AD guidelines. As such, conventional AD does not encourage improvisations by the audio describer which can lead to the AD not including changes to the performance and can thus give the B/VI audience members faulty or lacking information of the performance.

As conventional AD is typically produced by the describer(s) working mostly by themselves, as noted by Fryer (2018), the conventional AD often offers a view into the play that uses an external reference frame. Often conventional AD is also not available to everyone as only selected live performances are described (Fryer 2018, n.p.). This was the case with *Sokea piste*, as only two of its multiple performances were audio described. However, conventional AD does have the chance to be highly responsive, and as the actors do not hear the AD, this allows the describer the possibility to improvise without risking confusing the actors by a suddenly changed AD.

3.4 Non-conventional theatre audio description

Non-conventional AD refers to AD that is produced or delivered in a manner that does not follow the guidelines and conventions for AD. Whereas conventional AD strategies prevail especially in television and films, non-conventional AD strategies are being explored and developed especially in theater and other live arts (Udo & Fels 2009a, 179). Often the groups that are willing to explore alternative AD strategies have individuals with disabilities in their cast (Udo & Fels 2009a, 180). Thus, a conclusion could be drawn that non-conventional AD is

often developed for and with the people who most benefit from it, instead of it being done solely by the sighted audio describer.

Non-conventional AD differs from conventional AD often both in the way it is produced and the manner in which it is performed (e.g. Fryer 2018, n.p.). Whereas conventional AD is often produced following similar guidelines, such as the ADLAB or the ITC guidelines, the approaches to producing non-conventional AD can differ from each other, and there is no single, predefined way to produce non-conventional AD.

According to Fryer (2018), non-conventional AD is often also referred to as integrated AD, as although the terms are not directly equivalent, there is plenty of overlap between them. Fryer states that integrated AD began as a response to conventional AD. It aims to reject the separation between the audio describer and the performing artistic team, as it also rejects the idea of neutral/non-subjective AD being the desired outcome, even questioning whether neutrality is even possible to achieve (Fryer 2018, n.p.).

Fryer (2018) states that integrated AD is an umbrella term for various forms of non-conventional AD. As such, all integrated AD is non-conventional, but non-conventional AD does not necessarily need to be integrated. Integrated AD can refer to AD that has any combination of the following aspects, as listed by Fryer:

- the AD is non-neutral,
- it is creative and/or subjective,
- it is done in collaboration with the theatre group or the play's director to reflect their vision,
- it is produced before or at the same time as the play and not afterwards,
- or it is open and inclusive to all audience members and not delivered via headsets to only some of them (Fryer 2018, n.p.).

As the term has so many possible meanings, integrated audio descriptions can differ from one another by a significant margin, depending on what aspects have been considered in the production and delivery of the AD. In comparison, non-conventional but not integrated AD could be, for example, AD that is otherwise produced following the guidelines but is produced by a large team of describers instead of just 1-3 describers.

When integrated AD is produced during the production of the play, the describer can collaborate with the members of the theatre group, which can allow the source material to be manipulated in a way that creates more space for the AD within the play. Collaboration with the artistic team also makes it more likely that the AD presents the viewpoint of the performer,

instead of that of an outsider watching the play. Integrating the AD into the play also makes it better available to the audience, as an integrated AD that has a distinct function within the play is less likely to be dropped out from some of the performances. Additionally, by producing the AD in collaboration with the theatre group, the AD has what Fryer (2018) refers to as a "seal of approval" from the director, as they know what the AD says. Openly delivered AD also raises the visibility of AD as an access method with a wider audience, helping to normalize it (Fryer 2018, n.p.).

In the following three subchapters I will discuss three different approaches to non-conventional and integrated AD.

3.4.1 Audio describer on the stage

One possible way of integrating AD into the play was explored by Louise Fryer (2018) and the Unscene Suffolk theatre group in their play *A Zimmer of Hope*. The play integrated AD in all the aforementioned five aspects; it was non-subjective, creative, produced in collaboration with the theatre group while they were practicing the play, the AD was even largely written by the director, and it was delivered openly to all audience members during the performance.

According to Fryer (2018, n.p.), the process of producing the AD to *A Zimmer of Hope* highlighted many differences between conventionally produced and integrated AD. When writing an AD to a show that is still in development, the audio describer must accept the fact that the actions and the length of the pauses between them are not yet fixed, and the AD must be updated often. In order to write the AD to be a part of the script, at least some of the actions the performers take must be fixed before the AD script can be written. Fryer also noted that B/VI cast takes cues from the AD when it is available to them which can lead to the performers not performing a certain action before it is described, which in turn can be problematic if the describer does not want to pre-describe actions that have not yet happened. When the performers themselves do not hear the AD, this naturally is not an issue.

Fryer (2018, n.p.) also noted that in her experience, while letting the director and the performers participate in writing the AD script makes the AD better represent the director's meaning, the director uses very different word choices and phrases than a professional audio describer. This could lead to both redundancy that leads the listener to feel that there is too much description, but also to a use of language that is more tactile and embodies elements that are not restricted

by the traditional feedback roles of AD, and instead uses phrases that B/VI people themselves would use to describe their surroundings.

Of the production Fryer (2018, n.p) notes that, in addition to the AD being produced simultaneously to the play itself being developed and with the director and performers of the play, thus making it both creative and non-subjective as well as reflecting the director's vision, the AD for *A Zimmer of Hope* also integrated the audio describer as a character in the play. This made the describer visible to all, and as the audio description was written to be a part of the play, it was also available to all members of the audience. This helped make the whole audience aware of AD as an access service, and could help those sighted audience members who were, for example, seated far from the stage, to better understand what was happening on the stage. As the AD was available to all, the B/VI people in the audience did not need to use headsets to listen to it, letting them feel like normal audience members. However, Fryer notes that being a character in the play prevented her from seeing what was happening on most parts of the stage, which resulted in her having to create the AD for the play from a video of the performance, which in turn easily leads to giving the description an outsider view.

3.4.2 Audio description in a pedagogical setting

Whereas Fryer's approach to non-conventional, integrated AD incorporated the five aspects of integrated AD, non-conventional AD can be produced in a manner that mostly follows the AD conventions as well, with only slight differences that make the AD non-conventional. In 2009, as a part of the research project Live Describe, a school theatre play in Toronto, Canada was audio described by three grade eight students aged 13-14 (Udo & Fels 2009b, 1-2). Udo and Fels (2009b, 11), who researched the production in question, note that the idea for audio describing the play originally came from one of the students who did not want to participate in the play as an actor or a set maker. As the student had previous knowledge of AD, he approached both experienced audio describers for help with the project and the school drama teacher and director of the play to get permission to produce the AD for it. With encouragement from the teacher, the student eventually also recruited two of his friends to help produce the AD.

According to Udo and Fels (2009b, 12), when the production started, only the student who had suggested AD had any experience with or understanding of the creation and use of AD. Even the teacher directing the play, who had been trained as actor and director as well, had no

previous knowledge of AD. To familiarize themselves with the subject, the students and the teacher watched audio described video clips and a movie.

The students prepared the AD mostly independently, although the teacher was the one to suggest to them that they would do the AD from the point of view of the main character in the play (Udo & Fels 2009b, 14). At least one of the students had expressed the desire to do the AD differently from the conventional, non-subjective manner, wanting to make it more expressive and fun (Udo & Fels 2009b, 12). The student who had previous experience with AD felt that the AD should be done in the "correct way", likely referring to the conventional way of producing AD for films and movies (Udo & Fels 2009b, 20).

Udo and Fels (2009b, 13) report that two of the three students noted that producing the AD was not possible in the early stages of the play practices as the student actors were still learning their lines and it was difficult to understand how the actors' interactions would fit together. Waiting until a month (or a week, as was the case with one student describer) before the described performance allowed the actors to learn their lines and actions and made producing the AD easier. Udo and Fels also note (2009b, 14) that in addition to attending the rehearsals, the describers also used the original script and the stage directions to their advantage as they drafted the AD script, although they noted that eventually many stage directions that were used in the director's version of the play differed from the original script, and thus needed to be adjust for in the AD script as well.

Before the described performance, the students received feedback from an experienced audio describer. They were instructed, among other things, on topics such as how to use their voice to convey emotions and how to use more expressive word choices and metaphors. Udo and Fels (2009b, 15-16) report that all students found the feedback helpful and adjusted their descriptions according to it.

The AD produced for the play was closed and only available to those audience members who had selected to use the headsets to listen to it (Udo & Fels 2009b, 9). In this regard the AD adhered to the guidelines of conventional theatre AD. In addition to describing the play, the students also produced an audio introduction of the play that was delivered before it, as well as introductions of themselves and an intermission notification (Udo & Fels 2009b, 2, 16–17).

Udo & Fels (2009b) reported that the students experienced some difficulties and obstacles in the production. For one, the play had two different sets of actors, which naturally made different performances of the play very different, and the AD script prepared for one performance was

not timed correctly for the other, which resulted in the need for a lot of inspiration. The technology used for the delivery of the play was unnecessarily time consuming to learn. The stenomask that was used instead of a normal microphone resulted in the AD sound quality being poor. The projection booth the audio describers worked from was cramped and dirty, and at least one describer's vision to the stage was partially covered by a lighting frame. In addition, the describers worked long days, up to 13 hours a day during the week of the play, yet they were not credited at all for their contribution to the play (Udo & Fels 2009b, 15, 18–19, 22–23).

Despite these issues, Udo and Fels' (2009b) research concludes that the students felt that they learned a lot about making school more accessible and developed new skills. The realization that AD can be done by children was a positive experience, and the students felt they learned more about Blind people as well. While the students also criticized their own performance and the AD they produced, the overall experience for them was positive. The teacher/director as well as the audience members who listened to the AD were positive towards the experience and thought it exceeded their expectations (Udo & Fels 2009b, 20–23).

Whereas this AD was more conventional in its delivery, it can still be categorized as non-conventional AD due to it being produced simultaneously to the rehearsals of the play and not afterwards, the attempt to follow the director's vision instead of the script, and at least one of the describers aiming to make the AD creative and non-subjective. An additional non-conventional factor in this production was the describers' young age and amateur status. This further proves that non-conventional AD is an umbrella term that can include various manners or producing and delivering AD.

3.4.3 Language fit to the play

Udo and Fels (2009a) also researched another non-conventional theatre AD in 2006, when the Hart House Theatre produced a performance of *Hamlet* and used a non-conventional AD strategy to make the performance accessible to B/VI people. The AD was not non-subjective, nor did it focus on describing strictly that which was seen, but rather it aimed to focus the director's vision, *auteur*. *Auteur*-centric approach aims to incorporate the director's vision of the play into the AD, and thus provides the audio describer an opportunity to create less objective AD (Szarkowska 2013.) The director and the describer collaborated in the production of the AD, although the script itself was written by the describer (Udo & Fels 2009a). As such,

the AD incorporated many of the five aspects of integrated AD as later listed by Fryer (2018, n.p., discussed above in 3.4.).

According to Udo and Fels (2009a), the AD was eventually written in iambic pentameter to fit the language and the style of the play. This creative approach to the AD goes against the guidelines. The description did not always give the users an exact description of the set, the costumes, but rather communicated the ideas behind them. Thus, the visual information B/VI audience members were given of the set was not equal to the sighted audience members, but they were given information about the metaphorical meanings of the set (Udo & Fels 2009a, 180–181).

At times, the non-conventional AD resulted in longer descriptions, both to fit the form of the iambic pentameter and to capture the director's vision of the set. This approach also used sensory-based images and the aural description was embellished compared to the actual visual image on the stage. In the example provided by Udo and Fels (2009a), instead of telling the audience that the stage was lit with yellow and red hues, the director inspired the describer to create AD that did not depend on sight, letting even those B/VI people who have never seen colors to understand what was happening by describing that there was a "ball – enflamed in fire from torches lit" (Udo & Fels 2009a, 181).

The produced AD also differed from conventional AD in that it overtly identified the audio describer as one of the characters of the play, Horatio (Udo & Fels 2009a, 181–182). This identification was only available to the audience who listened to the AD: the describer was a separate person from the actor playing Horatio on stage. Udo and Fels (2009a) describe that the revelation of Horatio as the audio describer was fitted into the play by telling the AD users at the very beginning that the play was described from Horatio's point of view, whereas at the end of the play that character of Horatio was given the task to tell Hamlet's story onwards, thus enmeshing the experience of the play and the AD into a singular narrative. As such, the AD strategy did not assume or imply its own role as an access service but rather as an additional facet of the play (Udo & Fels 2009a, 182).

The performance was attended by 40-something B/VI theatre goers, of whom 22 agreed to evaluate the performance and the AD (Udo et al. 2010). The evaluation indicated that the majority of the B/VI users of the AD enjoyed both the AD and the play itself (Udo et al. 2010, 146). The non-conventional language of the AD was received mostly positively, with the users stating that it was unobtrusive, blended well with the play and matched the mood and language

of the performance (Udo et al. 2010, 151). Most AD users also evaluated the language of the AD as simple or average, and it was not found to be too complicated (Udo et al. 2010, 147). Most of the negative evaluations of the AD mentioned the need for more descriptions for details, entrances and exits, expressions and gestures of the characters, and location and time. Udo et al. (2010, 152) note that the description usually has very limited time available and thus everything that happens on the stage cannot be described without overlapping the dialogue.

The biggest problems with the AD resulted from technical issues, as reported by Udo et al (2010). Many AD users reported that the earpiece used to listen to the AD fit poorly, the sound quality was poor, that there was background static, or that the popping sound of the microphone used by the describer was either annoying or loud enough to hurt. These issues also affected the users' enjoyment of both the AD and the play. The users experiencing the most technical issues enjoyed the AD the least (Udo et al. 2010, 149–150). The researchers suggested open AD that is available to all audience members as one possible solution to the problems with both the technology and the timing of the description (Udo et al. 2010, 153). Based on the audience evaluation, the researchers concluded that AD should entertain the B/VI users of it, and unconventional AD methods can result in AD that fits the performance linguistically, emotionally and stylistically better than conventional AD (Udo et al. 2010, 155).

In conclusion, the above examples show that non-conventional AD can be created in a variety of ways. Generally, the reception of the non-conventional AD has been mainly positive. As such, non-conventional AD appears to be a solution that is worth considering when planning the production of an AD to a theatre play. Especially considering the criticism against some aspects of conventional theatre AD, including the criticism for the impossibility of non-subjectivity (Holland 2008, 179) and the lack of research behind the guidelines (Kleege 2016, 90), non-conventional AD solutions could offer another, user-friendly way to produce AD, while still maintaining the strengths of conventional AD, such as the use of clear and understandable language.

4 METHODOLOGY

In my thesis I analyze the process of creating an audio description for the play *Fedoriam* by theatre group Sokkelo (Teatteriyhdistys Sokkelo). In this chapter I will outline the aims of the research and then introduce the theatre group, the audio describers and the play, as well as outline how the process of producing the audio description worked, introduce the data I gathered during and after that process, and discuss the manner in which I will analyze it.

4.1 Aims of the research

The aims of this research are to find out how conventional and non-conventional audio description methods were used in the AD for *Fedoriam*, as well as to discuss the possible reasons for why such methods were chosen and whether the audio describers found the conventional AD production methods beneficial for the project or if they felt like they benefited more from the non-conventional methods. Thus, the research aims to analyze the usefulness of conventional and non-conventional AD production methods in hopes to prove that, at times, non-conventional methods can also provide favorable outcomes, which would suggest that broadening the conventions regarding the production of AD could make the field of AD more diverse and provide new viewpoints into the growing academic field of AD research and offer new production process ideas for theatre AD.

The research data gathering was conducted using ethnographic methods: I was a part of the team of audio describers who produced the AD, and as such I interacted with both the other describers as well as the members of the theatre group. Ethnographic methods were particularly useful for this research as I was researching a topic that was not yet clearly understood, I had no defined researched question when I began my research, and I wanted to gather the audio describers' own opinions of the process in the "natural" setting instead of analyzing the process through a pre-determined set of questions. Ethnographic methods are often used to study the aforementioned characteristics (Angrosino 2011, 19-27), and they proved to be the most convenient research method for this research as well. While these research results gained via ethnographic research are context-bound (Eardley-Weaver 2013, 15) and thus cannot be replicated in another setting, they do still reveal important information about the research topic which can then be used to discuss the existing theory.

4.2 Theatre group Sokkelo

According to the description on theatre group Sokkelo's own web sites, the group is the only professionally led amateur theatre society for the Blind in Finland. Sokkelo was founded in 2006 and registered as an organisation in 2010. (Sokkelo 2020.) However, the CSVI has its own theatre group for the Blind, Näkövammaisteatteri (Theatre for the Visually Impaired), that has been operational since 1978 and has been led by multiple professionals (TINFO 2020). In addition, Riitta Lindroos (2014, 8-9) mentions another Blind Theatre, the Käskopolo theatre that was founded in 2005.While Sokkelo undoubtedly is one of the few theatres for the B/VI in Finland, its claims of being the only one are thus unsupported. It is possible that Sokkelo is, however, the only theatre company in Finland where the performances are also directed, performed, advertised and set designed primarily by the Visually Impaired.

The theatre group Sokkelo is primarily located in Tampere but the group has also performed around Finland. The plays they perform have been written by either the previous director Erkki Aura or the current theatre leader Santtu Salminen. According to the group's websites, they have performed 9 different plays since the group was founded in 2006, with *Fedoriam* being their latest play. Some of the plays were performed multiple times. Many, although not all, of the group's members are B/VI people. (Sokkelo 2020.)

Sokkelo aims to make it possible for B/VI people to produce theatre and thus both increase the quality of life for its members by allowing them the opportunity to participate in culture (the benefits of which have been discussed by Ferziger et al. 2020) and teach them to perform and find their hidden talents. By producing B/VI theatre, Sokkelo also aims to make B/VI people more visible in culture, make theatre accessible, and create new ways of producing theatre. Members of the Sokkelo theatre group have called the group's work "important and socially significant" (Salminen 2021, e-mail conversation). In addition to theatre performances, Sokkelo also aims to organize different types of courses and lectures on arts and performance for B/VI people and those interested in their activities. Sokkelo finances itself by membership fees, performance fees, grants and donations (Sokkelo 2020).

4.2.1 Fedoriam

As Stated on Sokkelo's (2020) website, *Fedoriam* is a theatre play written by Santtu Salminen and directed by Esko Rissanen. The play's only performance was held on January 11th, 2020 in Tampere (Sokkelo 2020). While other performances were planned, they were cancelled due

to the restrictions put in place due to the Covid-19 virus. Additionally, one of the original actors of the play passed away in 2021, which likely means that the play will not be performed again. (Ketola 2020, Teams-call.) According to a book that is being written about Sokkelo, the performance of *Fedoriam* was the first simultaneously audio described play in Finland (Roviomaa, n.d., n.p.). It is likely that the author of the book meant that *Fedoriam* was the first openly audio described play, as other theatre performances have also been audio described and the AD has been delivered simultaneously to the performance.

Fedoriam is divided into two parts separated by a half-time. The singular performance's overall length was roughly two hours. The play has thirteen scenes, and during the performance they were divided so that the first six of them were during the first part of the play and the last seven during the second part.

There are ten characters in the play. These were performed by a total of eight actors. In addition to the actors, pre-recorded audio tapes are also used in the performance to create the illusion of radio shows, a musical performance, and radio communication between militant groups. During the performance, some of the planned audio effects had to be omitted due to the lighting technician becoming ill and being unable to attend the performance.

4.2.2. Synopsis of *Fedoriam*

Fedoriam is set in the imaginary South American state of Libero del Sur. The state gained independence from its neighbouring state of Costa del Norte some decades ago, and the two states have been fighting over the coastal rights ever since. Lately the situation has become more tense as the leader of Libero del Sur, General El Groz, has become ill and the day-to-day operations of the state have been led by the General's right-hand man, Don Diego.

The play follows the budding romance of a university student Angelina Alvarado and a widowed middle-aged doctor Oscar Aramante as the country falls into a military engagement with Costa del Norte. In the first half of the play Alvarado and Aramante meet and fall in love near a magical fountain but Don Diego arrives to interrupt their meeting, also getting interested in the young Alvarado. Both Don Diego and Aramante ask Alvarado to be their dance partner at the upcoming ball for General El Groz' birthday. Alvarado accepts both offers.

In the scene before halftime the audience finds out that Don Diego's interest in Alvarado is solely due to her family's political connection and he sees her as an easily-controllable pawn in the game for the control of the country. Don Diego also reveals that he is prepared to start a

nuclear war against Costa del Norte, not caring whether tens of thousands of his countrymen would die due to it as long as he himself survives the war as a victor.

After halftime the play is set on the General's birthday ball, where the main focus is on Miss Alvarado, who dances consequently with both Aramante and Don Diego. While Don Diego tries to encourage her into politics, Aramante tells her to follow her dreams as a poet. Aramante and Alvarado almost kiss when the party is disbanded as Costa del Norte attacks Libero del Sur, and a bombing starts. Aramante and Alvarado escape the ball, and Don Diego assumes they were planning the attack with Costa del Norte, ordering the two of them to be found and killed.

In the last scenes of the play Aramante and Alvarado have escaped to a beach house. As the sound of bombing is heard from the speakers, the pair confess their love to one another and promptly lose their mind, falling victims to frantic insanity and making a final phone call to a friend, which leads to Don Diego's men tracking their whereabouts. Don Diego orders the beach house to be bombed down. The stage goes dark.

As the lights return, a sole soldier arrives at the beach house and finds the bodies of Amarante and Alvarado, stating that they died for nothing. After he has left, Amarante and Alvarado appear to wake up, standing up and walking hand by hand to the same magical fountain they had met at. The play ends.

4.3 The members of the theatre group and the audio describers

In the production of both *Fedoriam* and the AD for it, it is noteworthy that most of the people participating in the production were non-professionals. Sokkelo is an amateur theatre, and while some of its members may have had some professional experience as well, most were amateurs. Likewise, the majority of the audio describers participating in the process were university students with little to no previous experience in either theatre or AD. As such, it is possible that the AD production reflected their previous lack of experience with professional AD, which in turn may have affected the final AD.

4.3.1 The theatre group members

The theatre group that produced and performed *Fedoriam* consisted of seven actors, the director, the playwright who also had an acting role, and a light and sound technician [2]. Additionally, one of the group members often had a personal care assistant with them during the rehearsals who helped by working as a prompter and acting as any character who was needed for the scene that was being practiced but whose original actor was not present in that rehearsal. The personal care assistant did not have a role in the performance of the play.

The group included both sighted and B/VI members. This supports Udo & Fels's (2009a) statement that theatre groups who have disabled members in their cast are more likely to explore different AD methods (Udo & Fels 2009 a, 179–180). Of the two members whose effect on the AD production process will be analyzed in more detail further on, the director and the playwright, the director is sighted and the playwright is B/VI.

All the theatre members gave their permission for the data to be used in this thesis, most on the condition that they remain anonymous in its analysis. The director and the playwright agreed to be identified by their names.

4.3.2 The audio describers

The audio description was created by a seven-person team from the Tampere University as a part of a university course in audio description. The group consisted of five students, one professional interpreter who participated in the course due to being interested in the field, and a lecturer who coordinated the project and advised the other members on how to produce AD. Of the students, all were studying languages and/or translation and interpreting in either English or German. None of the students nor the professional interpreter reported previous experience in professionally audio describing plays, but two of them reported that they had participated in another course about audio description where they had produced a short AD of a museum display, and one reported having practiced audio describing paintings and comics in a course about multimodality[3].

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[2] During the performance of *Fedoriam* the original light and sound technician was ill and was replaced with two people.

[3] There was an eighth member of the group but they had to drop out of the project for personal reasons before any data was gathered for this thesis, and as such are not included in the analysis.

All the audio describers participating in the production gave their permission for the data to be used in this thesis if the analysis was presented in a manner that preserved their anonymity. The audio describers did express a wish to be named in this thesis as the describers who produced the AD for *Fedoriam*. As such, their names can be found in the Acknowledgements.

4.4 The audio description process

According to Anne Ketola (2020), the lecturer responsible of organizing the university course which produced the AD, the idea for the AD for *Fedoriam* began with the playwright, Santtu Salminen, meeting some of the Tampere University's students who were producing AD for another course project and learning from them that the university offered some courses on AD. Salminen asked the students to give his contact information to the lecturer responsible for these courses, as he "had a theatre and ideas for AD". The students did so and passed Salminen's information to university lecturer Ketola. Ketola contacted Salminen in the late spring of 2019, and the idea for theatre AD for *Fedoriam* was born (Ketola 2020, Teams-call).

The rest of the audio describers were recruited into the project in June 2019 when Ketola sent an email to selected students of the Tampere University inquiring if the students would be interested in audio describing live arts the next semester as an independent study project. The students receiving the inquiry had all previously either attended a course on AD or otherwise expressed interest in the field. In August 2019 the students who had expressed interest in the project were told that the project would be to produce AD for the play *Fedoriam* (Ketola 2019, personal email conversation).

The first rehearsal that the describers attended was on September 2nd, 2019, marking also the first time the describers had the opportunity to meet the actors and the director of the play, as well as see the theatre and receive the play script. This was also the first time the describers, including the lecturer, learned that Salminen would not be directing the play but it would instead be directed by Esko Rissanen. This came as a surprise, as Ketola had discussed the AD project only with Salminen, and thus could not say how much Rissanen had been informed of their conversations and the agreements they had made regarding the describers' job description and the AD in general (Ketola 2020, Teams-call). During the rehearsals, the matter was not discussed with the rest of the theatre group.

At the time the rehearsals began in September 2019, the play script was still missing some scenes, the date for the first performance had not been decided on, and the female lead had not

yet been cast. The describers were asked if one of them would like to play the part of the female lead, but all refused. Unlike in Fryer's (2018) integrated AD experience, the role offered to the describers was that of an actor, not of an acting audio describer.

The theatre group often had rehearsals twice a week, once in the theatre, once a read-through of the script in a separate meeting room. The rehearsals typically lasted around two hours at a time and were often preceded by a casual "coffee and conversation" moment in the lounge area of the theatre. The describers were welcomed to attend all these rehearsals and were treated as a part of the team. During the autumn of 2019, all describers did not attend every theatre rehearsal but there were always at least two describers present. The read-throughs were not attended frequently for they were not deemed as necessary to produce the AD as there were no actions, stage or costumes to describe, although a few describers attended the read-throughs a couple of times.

During the course of the rehearsals every describer received multiple revised scripts of the play as paper copies on which they could make their own notes. Additionally, the group of describers had a shared Google Docs – document where they could see and edit the entire script. The lecturer added the revisions of the play script onto the document as they were delivered to them. The AD script was written on this shared document and edited as the rehearsals progressed. All describers were allowed and encouraged to suggest AD solutions to the script. The rest of the theatre group did not have access to the AD script, though they did all have both paper and electrical versions of the play script and had the opportunity to mark the AD in their own scripts.

At the rehearsals, the audio describers sat near the stage and often the scenes were practiced with the audio description, allowing the actors and the director to ask questions and suggest additions or detractions to the AD. Typically one of the describers worked as the main audio describer during the rehearsals while the others wrote down suggestions and changes to the describers' shared AD script. However, there were also rehearsals where the actors practiced the scenes without the AD, during which the describers usually wrote their own notes.

In addition to the rehearsals, the group of describers also met twice during the production to discuss the AD script and different approaches to producing the AD. These meetings were coordinated by the lecturer, and lasted between one to two hours.

The date for the performance was finally decided on in late October 2019, and the describers were informed of it accordingly. The theatre rehearsals continued as usual once a week until

early December, when the last rehearsal of 2019 was set on the 9th of December. The theatre group then continued the rehearsals in January 2020, rehearsing the play a total of four more times before the performance on the 11th of January. The audio describers were present for each of these rehearsals.

During the performance, a total of four audio describers had the opportunity to describe parts of the play. The roles were shared on the day of the performance, based on the describer's willingness to describe live and the availability of the AD lines. The describers divided the AD into four distinct sections: the introduction tour, the overall technical AD (including lighting and stage prop changes) and the AD for the first and the second half of the play. As one of the describers was late to arrive to the play and was not present when the roles were shared, and I myself preferred to take notes of the AD for the purposes of this thesis, the four roles were shared between the four remaining describers. The lecturer opted out of the role of a describer, wanting to give all the describers' roles to the students.

The four parts of AD differed in length and timing. The introduction tour was held before the start of the performance, with each actor stating their character's name and the describer briefly describing the characters' outfits. The AD for that was concise and lasted less than five minutes total. The AD for the first part of the play consisted of describing the actors' actions, impressions and noteworthy costume changes throughout the performance, often in short intervals between the actors' dialogue. In comparison, while the AD for the second part of the play had the same type of content, the first part of the play was considerably longer than the second one. The AD for the technical changes was present for both the first and the second half of the play, both during and between scenes. The audio describers, therefore, gave very differing amounts of descriptions.

4.5 Data gathering

The data I will analyze in the following chapter consists of the final AD script, four audio recordings from the theatre rehearsals and describers' meetups, and the audio describers' written answers to an online questionnaire which I created for this thesis. Everyone who can be heard on the audio recordings gave their written permission for the recording and its use for the purpose of this thesis on the condition that they remain anonymous in the thesis (with the exceptions of the lecturer, director and playwright who agreed to be identified). Of the four recordings, two were recorded during the rehearsals and two were recorded during the audio

describers' group meetings. The overall length of the recordings is over 5 hours (see Table 3 in chapter 4.6 for a more detailed information of the recordings).

The describers answering the written questionnaire had the option to do so anonymously, and their answers will also be presented in a way that does not reveal their identities. All the describers in the project expressed interest in and consented to being credited as one the describers, and they will be listed in the acknowledgements of the thesis.

The data was gathered between September 2019 and January 2020, with the written questionnaire being the only data gathered in 2020. At the time I began the data gathering, I had not yet defined my research question for the thesis, although I did know I wanted to research the AD production process and the audio describers' opinions regarding it in some manner. As such, the conversations recorded and the questions asked did not aim to direct the conversation and/or answers to any particular direction. All the conversations were naturally occurring, and while I participated in them, I did so as a member of the describer team expressing my personal opinions. My research question was later formed based on the data I had gathered.

The written questionnaire, which was produced at the very end of the project and at a time when I had a clearer idea of the aspects of the process I wanted to research, aimed at gathering a general overview of the describers' experiences and thoughts regarding the whole AD process. In addition to asking about the describers' previous experience with AD, the questionnaire also asked about:

- the describers' perception on who were involved in the production of the AD, and whether there were too many, too few or just enough people involved,
- how the describers and the AD were treated/received,
- what kind of a role the describers had in the production of the whole play,
- how the practical aspects of the whole production functioned,
- how the creative aspects of the AD production functioned,
- what the describers thought about the quality of the final AD,
- what the describers would do differently if they worked on a similar project in the future, and
- did the describers believe that AD could be produced for theatre in this manner?

Answering the questionnaire was voluntary, and the describers could answer it anonymously. None of the questions were mandatory, and the describers could choose to only answer some of them. All the questions allowed the describers to write in their answer without character

limit. Of the six audio describers, including the lecturer and excluding myself, four chose to answer the questionnaire.

As I research the conventionality and non-conventionality of the AD production process, my data also includes the Finnish Audio Description guidelines, which were introduced in more detail in chapter 2.3. A printed version of these guidelines was also given to the audio describers by the lecturer during the first rehearsal.

4.6 Research approach

In order to find out how the AD production process for *Fedoriam* followed the conventional guidelines for AD and how it differed from them, I will look at the recordings and the questionnaire answers as well as the AD script and compare how the FAD guidelines have been followed or diverted from in my data. I will pay special attention to any direct mentions of the guidelines but also analyze how the guidelines were or were not followed in the production of the AD. I will also note if the describers have expressed opinions about the functionality of their chosen AD methods as this can provide information on whether the describers feel that conventional or non-conventional AD methods are more beneficial in producing theatre AD.

From the recordings, the questionnaire answers and the AD script I will look for instances where any of the following aspects are being mentioned:

- The non-conventional aspects of the AD production that were decided upon at the beginning of the production,
- the importance of *auteur* for the AD and the differing visions of the playwright and the director, as well as how they were dealt with by the describers,
- the integration of the describers' visions in the play and the AD,
- the describers' non-conventional roles in the production,
- the general collaboration with the theatre group,
- the subjectivity/non-subjectivity of the produced AD and the possible reasons for it,
- the language and the contents of the final AD script and their conventionality, and
- the describers' general experiences of the project and the AD methods they chose to use.

Mainly, I will analyze whether these aspects follow the conventional guidelines for theatre AD (introduced in chapter 3) or if they differ from them. Of the listed aspects, Fryer (2018) mentions non-subjectivity, *auteur*, and collaboration with the theatre group as signs of non-conventional AD. Additionally, the open delivery and simultaneous production of the AD and

the play are discussed in the predetermined non-conventional AD aspects. The analysis of the describers' roles and vision as well as the language and the contents of the AD can be justified as the Finnish guidelines (FAD 2013) include conventions regarding both aspects, and as such it is valid to analyze how the guidelines were followed. Additionally, as only analyzing whether the used methods were conventional or not without discussing their perceived functionality would give no information about whether the AD methods should be used in future as well, I also discuss the describers' opinions on whether their conventional/non-conventional AD methods were functional and beneficial for the production. I believe that determining whether the chosen AD methods, whether conventional or not, were deemed practical by the describers is important so that this research can be used to provide suggestions for improving the state of future theatre AD.

4.6.1 Referring to the data

To discuss the data, I will give examples from the data in its original Finnish and discuss their implications. As the describers wished that the data would be presented in a manner that would not reveal their identities, all the describers have been given pseudonyms, except for the lecturer. While the playwright and the director agreed to be named in this thesis, in the analysis they will be referred to as the playwright and the director. The actors will be referred to simply as actors, as there is no need to further identify them from each other. The pseudonyms for the audio describers are listed below on Table 1.

Table 1. Audio describers' pseudonyms for recordings

Pseudonym	Role
Anna	Student
Bella	Student
Cecilia	Student
Diana	Student
Erica	Student
Fiona	Student
Ketola	Lecturer

As can be seen from Table 1, the audio describers' pseudonyms are in alphabetical order. The order was decided based on the order the describers are mentioned in the examples in the

following chapter, except for the lecturer. The table also lists the describers' role as either a student or a lecturer. The professional interpreter involved in the project is listed as a student as they participated in the project in the same capacity as the rest of the students and had no prior experience in producing theatre AD. The lecturer is the only one who does not have a pseudonym, as they agreed to be named in the thesis. As such, the lecturer is referred to with their surname.

As the describers had the opportunity to answer the questionnaire anonymously, and some of the four people who answered had done so, the questionnaire answers cannot be linked with the pseudonyms used for the analysis of the recordings. Therefore, I gave the describers who answered the questionnaire another set of pseudonyms. These pseudonyms for the four describers who answered the questionnaire can be seen below on Table 2.

Table 2 Pseudonyms for the questionnaire answers

Pseudonym	Previous AD experience
Describer 1	Has practiced AD before in a non-professional setting
Describer 2	None
Describer 3	Has listened to AD before
Describer 4	Has practiced AD before

Table 2 also lists the describers' self-reported previous experience with AD. The pseudonyms were given in numerical order in the order the describers had answered the questionnaire. Stylistically the pseudonyms for the recordings and the questionnaire answers differ from each other significantly so in the analysis it would be easier to differentiate between answers given in the questionnaire and statements spoken during the recorded group conversations. I believe it is important to differentiate between the two, as the group conversations were held before the performance of the play when the AD was still in production, whereas the questionnaire was answered after performance. The describers also filled in the questionnaire by themselves at their leisure and could reflect their own opinions in it, whereas the environment and structure of the group conversation may have affected the topics that the describers mentioned during the recorded conversations.

The recordings of the theatre practices and the group discussions have been given names which are listed below in Table 3. Table 3 also lists the length of the recording as well as the recording day and the type.

Table 3 Recordings

Name	Length	Date	Type
Theatre 1	01:36:43	21st Oct 2019	Theatre practice
Group 1	00:57:10	4th Nov 2019	Group meeting
Theatre 2	01:41:38	11th Nov 2019	Theatre practice
Group 2	01:09:14	19th Nov 2019	Group meeting

As can be seen from Table 3, the recordings consist of four different clips, two from the theatre practices and two from the describers' group discussions. In total, the total run time of the recordings is roughly 5 hours 25 minutes. To analyze the recordings, I did a clean read transcription of all the recordings. In the transcription I had not yet given pseudonyms for any speakers, and the pseudonyms were only edited on the data examples.

4.6.2 Ethics of the research and data handling

All data was gathered with the written permission of the people participating in the production process of *Fedoriam* and its AD, and everyone gave their permission for the gathered data to be used and analyzed for the purposes of this thesis, with most of the participants expressing a wish that they could not be identified from the analysis presented in the thesis. The director and the playwright agreed to be named in the thesis when relevant, as did the lecturer who organized the course.

The recording data was recorded on my phone and then stored on my personal computer behind a password to ensure no one else could access it. The written questionnaire, being a Google Forms – questionnaire, was stored on a cloud service, with no one else being allowed access to it. After the publication of this thesis, I will move all the data to an external hard drive. Should it be used for further research, I would ask for the permission for it to be used in such a manner from the relevant parties. Should I decide to do no further researched based on this data, I will delete it from all my devices.

5 ANALYSIS

I will analyze the key points of the data in seven different sections. First, I will analyze and discuss the two aspects of the production of the AD that were decided upon at a very early stage of the production by the lecturer, the playwright and the director: the delivery method of the AD, and the AD being produced and practiced simultaneously to the rehearsal which directly led to the AD production process requiring a longer time. These decisions largely affected the rest of the production of the AD, yet most of the describers were not involved in making the decision. Second, I will analyze the describers' *auteur*-centered approach to the production of the AD, and how the playwright and the director's visions were followed. Third, I will discuss the describers' vision as well as their roles in the production of the whole play and its effect on the AD. Fourth, I will briefly discuss the describers' collaboration with the rest of the theatre group. Fifth, I will analyze the subjectivity, neutrality and interpretations in the AD. Sixth, I will focus on the language and the contents of the AD. Finally, seventh, I will discuss the describers' opinions on the project and their choices in producing the AD. In all these sections, I will tie the analyzed topic to the conventional theatre AD methods, noting whether the decisions made followed or diverged from the Finnish AD guidelines, or whether they complied with Fryer´s (2018) classification of non-conventional AD markers.

5.1 Early non-conventional aspects

The AD for *Fedoriam* can be classified as non-conventional solely due to the way it was produced and presented to the audience. The AD process includes two of the five aspects of integrated/non-conventional AD, as listed by Fryer (2018) and further discussed in 3.4; the AD is open and inclusive to all audience members, and it is produced before or at the same time as the play. Both aspects were decided on shortly after the production of the AD started, primarily by the lecturer, the playwright and the director, with the rest of the describers following their lead and not questioning the decisions (Ketola Teams-call, 23.2.2021). As outlined in chapter 4.4, the AD was produced simultaneously to the play, and during the performance the AD was delivered via microphones to the whole audience and the actors. As such, the AD fulfills the criteria of being non-conventional. However, I believe it is important to not just say that the AD was produced and delivered in a non-conventional manner but to also note how these decisions were made and to question whether the describers think the non-conventional method was better than the conventional method.

5.1.1 The open delivery of the AD

When the students participating in the project were informed about the play they would be describing, they were told that the AD would be delivered closed via headsets (Ketola 2020, personal email conversation). However, this idea was discarded in early September 2019, when the describers first visited the theatre where the performance would take place. The theatre had no sound-proof area from where the describers could deliver the AD without it being audible to the whole audience. While other methods of AD delivery were briefly considered, including an idea of the describers watching the performance via a web stream and using microphone and headsets to describe it to the B/VI audience, these ideas were also discarded. The lecturer and the playwright decided that the AD would be delivered openly for the whole audience instead, with the describers being seated near the stage and talking into a microphone.

As such, it was clear from almost the beginning of the process that the AD would be delivered openly for the whole audience and the actors, which is a non-conventional AD method already on its own. In addition, the choice to use four audio describers in total for the performance was also non-conventional. The aim was to make the AD accessible to all and make AD as an accessibility device more visible, and open AD was beneficial to that aim. The decision to use four describers was done to allow more than one of the describers a chance to deliver AD.

In the practices the AD was delivered without any technological aids, but during the actual performance the audio describers had microphones. The four describers had two microphones in total which they shared between them so that the describer describing the set and technical aspects of the play had their own microphone, while the three other describers switched between using the other one. During the rehearsals even as late as the day before the performance the audio describers had only one microphone, so the addition of another microphone was seen as an improvement, as discussed in example 1. As experienced by the student describers in Udo and Fels' research (2009b, in 3.4.2), the microphones produced some background static noise, which the audio describers did note but were unable to do anything about. This did make it more difficult to hear the AD, and as such was an inconvenience. The use of microphones follows the FAD conventions on theatre AD (2013). However, microphones are conventionally used as the AD is delivered closed to the headsets of the B/VI audience members, and as such the delivery method requires the use of a microphone. As the AD of *Fedoriam* was delivered openly without headsets, the use of microphone was not required in a similar capacity. During the performance of *Fedoriam,* the audio describers were

the only ones using microphones as the actors did not have any. As such, it raises the question whether the audio describers could have broken away from the conventions of AD and delivered their lines without the aid of microphones as the actors did. This would have resulted in the lack of the background statistic noise that the microphones caused, though it is also possible that had microphones not been used the AD may not have been audible to the whole audience.

> (1) Describer 3: Tekniikka toimi pääsääntöisesti, joskin olin hieman kauhuissani siitä, että tarkoituksena oli käyttää yhtä aikaa kahta tulkkia tulkkaamaan erilaisia tulkkeita vain yhteen mikrofoniin, mutta onneksi viimeisiin treeneihin ja esitykseen saatiin omat langattomat mikrofonit. Mikeistä kuului hieman sivuääniä, joka saattoi mennä puheen päälle, jolloin siitä sai vähemmän selvää. (Questionnaire)[4]

The idea of the open AD delivery was received positively by the describers as they experienced that this allowed them the opportunity to ask for breaks in the dialogue for the AD. The practicalities of using open AD instead of closed AD were also discussed by the describers, as they considered how it could affect the timing and rhythm of the play as the AD could not, in any case, be delivered simultaneously to the actors' speech, as can be seen in example 2.

> (2) Cecilia: Joo, mutta tää on sellanen näytelmä, että siinä on tosi pitkiä dialogeja, joissa silleen ei oo kirjotettuna mitään, että siinä on vaan vuorosanat ja ohjaaja pistää ihmisiä hääräämään sinne taustalle, niin että sitä voi kuvailla niin sinne pitää jättää myös niitä taukoja ja se on ehkä tän projektin etu, että pystyy tekemään myös niin.
>
> Anna: Voi kuvailla ilman niitä taukojakin, mutta tässä just se [ohjaaja] on antanut meille sen mahollisuuden, että pidetään niitä taukoja.
>
> Cecilia: Ja että osa niistä kuvailuista jäis varmasti pois, jos sitä dialogia ei tauotettais niitä varten. (Group 1)

As the AD would be delivered to everyone, the describers also noted that this way they would not accidentally give the B/VI audience members information via AD that would not be available to the rest of the audience, seen in example 3. This shows a conventional way of thinking on the describers' behalf. The guidelines advise against giving the B/VI audience information that is not available to the rest of the audience, even while the sighted audience constantly receives information that is not available to the B/VI audience. Even when they were producing open, non-conventional AD, the describers were thus seemingly thinking that they should not make decisions that go against the AD guidelines.

> (3) Anna: [Hahmojen esittelykierroksella] toi ammatti voidaan sanoa vaan, jos se on siinä käsiohjelmassa, koska muuten sitä ei tulisi esille näkevällekään yleisölle.
>
> Diana: Paitsi tässä, kun nekin kuulee sen, mitä me sanotaan. (Group 1)

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[4] English translations of all the data examples can be found in Appendix 1.

In conclusion, the describers found the open delivery method of the AD to be beneficial for the production of the AD and did not protest against the request for it or argue on behalf of finding another delivery method that would allow them to keep the delivery of the AD closed. Description solutions reflected the fact that the AD could be heard by everyone, even if this was not taken full advantage of and the describers at times opted to follow the guidelines in not providing information in the AD that would not also be visible on the stage despite the AD being available for all. During the actual performance of the play the describers experienced some problems with the technology and the microphones' static background noise did interfere slightly with the AD but altogether the describers seemed satisfied with the delivery method of the AD and its functionality. The one aspect of a more conventional delivery method that the describers would have preferred to have on this project as well was more time to practice the AD with the technological aspects. Now the AD was not practiced with the microphones until the day before the final performance, and even then the describers only had one microphone to share. The second microphone was only added the day of the performance and as such the describers did not have much time to practice switching the microphone from one another.

5.1.2 The simultaneous production of the audio description and the play

From the first rehearsals that the describers attended, the director expected them to produce the AD simultaneously and integrated within the play. The lecturer and the playwright had originally agreed that the AD would be produced independently by the audio describers who would only watch the rehearsals and produce the AD outside of them, but the director was apparently never informed of this agreement (Ketola 2020, Teams-call). Thus, the audio describers' more intensive participation in the rehearsals as well as the production of the AD alongside the rehearsals were decided upon during the first rehearsal as the audio describers followed the director's instructions on the matter. These decisions strongly affected the length of the AD production as it was now strongly tied to the production of the play: the describers could not take breaks to work on the AD on their own and to step back in when the play was mostly finished, as they were expected to be present in all stage rehearsals so the actors would also learn to work with the AD.

The production for the AD started in September 2019 and the final AD script was written on the date of the play's first public performance, in January 2020, with the describers even improvising some descriptions during the performance. As such, the AD was produced during the span of five months. While the Finnish guidelines (FAD 2013) for producing theatre, AD

do state that the describer should reserve "plenty of time" (my own translation) to the production of AD, five months is very excessive. During the process, the audio describers attended the rehearsals over 20 times (Roviomaa, n.p.). Assuming that each rehearsal lasted two hours and there were at least two audio describers present for each rehearsal, combined the audio describers spent over 80 man hours following the rehearsals. In reality, this number is even higher, as often there were more than two describers present. In addition, the audio describers had their own meetings, and they also worked on the AD script outside the rehearsals. As such it is likely that in reality the audio describers spent up to 200 man hours, possibly even more, working on the AD script. The length of the production was often commented on by the describers, both during the describers' group discussion and in multiple questionnaire answers, including examples 4-6.

(4) Anna: Ehkä vähän tuntuu, että se junnaa paikallaan, kun mennään aina eri porukalla samoja kohtauksia ja kun niillä ei oo ylhäällä kenelläkään, että mihin ne tulkkeet tulee, ni sit on silleen että, niin…

Bella: Mun mielestä, kaiken kaikkiaan, on niinku kuvailutulkkauksen valmistuksen ja tekemisen kannalta tässä ei oo mitään järkee näin, näin niinku suoraan sanoen. Musta on hirveen mielenkiintoista, musta on kauheen hauskaa katsella kauheen erilaisia ihmisiä ja työtapoja, mutta eihän siinä oo mitään järkeä, että kuvailutulkkaus lähtee mukaan siinä vaiheessa, kun ei oo vielä edes kaikkia näyttelijöitä ja kässäri ole valmis. Mun mielestä. Vaikka kuinka se tehdään sinne osaksi esitystä, niin mun mielestä sen esityksen pitäisi olla jonkinlaisessa kuosissa ensin. Se että me istutaan siellä viikosta toiseen ja niinku siel venkslataan sitä, että nouseeks se nyt tässä kohtaa vai minuutin myöhemmin niin ei siinä sen kannalta oikeesti oo mitään järkee. (Group 1)

(5) Describer 1: Kuvailutulkkien kannattaa vastaisuudessa tulla mukaan projektiin vasta sitten, kun näyttelijät ovat harjoitelleet jonkin aikaa, sillä alkupuolella istuimme monissa harjoituksissa vain katsomassa. (Questionnaire)

(6) Describer 2: Tulimme mukaan porukkaan todella alkuvaiheessa, jolloin kaikkia näyttelijöitä ei vielä ollut, eli tulkkeiden työstäminen joidenkin hahmojen tekemisiin oli turhaa, sillä mitään ei voinut sopia valmiiksi. Näyttelijät eivät olleet vielä sisäistäneet hahmojaan ja heidän maneerejaan ja tukeutuivat plariin todella pitkään, mikä esti heidän luontevaa eläytymistä ja lavan haltuunottoa ja siten myös meidän työtämme. (Questionnaire)

While many describers expressed opinions about how the AD production started too early in the process, it should be noted that this was also sometimes seen as a positive aspect of producing the play, as in example 7. Even the describers' who criticized the long production window felt that being a part of the process from the beginning helped to integrate the AD within the play better than if it had been added afterwards or very closely to the final performance, as said in example 8. Having worked on the AD for so long also helped the describers to improvise during the performance, commented on in example 9.

(7) Describer 1: Oli hienoa, että kuvailutulkkaus oli osa näytelmää alusta asti. (Questionnaire)

(8) Describer 2: Esityksessä tuli lopulta muutamia improvisoitavia kohtia sekä näyttelijöille että tulkeille. Treeneissä alusta asti mukana oleminen ja tarinan tunteminen läpikotaisin auttoi näissä tilanteissa, sillä muistijälki vuorosanoista ja tapahtumista oli todella vahva. ”Riskillä” pystyi heittämään esitykseen muutamia tulkkeita, joiden tiesi mahtuvan siihen aikaan, mitä näytelmässä oli, sillä näyttelijöiden maneerit olivat tuttuja ja pystyi ennakoimaan, minkä verran he aikovat ottaa aikaa ennen omia repliikkejään. (Questionnaire)

(9) Describer 3: Kuvailutulkkien mukana olo alusta asti vaikutti näytelmän rytmittämiseen ja täten helpotti kuvailutulkkeen sovittamista dialogin sekaan. (Questionnaire)

When asked if the describers would participate in a similar project again where the AD would be produced simultaneously with the play, all of the three describers who answered the question said that they would. However, two did specify that a condition for their participation would be that the describers would not start working on the AD as early in the process as they did for *Fedoriam,* in examples 10 and 11. This was an opinion that was also agreed upon during the group conversations, in example 12.

(10) Describer 1: Kuvailutulkkien kannattaisi astua mukaan noin projektin puolessavälissä. (Questionnaire)

(11) Describer 2: Ryhtyisin uudestaan samanlaiseen projektiin (=siis projektiin, jossa tulkki työskentelee näytelmän kanssa treeneissä alussa asti). Lähtisin projektiin ylipäätään hieman myöhäisemmässä vaiheessa, jotta olisin hieman vakaammalla pohjalla tulkkeiden kanssa alusta asti ja turhaa työtä tulisi vähemmän. (Questionnaire)

(12) Ketola: Sen näytelmän pitäis olla tavallaan kokonainen, muttei ihan loppuunsa hiottu, koska ne muutamat kohtaukset on tavallaan ne, jotka menis uusiksi siinä vaiheessa kun me tehtäis... Tai ei kohtaukset uusiksi, vaan se lavalla tekeminen on pitänyt rytmittää eri tavalla.

Cecilia: Ehkä jossain harjotusten puolivälissä, jos kuvailutulkit alkais tulla paikalla ja kattoo, että miten siellä menee, niin se vois olla--

Anna: Niin, ehkä siinä vaiheessa ne kuvailutulkkeet jäis paremmin mieleen niille näyttelijöillekin, ettei sit tartteis joka kerta neuvotella uudestaan sitä, että missä kohtaa kuvailutulke on

Cecilia: Niin, ne opettelee tässä kuitenkin vielä repliikkejä ja liikkeitä siinä samalla ja sit pitäis muistaa siihen päälle vielä se missä kohtaa tulee tulke.

Anna: Niin, kun mäkin aattelin aluks sitä, että se ois hyvä että saatais sisäänrakennettua se kuvailutulkkaus siihen heti harjotusten alkuvaiheessa, mut ei se oo toiminu selkeästikään. Että ehkä siinä on just liikaa muistettavaa, kun ne harjoittelee vielä kaikkea. (Group 1)

It is possible that the play's production process, and thus the AD's production process, was this lengthy due to the theatre group being an amateur theatre, and the performance having no set date before late October. As such, the actors may not have been used to working rapidly, and the lack of definite deadline in the early months of the production may have installed a feeling of "no hurry" into the actors, leading to a more leisurely rehearsals schedule in which the same scenes could be practiced time and time again.

In conclusion, the describers found that this type of a non-conventional way of producing the AD simultaneously and integrating it to the performance is useful and they would choose to do so again if a similar opportunity arose. However, they did deem that in this case the AD was added to the project at a too early stage, and it could be integrated better to the play at a point when the actors already know their lines and have an idea of what they are going to do on the stage. Starting to produce the AD before the actors have started to practice the scene resulted in a lot of unnecessary work and even felt pointless.

5.2 *Auteur* and the differing visions of the director and playwright

Both Fryer (2018) and Udo and Fels (2009b) underline the importance of the director's vision, *auteur*, in their research of integrated AD for theater, as discussed in the examples in section 3.2, with Fryer even noting it as one of the distinct features of integrated AD. Therefore, I found it interesting to analyze how big of a role *auteur* had in the production of AD for *Fedoriam*. Unlike in Fryer's experience (2018), the script for *Fedoriam* was not written or adapted for the stage by the director. The playwright, however, was a part of the cast and had previous directing experience in the same theatre. This, at times, resulted in both the playwright and the director having different visions for the performance. This was noted by the describers, in example 13, to affect the production of the AD from a very early point onwards, and probably lead to the describers at times being unsure on whether they should follow the director or the playwright's vision.

> (13) Bella: Ja sit tässä on vielä nää vahvat persoonat, kun on [kirjoittaja] ja [ohjaaja], ja sit ollaan me siellä välissä jotenkin, ni sit siinä on aika monta semmosta muutenkin...
>
> Ketola: Se on hirveen hyvä pointti, koska, tota, viime treenien jälkeen kirjoittaja tuli sanomaan mulle siitä pitkästä dialogikohtauksesta, johon on sovittu jo, että siihen ei tuu mitään kuvailutulkkausta, että siihen pitää tehdä kuvailutulkkaukset. Ja sit mä sanoin, että se on jo sovittu että siihen ei tule, niin hänen mielestään sitä ei ollut sovittu. Ja siis sillä tavalla, että ehkä tähän meidänkin työhön heijastuu se kirjoittajan ja [ohjaajan] välinen dynamiikka, että [kirjoittaja] on ohjannut sitä teatteria monta vuotta ja nyt (…) se ohjausvastuu siirtyykin toiselle henkilölle. (Group 1)

The director of the play had no previous experience in using AD. As such, especially during the first months of the practice, he did not seem to have a clear vision for the AD, nor did he seem to know what kind of things should and could be described. This can be seen in example 14, and was reflected in the way he commented about the AD in general, even stating that at times it felt completely unnecessary to him, although he did stay positive to the idea of using AD for the play.

(14) Director: Noi kuulostaa nuo tulkkaukset nyt tuohon, sellaiselta, tietenkin näin näkevälle, että mitä helvettiä tuo pitää tulkata, mutta tottakai. Ja sit kirosanat pyyhit sieltä tulkkeesta pois, saatana täällä ei kirota yhtään. Vitun saatana [vitsaillen]. Don Diego sisään.

Cecilia: Don Diego ja Enrico saapuvat. Don Diego pitelee pistoolia. (Theatre 1)

It should also be noted that at the time when the describers entered the project and the practices started, the whole screenplay had not yet been written nor were all the actors chosen. As such, it is possible that the director did not have a clear vision for the whole play, either, when he started to direct the play. Due to the director's vision of the AD not seeming clear to the describers, and the frequent changes to the scenes, the audio describers were given more space to affect the scene than what might have been available if the director had already had a strict vision of the play and the actors had already known all the actions they were meant to for during the scenes. However, it often seemed that the describers would have preferred it had the director had a clear vision that they could have followed. As that was not the case from the very beginning, the describers had no clear *auteur* which to follow even when they were looking for one.

However, it should be noted that the audio describers did not discuss with the director about what AD could be like or what their own expectations for it were. The lecturer had previously discussed AD in relation to this project with the playwright and even came to agreements about aspects including what the describers' roles in the project should be like and how the AD could be produced but she could not say whether the playwright had ever relayed this information to the director (Ketola 2020, Teams-call). As such, the describers – perhaps unintentionally – gave the director and the playwright differing information on what they thought they should be doing in the project.

In contrast, the playwright seemed to have multiple ideas and a vision for the play, often adding elements to it during the practices and changing the script. The playwright also had previous experience with AD and was B/VI himself so he had more of a vision for the AD as well in regard to what should and shouldn't be described. This may have led to the describers at times following the playwright's vision for the play, especially at times when the director did not seem to have a clear vision for the AD. Example 15 shows how the playwright also came to whisper to the audio describers, often while the director was directing the other actors, giving suggestions and asking questions about the AD, which the describers often reflected in the AD script.

(15) playwright: Tulkit.

Cecilia & Diana: Mhm?

playwright: Onks tää siis se, onks tää se oikee kohta missä on se, onks se kirjoitettu tähän kohtaan, että naiset menee vierekkäin-

Cecilia: Se… Se tulee se peilihomma vielä Laurencialta, jossa tulee--

playwright: Joo, mutta tässä on tämmönen, että ne tekee ryhmän, naiset menee, se on merkattu tähän kohtaan?

Cecilia: Öööh, ei oo merkattu niille liikkeitä.

playwright: Mutta jossain vaiheessa puhutte, kerrottais että naiset menee niinku lähekkäin, vähän jossain… Kannattaa laittaa jollain kysymysmerkillä.

Cecilia: Joo meillä ei oo täällä mitään merkkiä.

playwright: Se on merkityksellinen siinä, tässä niinku, näitten suhteelle.

Cecilia. Joo… Pitää kirjoittaa. (Theatre 1)

While receiving feedback from other members of the theatre group was important, the way the playwright brought forth his opinions and views put the audio describers in the middle of the differing opinions of the playwright and the director. As noted, the playwright usually came to talk to the describers after the practices or then whispered to them during the practices while the director was focused on something else. He also suggested ideas for the AD to the lecturer multiple times outside the rehearsals (Ketola 2020, Teams-call). As the playwright and the director did not often discuss their differing visions together with the describers, it was left up to the describers to decide whose vision and suggestions to follow, if either.

Often the playwright's and the director's visions did not drastically contradict each other, and thus they could be accommodated more easily in the AD. Typically the describers seemed to want to follow the visions of both the playwright and the director, seeming almost hesitant to say no to them. However, there were also instances when the playwright and director had opposing views and the describers had to make the decision on how to describe what was happening on the stage. This was especially relevant when it came to some of the stage props as the playwright and the director had very differing opinions on whether there even would be props on the stage or not. In these cases, such as in example 16, the describers usually decided to describe what was on the stage, regardless of whether it fit the director's or the playwright's vision.

(16) Erica: Onks meillä nyt konsensus tästä suihkulähdehommasta, kun sitä ei vieläkään oo siellä, että miten se sanotaan. Kun jos sanotaan että se-

Fiona: Eiks se oo tulossa projisoituna?

(...)

Erica: Kun eiks [kirjoittaja] ollut kovasti sitä mieltä että sen suihkulähteen pitää olla kuvitteellinen?

Bella: Kun sillä on sellainen kunnon filosofinen idea siitä, mutta viimeks [ohjaaja] sanoi että se projisoidaan sinne.

Diana: Sillon kun kuvaillaan että on siellä puistossa ja on puita ja muita, niin silloin kuvaillaan se sinne.

Fiona: Kun noi lavasteet kuvaillaan kuitenkin.

Erica: No jos se on projisoitu sinne niin sit sen voi tulkatakin, sit jos se on kuvitteellinen niin sit tää ois vähän hankalaa sitten.

Anna: Mutta musta se oli väärään suuntaan se, että alettais kuvailla jotain kuvitteellista tai projisoitua suihkulähdettä, että voi jättää vähän teatterin taikaa siihen.

Cecilia: Joo siis oletus on, että ihmiset tietää, että se suihkulähde ei oo oikea, mutta he kuvittelevat että se on.

Anna: Että ei aleta yliselittämään, että kuvitteellinen suihkulähde on teatterin lavalla ja roolihahmot ovat juovinaan. (Group 1)

Interestingly, both the playwright and the director had occasional visions for the AD that would have integrated the AD even more firmly as a part of the play. The most notable of such occasions, which can be seen in example 17, was the idea that the AD would be used to deliver descriptions of the grand ball and its participants as if the comments were not made by audio describers but by some unseen character of the play. The vision the playwright and the director had was that the AD would be used like a radio commentator-voice, such as the commentators during the Finnish Independence Day party, with the describers commenting on the outfits of the partygoers and making comments about how handsome and beautiful everyone looked like. The describers discussed the idea and agreed that it was unconventional, and not something they wanted to do, feeling like it was not the describers' role to produce such in-play commentary. Worries were also raised that having one short in-play commentary delivered by the same people who did the rest of the AD would be confusing to the audience members.

(17) Ketola: Siitähän me juteltiin viimeksi, että jossain vaiheessa heiteltiin ideaa, että onko Linnan juhlat tyylinen kuvailu [tanssiaisissa], ja jos tulkitsin ilmapiiriä oikein kukaan ei tainnut olla siitä innoissaan. Se oli erikoinen idea, mutta ehkä palaamme siihen, kun lavasteet ovat valmiita, kun tiedetään mitä siinä pitää sanoa.

Bella: Musta voisi olla hyvä idea, että voidaan kirjoittaa sellainen kuvaus, mutta että selkeyden vuoksi se ei ole meistä kenenkään ääni, joka sen sanoo.

(...)

Ketola: Mutta tota, se ihminen joka huutelee niitä yleisöääniä, niin voisi lukea noi. Tai ehkä minä mahdollisesti.

Bella: Tai kun on kaikkia niitä radiopätkiä, niin jos sen sais nauhoitettua samalla tavalla etukäteen ja siinä olisi sellainen radiokohina. Että se ois semmonen… Sillein kun sinne tulee sitä laulua ja radiopätkiä, niin se kantaisi näytelmän elementtinä ihan itsessään.

(...)

Ketola: Mutta se on varmaan hyvä, että meillä on ehdotus siitä olemassa, koska sitä oltiin sysäyttämässä meille, että me oltais ehkä lähtökohtaisesti sitä mieltä, että se ei ole kuvailutulkin ääni, joka niitä kertoo. (Group 2)

The lecturer noted that especially the playwright had many unconventional, sometimes even quite grandiose ideas for the AD and the describers, and the lecturer had to remind the playwright that they had already agreed on what the describers would do. Thus, most of these ideas were not even mentioned to the rest of the describers. (Ketola 2020, Teams-call.)

5.3 The describers' visions and multitude of roles

What made it more challenging for the describers to determine whose vision was to be followed were the roles audio describers were given during the practices. The theatre group had no previous experience in working with audio describers, and as most of the describers had no previous AD experience either, the describer's role was not clearly defined. While the lecturer had discussed the describers' roles and the expectations for the AD with the playwright before the rehearsals began, such discussions were not had with the rest of the group. This was noticeable during the practices as the describers were asked to fill multiple different roles outside of their assumed conventional role of simply producing the AD. Examples of these roles are mentioned in 18-20.

> (18) Cecilia: Niin mikä on meidän tontti, me ollaan kuiskaajia ja mitä muuta.
>
> Erica: Näyttelijöiksikin pyydettiiin. (Group 1)

> (19) Playwright: Voisko joku teistä olla kuiskaaja jos vuorot unohtuu?
>
> Cecilia: Joo, siis kuiskaaja?
>
> Diana: Mä voin olla kuiskaaja jos sä teet kuvailutulkkausta. (Theatre 1)

> (20) Director: Ja nyt sinä nouset ylös.
>
> Cecilia: Ja kierrät sinne.
>
> Director: Ottaako te nyt kun teillä on siellä ne merkinnät, niin katkaskaa tää juttu. Te olette nyt ohjaajia. Koska teillä on merkinnät ja te kerrotte ne katsojille sitten. (Theatre 1)

In addition to producing the AD for the play, the describers were also asked to fill a multitude of roles even outside the rehearsals. The playwright contacted one of the describers and convinced them to update the theatre group's web sites. The describers helped the actors make promotional videos for the play, and one was made of the describers themselves and published on the theatre groups social media sites. During the rehearsals, the lecturer at one point even noticed that her most important job was to brew coffee for the group, and during the performance the lecturer helped with checking the tickets, helping audience members to their seats, ringing a bell so signal the end of the half-time, and doing the after-show introductions of the theatre group members, audio describers and light and sound technicians (Ketola 2020, Teams-call.)

As the describers were asked to perform various roles during the practices, it was occasionally the describers' vision of how a certain scene should go that the actors and even the director followed, especially during the early practices when the actors were still deciding how they

would move on the stage. Even the director occasionally said that the scene would be practiced according to the describers' notes and the planned AD script as none of the actors had made any notes of their own on how they should perform a scene. During the very first practices the describers were also asked to improvise the AD as they felt fit, either after the actors had done something worth describing or if the describers felt that the AD could guide the actors to do something better. This made the describers' vision of the play unconventionally visible. The describers were given a lot of space to affect both the play and the AD, but the describers expressed reluctance to take that space, possibly because the felt that it was too non-conventional, and they did not want to "step outside" of their role as describers.

The importance of the describers' vision and even of the whole AD varied significantly during the practice period, as the role of the describers differed from one practice to another. Especially during the first months of the rehearsals, the actors kept asking the describers and not the director what they should do and when, and at other times the scenes were being practiced completely without the AD and the describers having nearly nothing to say during the practices, as happened during the second recorded rehearsal, Theatre 2. When the scenes were practiced without the AD, it was not uncommon for the actors to perform actions in a different manner than that which had been agreed upon previously and which had been reflected in the AD. This constantly shifting role of the describers and the AD resulted in unclarities regarding whose vision to follow in the practices and, therefore, made it more challenging to produce the AD as the actions during the scenes changed often, as did the director's, the playwright's and the describers' opinion on what should be described. As the rehearsals progressed and the director's vision of the performance and the AD grew stronger, the space the describers had previously shrank.

At times, the describers were asked to describe actions that had not happened and therefore to produce AD that conflicted with the play, as is seen in example 21. This may have happened due to multitude of reason, ranging from the playwright making changes to the script between and during the practices, the director changing his vision of what the actors should do and having doubts about the importance of the AD, the actors not remembering where and what kind of AD there was supposed to be in the scene, and the describers being more prone to change the AD to fit every new version of the scene instead of reminding the rest of the cast that the AD had been agreed upon the previous practices. This resulted in more work for the describers as they had to write and time a new AD script for the scene as well as to get the

director to agree to the relevance of it. At times it also gave the describers the chance to affect the actors' actions on stage.

> (21) Cecilia: Hei tossa on pieni ristiriita, että tulkataan että hän katsoo ensin peilistä, ja sitten hän sanoo, että en uskalla katsoa edes peiliin.
>
> Director: No tää elämä on täynnä ristiriitoja.
>
> Cecilia: No se on kyllä totta.
>
> Director: Me emme tee tästä niin kuin fakta-fakta juttuja.
>
> Cecilia: Mutta tulkataanko yhä, että hän kattoo itseään peiliin, koska se tulee…
>
> Director: Ei tarvi.
>
> Cecilia: Okei, ollenkaan?
>
> Director: Siis, se on tärkeintä, että jotain me teemme päinvastoin mitä me emme tee, koska tässä on flirtti käynnissä.
>
> Cecilia: Joo.
>
> Director: Niin flirtissähän voi tapahtua mitä tahansa ja miten päin tahansa.
>
> Cecilia: Selvä. Mutta kyllähän se siinä jotakin tekee, niin onko se sitten, että kaivaa peilin taskustaan, koska--
>
> Director: Joo joo.
>
> Cecilia: Mutta mitä siinä sitten sanotaan?
>
> Director: Mä en tiedä, että tää ei oo niinku sellainen välttämätön tulkata.
>
> Cecilia: Okei.
>
> Director: Me voidaan se panna sinne, että se kaivaa sen peilin.
>
> Cecilia: Okei. Niin ehkä jos se ottaa sen peilin käteen, mutta sitten ei uskallakaan katsoa siihen.
>
> Director: Niin. (Theatre 1)

The example 21 also shows that while the describer points out inconsistencies in the text and brings forth their own vision of how the scene should go, they also want the director's approval for the suggested change. Meanwhile the director does not seem to think it as important that the AD matches the character's actions exactly, as he sees such inconsistencies as a part of theatre. The describer however feels that they should stick to the conventions and only describe things that are actually happening on the stage. The describer wanting the director's approval for the AD may be a sign of the describers' *auteur*-based approach to the AD, or a sign of frustration of the ever-changing AD script and a hope that if the AD is agreed upon with the director it will not have to be changed again later.

Altogether, the describers' role in the production of the play was non-conventional and unexpected, which may have been the reason why the describers often did not seem comfortable taking their space or establishing any limits to their role. Instead, they agreed with most of the playwright and director's request and acted in other roles than that of the describer. While the unclear definition of the describers' role also allowed the describers unusually much

space in the production of the play and the opportunity to affect the scenes, the describers seemed to have wanted a narrower, more conventional role and were thus looking for the director's and the playwright's approval for many of their decision. Notably, the describers did not discuss these matters with the theatre group, but rather only commented among themselves that their roles were undefined, and they felt that the theatre group did not understand what audio describers are and are not supposed to do.

5.4 Collaboration with the rest of the theatre group

Collaboration with the theatre group is one of Fryer's (2018) aspects of non-conventional AD. As the AD was produced and practiced alongside the rehearsals, all the actors were aware of it throughout the process. Of the four describers who answered the questionnaire, three stated that they think that alongside the describers, also the director, the playwright and at least some of the actors were involved in the process of creating the AD, shown in example 22. The fourth one did not answer the question.

> (22) Kysymys: Kuka/ketkä olivat mielestäsi mukana tekemässä kuvailutulketta tähän näytelmään?
>
> Describer 1: Kuvailutulkkaustiimin lisäksi myös ohjaaja, käsikirjoittaja ja näyttelijät osallistuivat kuvailutulkkeen tekemiseen.
>
> Describer 3: Enimmäkseen kuvailutulkit, mutta myös toinen ohjaajista ja yksi näyttelijöistä tekivät ehdotuksia.
>
> Describer 4: Kaikki, sillä vaikka kuvailutulkit tuottivat varsinaisen tulkkeen, sen sisällöistä ja paikoista neuvoteltiin kaikkien kanssa ja ohjaajan lisäksi näyttelijätkin ehdottivat välillä kuvailuja. (Questionnaire)

During the practices, it was common for the actors to ask the describers where the AD was going to be in the scenes they were practicing. This was most likely due to the fact that the actors did not mark the AD down in their own scripts, nor did they have access to the describers' AD script. It should be noted that as some of the actors were B/VI, making notes on their paper scripts during the practices likely would have been difficult, and therefore may have been a part of the reason why such notes were not made. At times during the rehearsals the actors also waited for the AD to be delivered before they performed the action that was described which led to the describers predicting the actions instead of describing them, as in example 23. As most of the actors had said they had no previous experience with AD, and as the practices often did not incorporate AD in every run-through of the scenes, the actors may have thought of the AD as stage directions instead of descriptions of the actions that they should perform simultaneously or slightly before the AD is delivered. This issue was likely exacerbated by the varying roles of the describers during the practices, as the actors learned to turn to the describers

when they forgot their lines or their actions. The describers also noted this issue, as can be seen in example 24.

> (23) Cecilia: Paikalle juoksee haavoittunut mies, pysähtyy katsomaan kolmikkoa. (tauko.) Jatkaa matka-
>
> Playwright: Kuinka pitkä toi tauko on?
>
> Director: Otetaan uudestaan.
>
> Cecilia: Paikalle juoksee haavoittunut mies, pysähtyy katsomaan kolmikkoa. (tauko.) Jatkaa matkaansa.
>
> Director: Otetaan uudestaan, laske [näyttelijän nimi] vaikka kolmeen ja jatka matkaasi. Sun pitää ite päättää se milloin lähdet, kukaan ei sano sulle sitä. (Theatre 1)

> (24) Describer 4: Välillä kuvailutulkkien oletettiin toimivan kuiskaajina, välillä sikäli "ohjaavan" näyttelijöitä, että oletettiin meidän lukevan kuvailua, mikä muistuttaisi näyttelijöitä siitä, mitä heidän pitikään tehdä. (Questionnaire)

Despite these issues, the describers felt like the collaboration with the theatre group worked well, and that it was beneficial for the play for the actors to also be involved in the process of creating the AD and to be constantly aware of it. This was commented on in examples 25 and 26.

> (25) Describer 4: Tärkeä positiivinen puoli oli siinä, että kun kuvailua tehtiin yhdessä näytelmäporukan kanssa, kaikesta voitiin sopia ja kuvailulle oli näytelmän edetessä aikaa vuorosanojen välissä. (Questionnaire)

> (26) Describer 1: Tiimityö oli ehdottomasti hedelmällistä. Ryhmähenki oli hyvä koko projektitiimin kesken. (Questionnaire)

In conclusion, the describers felt that the collaboration with the theatre group was fruitful and producing the AD alongside the play allowed freer communication between the describers and the theatre group. While this sometimes led to the actors relying on the AD to tell them what to do, which the describers perceived as an issue, there were no major problems with the collaboration. The collaboration made pacing the AD easy, and also made it possible for the describers to improvise AD during the performance. While non-conventional, producing the AD alongside the rehearsals and with the theatre group being constantly aware of it was thus determined to be beneficial for the overall production of the AD.

5.5 Subjectivity and neutrality

Conventionally an AD aims to be non-subjective and neutral. As both the ADLAB (Remael et al. 2014) and the Finnish AD guidelines (FAD2013) state, the AD should only include descriptions of actions that happen on the stage. The describer is not supposed to add their own

interpretations or opinions in the AD, or if they do so, they should clearly say they are presenting their own interpretation.

The subjectivity and neutrality of the AD was a topic that was discussed by the describers multiple times during their group conversations. The describers discussed, among other things, whether they can add descriptions in the AD that were interpretational and not actually visible on the stage as such, as on a few occasions the director had asked them to do. Doing so would have followed the director's vision of the scene but it would have gone against the conventions of neutrality of AD. This can be seen in example 27. Eventually the describers decided that they would not add such interpretations to their AD, preferring to keep the AD conventional in this regard and again noting that the theatre group does not seem to know what (conventional) AD should be like.

> (27) Anna: Joo musta kanssa [ohjaajalle ja kirjoittajalle] ei oo ollut tarpeeksi selvää se, että mitä kuvailutulkkaus on, kun ne on välillä pyytäneet meitä niinku tulkitsemaan eikä vaan kuvailemaan, niinku siinä että tulee joku maisema sinne taakse, että "kertokaa että tässä on lämmin kesäpäivä" tai tämmöstä, mikä ei oo kuvailutulkkausta. Että tavallaan meiän rooli ei oo vaikuttanu aina ihan selvältä niillekään. (Group 2)

The longest discussion regarding neutrality, non-subjectivity and personal interpretations occurred when discussing how to describe the characters. At that point of the production the describers were considering an introduction tour of the characters before the show where the characters appearance would be described, their names would be told, and the actors would give a voice sample. The issues arose from the way the characters', and more specifically the actors', physical characteristics would be described, as shown in example 28. There seemed to be a reluctance to describe them with any references to their actual physical characteristics as the describers feared that the actors may find it insulting if they are described as "middle-aged", "chubby" or other terms which, while objective, could also have a negative connotation.

> (28) Cecilia: Mut miten sitä ikää kuvailee? Jos kuvaa hiuksia ja vaatteita.
>
> Anna: Hieman ryppyiset kasvot?
>
> Diana: Sillä on juonessa väliä, joten sen voi sanoa.
>
> Erica: Jos näyttelijä ei loukkaannu siitä, että häntä kuvaillaan tällein.
>
> Bella: Se on noissa kuvailuissa yks asia, että kuka ottaa mitäkin loukkauksena ja kuka ei. Kun joskus näissä on sellastakin tavaraa, joka on tosi roisiakin.
>
> Cecilia: Yleensä vois luulla, että teatterin väki on tottunut sellaiseen kaikenlaiseen kritiikkiin ja palautteeseen, että se vois mennä siihen samaan, mutta tää kun on harrastelijateatteria, niin en tiiä kuinka paljon teatterin tavat pätee tähän porukkaan ja esitykseen.
>
> Bella: Kaikkihan me nähdään miltä ihmiset näyttää, mutta kukaan ei sano kaikkea sitä ääneen. Tässä kun kuvailun kanssa joutuu tekemään sitä rajanvetoa, että mitä saa sanoa ja mitä ei, jos sen kerta näkee. Jostain ihmisestä jos sanoo, että hieman pullea, niin missä menee ne rajat kelläkin. Ja jos sen tosiaan tasa-arvoisuuden ajalta ajattelee, että mitä joku näkee ja mitä toinen ei näe, niin…

Anna: Mutta sit on toki sekin että miten subjektiivisesti me kuvaillaan ihmiset.

Cecilia: Ja mitä nostaa esille, kun ihan kaikkea ei lähdetä kuvailemaan. (Group 1)

It should be noted that in example 28, one of the describers wondered aloud how subjective they should be in their descriptions. This shows that the describers had not decided beforehand to either make a clear diversion from the guidelines and create subjective descriptions or follow the guidelines and be non-subjective but rather that it was an aspect of the AD that they were considering at various points during the production of the AD when it felt relevant to their decision-making process.

In addition to the describers wanting to create AD that would not be insulting to the actors, they also discussed the problem that arose from some of the actors being of very different ages than their characters. This was especially relevant for the characters of Oscar Aramante, a middle-aged man, and Laurencia Lacosta, a female in her thirties, as the actors for the two characters were both either decades younger, in Oscar's case, or older, in Laurencia's case, than the characters. The two characters' ages were also established in the play itself, unlike the ages of some of the other characters. This resulted in the problem that to the visible audience, the actors did not look the same age as the characters they would be playing but, should the AD reflect the playwright's and the director's vision, the AD should describe them as the characters' ages, not the actors'. The way these characters could be described would also affect the audience experience of the dynamics between the two, and if the AD was not in line with the director's vision, it could give the audience a different vision of some of the scenes. The describers also noted that their own interpretations of the character dynamics were different from the play's intended meaning and pondered on whether that should somehow be reflected in the AD, as discussed in example 29.

(29) Ketola: Mä oon miettinyt siitä henkilöhahmojen kuvailusta, sitä että esim tää Laurencia Lacosta, joka on hieman vanhempi Angelinaa roolihahmona, mutta näyttelijä on sitten kymmeniä vuosia vanhempi, että kuinka sellaiset sit ratkaistaan. Että kuvaillaanko me, kuinka vanhoilta he näyttävät? Koska luulen että tää roolihahmo on maksimissaan kolmekymmentä ja näyttelijä on varmaan yli viisikymmentä, niin miten se ratkaistaan?

Cecilia: Ehkä se "hieman vanhempi" voi jäädä katsojan ratkaistavaksi.

Fiona: Mutta näkevät kuitenkin näkee minkä näköinen se on, niin periaatteessahan se mikä niille katsojille näkyy on se, mikä meidän pitäisi tulkata.

Erica: Ja Laurencian tarkkaa ikähän ei tuoda siinä esityksessä mitenkään sanallisesti esille, että minkä ikäinen se on. Niin jos sanotaan "hieman vanhempi" niin varmaan näkevä yleisökin jää siihen oletukseen että hahmo on saman ikäinen kuin tää näyttelijä.

Anna: Niin mäkin oon aatellut. Näkevälle yleisölle se on viiskymppinen, jos näyttelijä on viiskymppinen. Joten jos me yritetään saada tästä tasa-arvoinen näytös, niin se on myös näkemättömille viiskymppinen. Tai sen ikäinen mitä se näyttelijä on.

(...)

Cecilia: Jos sanoo Angelinasta että se on nuori, niin jokainen voi siitä muodostaa oman mielikuvansa, ja sitten että Laurencia on Angelinaa vanhempi.

Ketola: Mut se on jännä, kun se niiden dynamiikkahan rakentuu sillä tavalla, että toi Laurencia olisi tota Oscaria kymmenisen vuotta nuorempi ja ikänsä puolesta sopivampi kumppani kuin Angelina, mut sit kun tää Laurencian näyttelijä on selkeästi ainakin reilut 10 vuotta Oscarin näyttelijää vanhempi. Niin se miten se omassakin päässä on rakentunut se naisen mielenkiinnon dynamiikkaa, niin siinä on jotain puumamaista, vaikka sitä ei näytelmässä oikeastaan olisi. (Group 1)

In the final AD the describers had decided to leave out all references to the characters' physical appearance, including descriptions of their ages, and focused on describing their outfits. This resulted in the B/VI audience members receiving significantly less information of the characters than the sighted audience members. The descriptions of the characters' outfits were non-subjective but it can be argued that leaving out the information of the characters' physical aspects was a subjective decision as it went against the guidelines of providing relevant information of the characters. However, the choice to leave out the describers' interpretations from the AD was conventional.

5.6 Language and contents of the AD

The guidelines for theatre AD have guidelines for what kind of language to use in AD and what types of actions should be described. The Finnish AD guidelines regarding these aspects were discussed in more detail in 2.3. The data examples will be compared to the FAD guidelines.

The AD in *Fedoriam* was divided into two parts that differed from one another both in their function, their contents and their style: the AD for the in-play actions and the AD for the technical aspects of the play, also referred to as the "inner" and the "outer." AD. The choice to divide the AD in two different parts as such was made sometime before November, as the two were already discussed during the first recorded describers' group meeting.

The main idea of the division was that the in-play AD would include all descriptions that were related to the characters and the stage props, while the technical AD would include descriptions of the lighting changes and the times when the props were moved around or changed between the scenes. The reasoning for this division was not discussed during the group meetings. It is possible that the idea was that the in-play AD would include descriptions that would be visible to the characters of the play the same way they were described, while the technical AD would include the descriptions that were perceived differently by the characters than the audience members, e.g. where the characters would see explosions, the describers would tell the audience that the lights were flickering. Another possible explanation for the division is that the in-play AD mostly included descriptions that had been practiced for months during the

rehearsals, while nearly everything that was first practiced during the last week before the performance was classified as technical AD. This is supported by the AD scripts, where most of the early versions only have notes such as "valaistus muuttuu?" ("lighting changes?") at the ends and beginnings of the scenes, as the audio describers only knew that they would likely have something to describe there but the actual lighting changes were not practiced until days before the performance and thus could not be prepared alongside the rest of the AD.

5.6.1 Language of the in-play AD

The in-play AD was discussed more than the technical AD as the describers had more time to prepare it, and as such the describers seemed to have a clearer opinion on what kind of language they wanted to use in the AD. Especially the use of pronouns versus names of the characters was discussed during multiple occasions, as was the lack of a named subject in the AD, shown here in example 30 and 31.

(30) Ketola: Yks sellainen tyylillinen kysymys, jota mä mietin viimeksi, mietin kun täällä muutamassa kohtaa on tällaisia kuvailutulkevirkkeitä joissa ei oo subjektia, että on tehty tää paikka kuvailutulkkeelle vaikka repliikin keskelle, että mitä te ootte näistä mieltä. Yleisestihän se ohje on, että aina pitäisi käytttää kokonaisia virkkeitä, mutta tässä se on aika selvää, että kenen tekemistä tässä kuvaillaan. (...) Se oli varmaan tää missä mä aloin sitä miettiä: "Tuossapa kivan näköinen herrasmies. Katsovat Oscaria".

Anna: Musta toi on kivempi kun muuten sitä tulee ihan hirveesti sitä Angelina tätä ja Laurencia tätä ja tällein.

Cecilia: Jos on pienikään mahdollisuus, että on sekaantumisen riski niin sitten nimet, mutta toi kyllä toimii ilman.

Ketola: Että ei nimiä, mutta entä naiset katsovat Oscaria?

Bella: Mulle tulee erilainen fiilis. Jos sanotaan "Nousee ylös" niin se on orgaanista, se on toiminnassa, kun taas jos sanotaan että "Laurencia nousee ylös" niin se on heti ulkopuolinen joka katsoo sitä kaukaa. Ilman nimeä se sulautuu siihen tekemiseen. Sellanen tuntu mulle tulee. Siihen tulee heti sitä metaa eri tavalla.

(...)

Fiona: Sillon jos on sekaannuksen vaara ni aina sanotaan nimellä kuka tekee, mutta tässäkin jos noi kaks puhuu ja kattoo Oscaria, niin Oscar ei silloin voi olla se joka kattoo itteään, niin varmasti on aivan selvä että ne kaks on ne jotka kattoo. (Group 1)

(31) Bella: Mietin tota "siirtyy Angelinan taakse", että jos haluu siihen tätä samaa nimettömyyttä, niin voisi siirtyä penkin taakse tai ystävänsä taakse, kun sekin on jo ihan erilaista kuin se että nimetään ulkopuolelta. -- Nyt tosta puuttuu kuvailusta se mitä treeneissä oli, se mikä oli ohjaajan mielestä hirveen oleellista, että se laskee sen kätensä, se äidillisyys, se ei oo tossa kuvauksessa ollenkaan mukana

Ketola: Totta, pitäisköhän meidän muuttaa tätä. Oisko tää että "siirtyy penkin taakse"?

Fiona: Siinä ois musta selkeetä, että "siirtyy Angelinan taakse", koska ei sanota, että Laurencia siirtyy.

Diana: Oisko tähän sit samaan, että se laskee sen käden siihen olalle?

Fiona: Siirtyy Angelinan taakse, laskee käden tämän olalle.

Bella: Tai siirtyy penkin taakse ja laskee kätensä Angelinan olkapäälle. Silloin ei tarvi käyttää elatiivipronomineja, jotka taas tekee siihen sitä etäisyyttä. (Group 1)

In the final AD script, the Finnish relative pronouns for he/she/they are not used at all. This follows the conventions outlined by the FAD guidelines (2013). The characters are named every time they enter, and almost every time they exit. When describing the characters actions, the AD strategy varies between naming the character doing the action, e.g. "Oscar nousee" ("Oscar rises"), not mentioning the subject at all e.g. "Siirtyvät lähteelle" ("(They) move to the fountain"), and using a group name to the characters, e.g. "Naiset istuvat puistonpenkille" (The women sit on the park bench"). Occasionally these strategies are combined within a single description, such as "Laurencia kaivaa laukustaan peilin. Katsoo peiliin." ("Laurencia draws a mirror from her bag. Looks in it.") In this aspect the AD is very conventional and follows the guidelines, as it uses simple, full sentences and avoids using pronouns that could cause confusion. These appeared to be deliberate choices by the describers.

In comparison, the in-play AD breaks the conventions of not stating the obvious by using words such as "the stage" in the AD on multiple occasions by referring to the characters as "hahmot" ("characters") twice, and explicitly mentioning the stage twice. Interestingly the use of such terms was discussed during both group meetings and the describers were of the opinion that such terms should not be used in the in-play AD. It is possible that the mentions were added to the AD script accidentally, as the final AD script was written and edited less than an hour before the performance.

5.6.2. Contents of the in-play AD

The majority of the in-play AD focused on describing the entrances and exits of the characters and their movements on the stage. There are a total of 92 in-play AD descriptions, consisting of one to three sentences per description. Of those descriptions, 26 describe the characters entrances and exits. Of the rest, 65 times the AD describes the characters movements and gestures, including one description of a character's facial expression, and one description interprets meaning behind the characters' actions instead of describing the action itself ("hahmot säikähtävät", "the characters get spooked"). Additionally, two of the entrance descriptions also include a short description of the characters' clothes. If the introductory tour of the characters is counted as in-play AD despite it taking place before the play begins, there are an additional 27 sentences describing the characters clothes and accessories.

The lack of description of the character's facial expressions is noticeable and very non-conventional. Both the ADLAB guidelines (Remael et. al 2014) and the Finnish guidelines (FAD 2013) suggest describing facial expressions for the audience is often interested in them. This lack of facial expression descriptions was also commented on by the audience members and the describers after the performance, as seen in examples 32 and 33.

(32) Describer 1: Katsojilta tuli palautetta, että näyttelijöiden ulkonäköä ja ilmeitä olisi voinut tulkata enemmän, ja tämä on varmasti totta. (Questionnaire)

(33) Describer 3: Vasta näytelmän jälkeen saadusta palautteesta kävi ilmi, että olimme jättäneet hahmojen ilmeet ja olemukset melko laajalti tulkkamatta, ja itsekin huomasin sen vasta siinä vaiheessa. Esityksen aikana minun teki mieli improvisoida joitakin ilmeiden tai tunteiden tulkkeita, mutta koska niitä ei ollut harjoiteltu eikä mielessäni ollut sopivia tunteen ilmaisun sanoja, en lähtenyt yrittämään, sillä tulos ei olisi ollut luonteva. En muista, että olisimme missään vaiheessa tehneet tällaista "linjausta" että vain näyttelijöiden fyysiset liikkeet ja rekvisiitan kanssakäymiset tulkataan ja ilmeet jätetään pois, mutta niin siinä taisi käydä. Jos olisimme olleet näiden puolten kanssa enemmän hereillä jo treenivaiheessa ja ne olisi ympätty tulkkeeseen, olisi lopputulos ollut vielä parempi kuin mitä se nyt oli. Toisaalta tähän saattaa vaikuttaa myös näyttelijöiden harrastelijuus, sillä samanlaisia tunteenilmauksia mitä he esityksen aikana tekivät ei ollut oikein tullut esiin treenien aikana. (Questionnaire)

It appears as the choice to leave the facial expression undescribed was not intentional, and as one of the describers commented, it may have been due to the actors not using many facial expressions during the practices and thus the describers not noticing that they should be described as well. However, the lack of describing facial expressions may have also been affected by the director's opinion on describing a character's smile during one scene, when the director noted that it was unnecessary to describe it as the audience could hear from the actor's voice that the character was smiling (example 34). This comment was also discussed later by the describers, shown in example 35, and thus it is possible that based on it the describers concluded that any descriptions of facial expressions would be unnecessary. This was not discussed in detail though, and it seems that the describers made a unanimous but unspoken decision to leave out such descriptions.

(34) Director: Se on siinä vaiheessa, kun sanotaan, että Don Diego laskee aseen alas ja hymyilee, että se "hymyilee" otetaan pois (tulkkeesta) koska se kuuluu äänestä.

Diana: Okei, jees.

Director: Se on minusta turhan päälleliimattu, että riittää että hän panee aseen pois.

Diana: Täällä oli että "hymyilee viekkaasti" oli yks ehdotus, mutta se nyt riippuu muutamasta asiasta…

Director: Se hänen pirullisuutensa on jo pikkuhiljaa ilmaantumassa tässä kohtauksessa. Täytyy jättää jotain aivojenkin varaan, eli silmäthän meillä ei näe vaan aivot tulkitsee silmien kuvaa. (Theatre 1)

(35) Bella: Ja kuvailusta vielä, tässähän oli toi puumailmeiden tulo, mikä ei oo kuvailussa millään tavalla mukana. ([ohjaaja]) aina ohjeistaa astumaan lähellä, mutta se ei oo tossa--

Cecilia: Jos sen vois kuulla äänensävystä, niin sitä ei tarvis kuvailla, mutta kun ne näyttelijät tekee aina eri tavalla.

Diana: Kyllä se jostain just sanoi, ettei tarvii kuvailla että Don Diego hymyilee, kun ilmeet kuulee äänestä. (Group 1)

It is therefore possible that when choosing what elements of the play to describe, the describers followed the director's vision – or their own interpretation of the director's vision – instead of following the guidelines for theatre AD. This resulted in an AD that was non-conventional in the aspects it described but quite conventional in the language that it used. Excluding the remarks about the missing descriptions, all the describers who answered the post-performance questionnaire said that they thought the quality of the AD was good and they were satisfied with it.

5.6.3. Language and contents of the technical AD

In comparison to the in-play AD, there were only 20 instances of technical AD, of which 18 included a description of the lighting of the stage. 5 included descriptions of the stage props and of them being moved around, and 3 also mentioned the actions of unnamed characters, e.g. "Lava tyhjenee ihmisistä", "taustalla kulkee ihmisiä sateenvarjojen kanssa" ("People exit the stage"," there are people with umbrellas walking in the background"). In the technical AD the word *stage* and its synonyms were used multiple times, as were other technical terms such as *lights* and *props*. Unlike the mentions of the stage in the in-play AD, the mentions in the technical AD were done on purpose. Using such terms was seen as a way to distance the technical AD from the in-play AD in terms of style, noted in examples 36 and 37.

(36) Cecilia: Tosta oli kans keskustelua, että onko noi lavaspeksit ok, että voiko mainita lavan, onks se puisto, pitääkö sitä käsitellä sanallisesti lavana vai jättää pois se, että tämä on fyysisesti lava?

(...)

Fiona: Siis eikö sen siinä teknisessä tulkkeessa voi ihan sanoa? (Group 1)

(37) Ketola:yleisenä kysymyksenä, meidän on varmaan kuvailutulkattava aina kun tulee noita black-outteja.

Cecilia: Joo, niin onks se vaan joku "Tulee pimeä", "Laskeutuu pimeä", "Valot sammuvat"... Se voi ehkä olla vähän tekninen.

Bella: Mutta jos se on sen ulkoisen kuvailutulkin homma, niin silloin se "valot sammuu" voi toimia ihan hyvin. Se ulkoinen (tulkki) vois sanoo jotain sellaista myös, kun kohtaus päättyy.

Cecilia: Se voi olla jopa hyväkin, että tehdään se ulkoisen (tulkkeen) ero tollein. (Group 2)

As with the in-play AD, the sentences in the technical AD were short, with most descriptions consisting of two to three words. Pronouns were not used at all. While there was some repetition when describing the lights, especially of the terms "Tulee pimeää" ("It gets dark") and "Valot

kirkastuvat" ("The lights brighten"), most often the descriptions varied from one another slightly. This also seemed to be intentional as the describers had discussed whether it would be better to use repetitive descriptions or use many different terms when describing the repeating actions of the characters. During that discussion, the describers decided to rather use synonyms rather than to repeat the exact descriptions multiple times. While the repetition in the technical AD was not directly discussed, it is likely that the consensus of avoiding repetition in the in-play AD affected the terms used in the technical AD as well.

While the concept of creating a separate AD for the technical aspects of the play is and which is presented by a different person than the rest of the AD is non-conventional, the style and contents of the AD itself were quite conventional. The stage props were not described in much detail, which was a break from convention, but this was likely due to the describers only seeing the props in use for the first time the day before the performance and thus having no opportunity to add more pauses in the AD script to describe them in detail.

5.7 The describers' opinions on the project and AD methods

The describers expressed opinions of the project throughout the production. A recurring opinion, which was discussed in 5.1.1., was that the describers should not have participated in the project from such an early stage onwards but rather started the production of AD around two months before the performance. This opinion was reflected in all the group discussions and every questionnaire answer when the describers were asked which parts of the project did not work and/or which they would do in a different manner.

The describers' opinions on whether this method of producing AD would be usable in other theatre projects varied. One describer thought that AD could be produced in this manner for any live production, one thought that it would work well for both amateur and professional theatre, while two thought that it might work for amateur theatre, but it would be neither possible nor financially ideal to produce AD for professional theatre in this manner. The financial costs of producing AD in such a way were also discussed by the describers, with them unanimously agreeing that nobody would pay describers to sit in theatre practices for months to create AD, seen in examples 38 and 39. Some even stated that they would not accept a work commission that would include them having to sit in the theatre listening to the practices for hours and having to practically re-write the AD every time. However, notably the describers did not at any point discuss whether they themselves could work differently, for instance skip

a few weeks of rehearsals and attend them again when they were further along, which could have made the production less time-consuming for the describers.

> (38) Cecilia: Jos mulle maksettais tästä niin ei kyllä.
>
> Bella: Ei niinku missään tapauksessa.
>
> Ketola: Ei kukaan voi aatella että tällaista tuntikorvauksella tekis. Tai kyllähän siellä tietysti istuisi, jos joku sen maksaa mutta--
>
> Cecilia: Maksajan kannalta siinä ei ois mitään järkee. (Group 1)

> (39) Describer 4: On tosin epävarmaa, olisiko samankaltaista projektia ollenkaan mahdollista toteuttaa taloudellisesti järkevästi… (Questionnaire)

The number of describers producing the AD was non-conventional, and while the describers thought that it was useful for this project to have 7 describers working on the project, for a project that would be done in a shorter time frame a smaller number of describers would be more useful, as seen in example 40. A smaller team of describers would also be more conventional, again showing that the describers thought that at many parts a more conventional approach would be more functional.

> (40) Describer 4: Kun oli kyseessä kurssi ja tällainen pitkäkestoinen pilottiproduktio, niin oli ehkä hyväkin, että kuvailutulkkiryhmä oli iso ja näyttelijätkin osallistuivat kuvailun synnyttämiseen, mutta jos oikeasti ajatellaan ammatillista toimintaa ja taloudellista järkevyyttä, niin olihan meitä siinä ihan turhan paljon ja turhan usein. -- Kuvailutulkkeja olisi hyvä olla ehkä 2-3, mutta ei enempää. (Questionnaire)

Altogether the describers were satisfied with the presented AD and while they did have some issues with the way the whole project was conducted, the overall experience was positive. While the describers often preferred to lean towards conventional AD methods especially regarding the language of the AD and the describers' role within the production of the play, they also found many of the non-conventional aspects functional as well. Most of the describers also thought that producing more unconventional AD such as this would be both possible and beneficial to the whole field of theatre accessibility. Especially producing the AD simultaneously with the play and integrating it with the performance were AD methods that the describers experienced to be functional. The open AD delivery method was also integral to the whole project even at the production stage, allowing the theatre group to make suggestions and offering the describers the chance to create space within the play for the AD.

Additionally, the open, integrated AD was praised by multiple audience members after the performance, with some stating that the AD was the best part of the whole performance, and that all theatre performances should offer it (Ketola 2020, Teams-call). This opinion aligns with the describers' opinions in affirming that there is a need for more audio described theatre,

and that non-conventional AD methods benefit the theatre scene, as well as provide further entertainment for the audience.

6 DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of the AD production process in the previous chapter, it can be said that the AD for *Fedoriam* included both conventional and non-conventional aspects. The conventional aspects largely pertained to the language that was used in the AD, as it was simple and did not use complex sentence structures or theatrical word choices, even if they may have integrated the AD further into the play. In addition, the audio describers at times approached the process of producing AD and the final AD from a conventional standpoint, even though the AD also integrated some very non-conventional aspects. This conventionally-leaning mindset can be seen in the way the describers approach the AD: they talk about keeping it non-subjective and even separate from the performance, not wanting the audio describers' voices to be used to be heard in the performance in any other role than that of the describer. Altogether the describers seemed more reluctant to create non-conventional AD than the members of the theatre group. When the director and the playwright suggest that the AD would be used in a manner that would integrate it further into the play, the audio describers reject the idea, claiming that it would be confusing, and it does not fit into the audio describer's (conventional) role.

During the group discussions and in their questionnaire answers the describers stated multiple times that they felt like the theatre group did not really understand what AD was supposed to be like and what the audio describers' role in the project should be. Some of the describers pondered that if they were to participate in a similar project again, they would want to have a discussion with the theatre group before the AD production would begin to define the role of the audio describer and to clarify what AD should be like. While it seems clear that in this project the audio describers' view of AD did not match the theatre group's view of AD, it should be considered that neither of the two groups necessarily had a "correct" view of what AD should be like. As the AD for Fedoriam was designed to be unconventional from the very beginning, it cannot be said that the theatre group members were wrong in having non-conventional ideas for the AD, just as it cannot be said that the audio describers were at fault for expecting that the AD should follow at least some of the AD guidelines. I believe it is likely that the AD was produced in the manner it was because there had been no pre-practice discussion about what the AD should be like. Had there been a discussion where it had been decided how much the theatre group members should participate in the creation of the AD, or whether it should follow conventional guidelines, the process and the final AD would have likely been very different.

It is possible that the describers wanted to create a more conventional AD than the theatre group as for the describers the project was a part of a university course (although notably the audio describers were not specifically instructed or encouraged to create conventional AD). The describers' previous lack of AD experience combined with their academic knowledge of AD may have also played a role in them being keen to produce more conventional AD: they may have wanted to produce AD that was done the "right" way. This may have been a part of the reason why the describers had a conventional idea of what the AD should be like: they were learning the conventions and may have felt that it was their duty to follow the guidelines as well as they could despite the non-conventional production method of the AD. Similar attitude was also noted in Udo and Fels' (2009b) research, when the only student who had previous knowledge of AD wanted to produce the AD in a "correct" way. As such, the describers' knowledge of how AD should be done according to the guidelines may have made them reluctant to provide AD that did not follow these guidelines. Therefore, it is possible that while knowledge of the guidelines helped the describers to create the AD, it may have also restricted their creativity and made them more prone to rejecting ideas that went against the conventions of AD as the describers understood them. This could also explain why the describers reported that they felt like their role was not understood: they themselves had a strict vision of their role and were not prepared to broaden it because the guidelines they thought they should follow were against it.

In comparison, the theatre group members were also amateurs in their field, just as the describers were beginners in their own field. The amateur nature of the theatre group may have been reflected in the practices and consequently also in the AD. Some of the describers noted that the actors had not been as expressive during the practices as they were during the play, which partly led to the AD lacking descriptions of facial expressions. However, the fact that the theatre was an amateur theatre is likely the main reason that allowed this project to happen in the first place, as it is difficult to imagine a professional theatre would be able to incorporate the audio describers in the project in a similar manner, even giving them a say over the actions that happen in some scenes and letting them affect the rhythm of the play. Professional theatre groups may have also had stricter visions of the AD itself as well, which could have also changed both the way the AD was produced as well as its contents and delivery.

The fact that the AD was produced as a part of a university group could have led to it being very lecturer-focused, but the lecturer of the course stated that they did not try to teach the students some "correct" way to produce AD, but rather the students learned by doing (Ketola

2020, Teams-call). The course was not graded, and there were no lectures or homework to return, and in addition to providing the FAD guidelines for the students' consideration, the lecturer did not tell the students how the AD should be produced. The group discussions were held on an equal basis, and everyone was free to express their own opinions. While the lecturer also participated in producing the AD and worked as the main contact link between the describers and the theatre group, for the most part their role did not differ significantly from that of the students when it came to making decisions regarding the AD.

While the describers seemed to lean towards more conventional AD methods, the production and the final AD also contained non-conventional aspects. The most visible ones were its open delivery and the way it was produced alongside the play. Interestingly, however, despite the describers' conventional-leaning attitudes the describers also showed non-conventional approaches to the AD production. Especially the way the describers seemed to want to follow the director's vision for the play was non-conventional. Aiming to follow the director's vision is even listed as one of the main aspects of non-conventional, integrated AD (Fryer 2018). The describers seemed to be so *auteur*-focused that they searched for the director's approval for the AD, thus involving the director in the production in a significant manner. This *auteur*-focused approach was likely at least one of the reasons why the describers also felt they did not want to take all the space that was offered to them. It is likely the describers felt like the play should not follow their visions or the AD, but the AD should reflect the play and fit the director's vision of it. I believe that the describers' focus on *auteur* was at least partially caused by the fact that the AD was produced and practiced in full view of the theatre group. Had it been produced and delivered in a conventional manner, with the actors and perhaps even the director never hearing it, I believe the describers would not have been as interested in making sure the AD fit the director's vision. Being practiced openly, I believe the describers prioritized the director's approval of the AD over its conventionality: they did not want to produce AD that the director and the rest of the theatre group would not like, even if that AD would be more neutral and follow the guidelines better.

Personally, I felt that my double role in the production of the AD as one of the describers and a researcher of the same production did affect my participation in the production. I opted out of describing the performance as I wanted to focus on making notes of it, and during the practices that I recorded to later analyze them I did not participate in any discussions with the other describers or the theatre group members. Therefore, I feel like I participated less in the production of the AD than the rest of the describers. However, I also feel that being a part of

the AD production process allowed me a better opportunity to research it. I was privy to the whole process and could discuss the AD and its production with the other describers as it was being produced. I also gained insight into the practicalities of this production, making it easier to analyze even a year later. Importantly, as I had not decided my research question at the time that the AD was being produced and I was gathering my data, my personal opinions did not affect the way I participated in the group conversations or the AD suggestions I made during the production process.

7 CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis I analyzed the AD production process for the amateur theatre play *Fedoriam*, in order to find out how the production had employed conventional and non- conventional AD methods. I did this by analyzing recordings from the rehearsals of the play and from the describers' group conversations where they discussed the AD, as well as the final AD script and the describers' written answers to a questionnaire regarding their experiences about the AD production process.

Based on my analysis, the AD was produced and delivered in a non-conventional manner, while the describers tried to produce it following the conventions whenever they had the opportunity to do so. The contents of the AD were deliberately conventional, and the few non-conventional aspects of it were largely unintentional or decided on by people other than the audio describers. This does further prove that non-conventional AD is an umbrella term for various different types of AD and lends further credence to Fryer's (2018) list of non-conventional AD elements, as the AD in question incorporated most of them. While there are Finnish guidelines for theatre AD (FAD 2013), professional practices for it are still quite lacking, as is the case in many other European countries (Reviers 2016, 236-241), and as such the observations made in this thesis could be used to help to update the FAD guidelines.

As the field of theatre AD research is still rather small, there is no directly comparable research I could compare my results to. However, it should be noted that similar experiences in the production and delivery of the AD were reported by Udo and Fels (2009b), especially when it came to the describers' experiences of the production of the AD having been started at a too early stage and most of the work having been done during the last week before the performance, as well as the describers' previous knowledge resulting in them wanting to create AD that follows the guidelines. Additionally, my research supports Igareda and Matamala's (2012, 119) claim that the describer's previous training is not the most significant factor in producing AD, as the audio describers were amateurs when they started the AD production and yet they managed to produce a praised AD. Lodge et al.'s (1994) previous claim that AD production requires a multitude of skills and knowledge is also backed up by this research and the multitude of roles of the audio describers.

The describers' conventional-leaning approach was surprising considering the non-conventional production method of the AD, although it could be explained by the describers' still being students and as such leaning on the AD guidelines to learn how to create AD. The

describers' *auteur*-based approach shows regardless of their otherwise conventional-leaning approach shows that the current theatre AD guidelines that advice the describers to create the AD without input from the director or other theatre group members may not be intuitive to the audio describers, or that the describers feel that following the director's vision for the play results in better AD. Should other research be done where similar notifications are made, this would provide a valid reason to re-write the AD guidelines to encourage for a more inclusive approach to creating AD.

The feedback gained from after the performance proves that there is a need for theatre AD, and the non-conventional AD was highly enjoyed by the audience. This observation is especially important when combined with Ferziger et al.'s (2020, 300) statements that participation in cultural events improves the quality of life for B/VI people, and audio describing theatre is one way of making that participation possible. Additionally, my research proved that AD can be seamlessly incorporated to the performance, as mentioned by Whitfield and Fels (2013, 223). As such, I believe it likely that theatre AD will become more popular in the upcoming years and therefore it should also be researched further to find new, effective ways to produce and deliver theatre AD in a way that is also entertaining to the audience. While the audio describers' roles in the production of the play were not as visible as Fryer's (2018) in her research where the audio describer was staged, the audio describers did participate in the production of the play as well, and they were visible during its performance.

My research was limited by the fact that it only examined the production of AD for one performance by a small group of describers, none of whom were professional audio describers, similarly to Udo and Fels' (2009b) research. As such, conclusions cannot be drawn from this research to state how AD is typically produced for theatre or whether the production process is usually as conventional/non-conventional. My research was a case study, and while it does add relevant information to the field of AD research, its results likely cannot be replicated as they were likely affected by the fact that neither the describers nor the theatre group had previous experience in producing an AD for a theatre performance. This does not, however, lessen the value of these results.

While my methods for analyzing the data were mostly sufficient, I did note that the analysis would have been easier had I managed to record the conversation with better sound quality, as now the conversation was sometimes so muddled it was difficult or even impossible to hear. Additionally, a video recording of the rehearsals and/or the performance would have allowed me to analyze how the AD actually fit the performances, which would have given me a better

insight into the conventionality/non-conventionality of it in terms of its timing and contents, and also allowed me to see how the AD changes due to the changes in the timing of the play, as theorized by Holland (2008, 177-178). Had I decided upon my exact research question before I wrote the questionnaire, I could have also received answers from the other describers that would have answered my research question better.

Additionally, my own participation in the production process, while allowing me a better insight into my data and research topic, may have affected the way I approached my research as by the time I started the data analysis I already had an idea of what conventional and non-conventional aspects I would be likely to find. Knowing that I would be analyzing the discussions and the AD scripts also affected my participation in the production process as I decided not to speak during the theatre practices I was recording and to not work as a describer during the performance so I would not thus influence the data I would have. In this manner I did put myself in a slightly different role than that of the other describers who were involved in the process.

Further research into theatre AD and especially into non-conventional theatre AD production would be required in order to make stronger statements on the effectiveness and benefits of producing non-conventional theatre AD, as well as of the best production processes for it. I believe that this research would be easier to do in collaboration with amateur theatres than with professional theatre groups as amateur theatres are likely to be more flexible in their methods and more easily adapt to new strategies, as also mentioned by Udo and Fels (2009a, 180). Possible relevant research topics would include further research into audience enjoyment of conventional versus non-conventional AD, optimal stage for the AD production to be integrated within the theatre play production, and how previous knowledge of AD conventions affects the describer's approach to producing AD.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 English data translations

In order of appearance. All translations are my own.

(1) Describer 3: The technical parts were mostly functional although I was a bit horrified about the idea of using two describers at the same time giving different descriptions into the same microphone but luckily we got two cordless microphones to the final rehearsal and the performance. The microphones emitted some background noises which could overlap the speech, which made it harder to hear. (Questionnaire)

(2) Cecilia: Yeah but this is the kind of play where there are really long dialogues where they have nothing written to happen in the script, like there are only the lines and then the director makes people do stuff in the background, so to be able to describe that pauses must be left in there, and maybe that is the upside of this project that that can be done.

Anna: It could be described without the pauses but here the director has given us the chance to make the pauses.

Cecilia: And some of the descriptions would be left out if the dialogue wasn't paused for it. (Group 1)

(3) Anna: [During the character introduction round] we can only mention the character's profession if it's also mentioned in the hand programme because otherwise the sighted audience won't know it either.

Diana: Except here where they also hear everything we say. (Group 1)

(4) Anna: Maybe it feels a bit like (the production) is stuck in place because we always practice with the same scenes with different people, and since none of them have marked down where the descriptions are, we are like, well, so…

Bella: I think, altogether, in terms of creating and producing audio description this makes no sense, honestly. I think this is really interesting, I really like watching really different people and work methods, but it simply makes no sense that the audio description is added in a stage where we don't even have all the actors and the play script is not complete. In my opinion. Even if we are integrating the audio description in the play, I think that the play should be at least somewhat done first. Us sitting there week after week and us thinking if the character stands up now or a minute later, it doesn't make sense. (Group 1)

(5) Describer 1: In the future the audio describers should step in into the project only after the actors have already practiced for a while, since now at the beginning we were sitting in the rehearsals just watching. (Questionnaire)

(6) Describer 2: We came into the project at a really early stage when all the actors weren't even chosen, so producing AD that fit the character's actions was unnecessary as nothing could be decided for certain. The actors had not yet learnt their characters and their manners and they relied on the play script for a long time, which prevented them from leaning into the characters and taking the stage, which in turn prevented us from doing our job. (Questionnaire)

(7) Describer 1: It was great that the AD was a part of the play from the beginning. (Questionnaire)

(8) Describer 2: In the end there were some improvised parts in the play for both the actors and the describers. Having attended the rehearsals from the beginning and knowing the script thoroughly helped in these situation as I remembered the lines and the actions really well. I could "take the risk" and throw in some descriptions as I knew there would be time for them since the actor's manners were familiar to me and I could guess how much time they would take before speaking their lines. (Questionnaire)

(9) Describer 3: Having the describers be in the team from the beginning affected the play's rhythm and thus made it easier to fit the descriptions between the dialogue. (Questionnaire)

(10) Describer 1: The audio describers should step in around the middle of the project... (Questionnaire)

(11) Describer 2: I would participate in a similar project (=meaning project where the audio describer is working in the rehearsals from the beginning) again. I would come into the project at a bit later stage, so I would a on a bit steadier ground with the descriptions and there would be less unnecessary work. (Questionnaire)

(12) Ketola: The play should be kind of complete but not totally fine-tuned, because the few scenes are kind of the ones that would need to be redone when we would… Or not to redo the scenes, but the rhythm would need to be different.

Cecilia: Maybe if the describers would start to get in there around the middle point of the rehearsals and then see, how they are doing there, that could be--

Anna: Yes, maybe at that point the actors would remember the audio descriptions better, so we wouldn't need to negotiate about their place every time again and again.

Cecilia: Yeah, at this point they are still learning their lines and movements, and then they are also expected to remember when there is audio description

Anna: Yes, because at first I also thought that it would be good if we could integrate the AD into the play already during the first rehearsals, but it clearly hasn't worked. So maybe there's really too much for them to remember since they are still just rehearsing everything. (Group 1)

(13) Bella: And then there are these strong personalities, with the director and the playwright, and then we are there in the middle, kind of, so then it is kind of, like

Ketola: That's a really good point because, well, after the last rehearsal the playwright came to talk to be about the long dialogue scene, where we've already agreed that there will be no description, that we should create descriptions to it. And I said that it's already decided that there will be none, and he thinks it hasn't been decided. And kind of, maybe it is also reflected in our work, the dynamics between the director and the playwright, that the playwright has directed the theatre for years and now (…) directing is someone else's responsibility. (Group 1)

(14) Director: Those descriptions there sound, like, well of course since I can see, it sounds like why the hell does that need to be described, but of course. And don't put any swears in the descriptions, we don't swear here. Fucking hell [jokingly]. Enter Don Diego

Cecilia: Don Diego and Enrico enter. Don Diego is holding a gun. (Theatre 1)

(15) Playwright: Describers.

Cecilia & Diana: Mhm?

Playwright: Is this the, is this the right part where there is the, have you written here that the women move to stand side by side--

Cecilia: It… Here's the mirror thing with Laurencia, where--

Playwright: Yeah, but here's the thing, they for a group, the women move like, have you marked it here?

Cecilia: Uhh, we haven't marked any movements for them.

Playwright: But at some point say, tell that the women go stand close to each other, somewhere… You should note it with a question mark or such.

Cecilia: Yeah we have made no notes about it.

Playwright: It's important there, here, like, for their relationship.

Cecilia. Yes… Got to mark it. (Theatre 1)

(16) Erica: Are we in agreement about this fountain thing, since we still haven't written it, about how we say it. Because if we say that—

Fiona: Isn't it going to be projected?

(...)

Erica: Didn't [the playwright] think that the fountain should be imaginary?

Bella: He had a proper philosophical vision of it but the last time [the director] said that it would be projected.

Diana: When we describe that there's a park and trees and such, that's when we describe the fountain there.

Fiona: Since we describe the props anyway.

Erica: Well if it is projected then we can describe it, if it's imaginary then this would be a bit difficult.

Anna: But I thought that it was a bad idea that we would start to describe some imaginary or projected fountain, we could leave some of the theatre's magic there.

Cecilia: Yeah, the idea is that the people will know that it's not a real fountain but that they will imagine it is.

Anna: So we won't overexplain it, that there's an imaginary fountain on the stage and the characters pretend to drink from it. (Group 1)

(17) Ketola: We discussed last time that the idea was thrown around that should there be a kind of Independence Day Ball type of a description [in the dance scene], and if I understood the atmosphere correctly none of you were enthusiastic about it. It was a peculiar idea so maybe we come back to it when the props are ready and we know what should be said there.

Bella: I think it could be a good idea to write such a description but for clarity's sake it should not be any of us who says it in the play.

(...)

Ketola: But well, the person who's making the background audience sounds could read it. Or possibly I could.

Bella: Or when there are all the radio clips, if we could record it in advance the same way and there would be the radio static noise. If it would be like… Like, there will be the singing and the radio clips, so it would be like the other elements on its own as well.

(...)

Ketola: But it's probably good that we have a suggestion regarding it, because they were trying to make that our job, but we would in principle think that it would not be the audio describer's voice commenting on it. (Group 2)

(18) Cecilia: So what is our role, we are prompters and what else.

Erica: We were asked to be actors too. (Group 1)

(19) playwright: Could one of you be the prompter if they forget their lines?

Cecilia: Yeah, a prompter?

Diana: I can be the prompter if you do the AD. (Theatre 1)

(20) Director: And now you stand up.

Cecilia: And move there.

Director: You, since you have the notes, stop this thing. You are the directors now. Since you have the notes and you tell them to the audience then. (Theatre 1)

(21) Cecilia: Hey, there's a small contradiction, that first we describe that she looks into the mirror, and then she says that she's too scared to look into the mirror.

Director: Well life is full of contradictions.

Cecilia: Well that is true.

Director: We don't make this a fact for a fact thing.

Cecilia: But should we still describe that she looks into the mirror, because it comes--

Director: No need.

Cecilia: Okay, at all?

Director: I mean, the most important part is that we do something in an opposite way that we don't do, because they are flirting.

Cecilia: Yeah.

Director: And when flirting, anything can happen in any order

Cecilia: Alright. But she does do something, so is it that she pulls a mirror from her pocket, because--

Director: Yeah yeah.

Cecilia: So what should we then say there?

Director: I don't know, this isn't really necessary to describe.

Cecilia: Okay.

Director: We can say that she pulls out the mirror.

Cecilia: Alright. So maybe that she pulls out the mirror but doesn't dare to look into it

Director: Yes. (Theatre 1)

(22) Question: Who do you think participated in the production of the AD for this play

Describer 1: In addition to the team of describers also the director, the playwright and the actors participated in creating the AD.

Describer 3: Mostly the describers, but also the other director and one of the actors made suggestions.

Describer 4: Everyone because even though the describers produced the actual AD, its contents and placement were negotiated with everyone, and the director and the actors also suggested descriptions at times. (Questionnaire)

(23) Cecilia: A wounded man runs in, stops to watch the trio. (pause.) Continues--

Playwright: How long is that pause?

Director: Let's do it again.

Cecilia A wounded man runs in, stops to watch the trio. (pause.) Continues on his way.

Director: Let's do it again, [Actor 1], count to three or something and continue. You need to decide yourself when you move, nobody will tell it to you. (Theatre 1)

(24) Describer 4: At times the describers were supposed to be the prompters, and sometimes "direct" the actors by reading the description and in that way remind the actors of what the should be doing. (Questionnaire)

(25) Describer 4: An important positive aspect was that since we were collaborating with the theatre group, we could discuss on everything with them and there were enough pauses for the description between the dialogue. (Questionnaire)

(26) Describer 1: The group work was definitely fruitful. The team spirit was good with the whole project team. (Questionnaire)

(27) Anna: Yeah, I also think that the directors did not really know what audio description is since they hace at times asked us to interpret things instead of just describing them, like when there's some kind of background they were like "say that it's a warm summer day" or such, which is not audio describing. So kind of it feels like our role hasn't always been clear to them (Group 2)

(28) Cecilia: But how do we describe their ages? If we describe hair and clothing.

Anna: Slightly wrinkled face?

Diana: It doesn't matter to the plot so we can say it.

Erica: If the actor won't be offended by being described like that.

Bella: That's a thing about the description, what people think is offending and what's not. Because sometimes they have some pretty crude stuff as well.

Cecilia: One could usually think that theatre folks are used to all kinds of feedback and critique and this would be no different, but since this is an amateur theatre I don't know how well usual theatre conventions apply to this group and this performance.

Bella: We all see what people look like but nobody says it all aloud. Here, with the description, we need to think about where to draw the line on what can and can't be said, even when we see it. If you say that someone is a bit chubby, where does everyone's limits go? Then again, if we think about equality, about what some people see and others don't…

Anna: But there's also the question of how subjectively we will describe the people.

Cecilia: And what aspects we choose to describe, since we won't describe everything. (Group 1)

(29) Ketola: I've been thinking about the character introductions, for example this Laurencia Lacosta, who as a character is slightly older than Angelina, but her actress is some decades older, how do we describe her. Do we describe how old they look? Because I think the character is max thirty-years-old, and the actress is probably over fifty, so how do we solve this?

Cecilia: Maybe it's up to the audience to interpret what the "slightly older" means

Fiona: But the sighted people see what she looks like, so in theory we should describe that which can be seen.

Erica: And Laurencia's exact age is not mentioned in the play verbally. Soi f we say she's "slightly older", then probably the sighter audience will also presume that the character's age is the same as the actresses'.

Anna: That's how I've imagined it. For the sighted audience she is fifty if the actress is fifty. So if we want to be equal, also the B/VI audience will hear she's fifty. Or however old the actress is

(...)

Cecilia: If we say that Angelina is young, everyone can draw their on conclusions about that, and then Laurencia is older than Angelina.

Ketola: But it's interesting how their dynamics are built, like Laurencia is around ten years younger than Oscar and age-wise would be a better partner for him than Laurencia, but then Laurencia's actress is clearly at least more than 10 years older than Oscar's actor. So in my head the dynamics of her interest in him include something cougar-like, even if nothing such is really written into the play (Group 1)

(30) Ketola: On question about style that I was thinking about the last time was that we have some descriptions that don't mention any subject, since the place for the description is in the middle of an actor's line, so what do you think about there. Generally the guidelines say to always use whole sentences, but in these it's pretty clear whose actions we are describing. (…) It was probably this one where I started to think about this: "There's a nice-looking gentleman. (They) Look at Oscar."

Anna: I think that's nicer like that because otherwise we'll repeat a lot of Angelina this and Laurencia that, and such.

Cecilia: If there's the slightest chance for confusion, then let's use names, but that works without them.

Ketola: So no names, but how about the women look at Oscar?

Bella: I feel differently about it. If we say "Gets up", it's organic, it's in action, whereas if we say "Laurencia gets up" it immediately feels like we are looking at it from far away. Without the name it's integrated into the action. That's how I feel. It gives meta into it in a different way..

(...)

Fiona: If there's a risk of confusion then we always use the names, but here the two of them are speaking and looking at Oscar, so Oscar cannot be the one who looks at himself, so I think it's obvious it's the two of them who are looking. (Group 1)

(31) Bella: I was thinking about that "Moves behind Angelina", that if we want to lose the name from there we could say that she mover behind the bench or her friend, since even that is different than nemaing the characters from the outside. (…) Now the description is lacking the thing we had in the rehearsals, the one the director thought was really important, that she puts her hand on her shoulder, the motherly action, it's not included in the description at all.

Ketola: True, should we change this. How about "moves behind the bench

Fiona: I think it would be clarifying to say that "moves behind Angelina" because we don't say that Laurencia moves.

Diana: And in the same description that she puts her hand on her shoulder

Fiona: Moved behind Angelina, puts a hand on her shoulder

Bella: Or moves behind the bench and puts a hand on Angelina's shoulder. Then we wouldn't need to use the elative case which create more distance in the description. (Group 1)

(32) Describer 1: We got feedback from the audience that we could have described the actors' looks and expressions more, and this is surely true. (Questionnaire)

(33) Describer 3: Only after receiving feedback after the performance we noticed that we had largely left the characters' expressions and looks undescribed, and I myself only noticed it then. During the performance I felt

like improvising some expressions but since we hadn't practiced them and I didn't have proper words for describing them, I didn't try to do so since it wouldn't have sounded natural. I can't remember that we would have "decided" to only describe the actors' physical movements and leave out the expressions, but that's what happened. If we had been more alert about this during the rehearsals and added those descriptions to the AD, the end result might have been even better than it was now. Then again, the amateur actors may have affected this since during the rehearsals they didn't really express emotions the same way they did during the performance. (Questionnaire)

(34) Director: At the point where you say that Don Diego puts down his gun and smiles, leave out the "smiles" since that can be heard from his voice.

Diana: Alright, yeah.

Director: I think it's too much, it's enough to say he puts his gun down.

Diana: We had "smiles sneakily" as one suggestion, but it depends on a few things…

Director: His devilish attitude is slowly revealing itself in this scene. We must leave something for the brain to understand, since it's not our eyes that see, it's the brains that interpret the picture the eyes send them. (Theatre 1)

(35) Bella: And about the description, there were these cougar-like expressions which aren't reflected in the description. [The director] always directs them to step closer, but that's not in there

Cecilia: If it could be heard from the character's voice we wouldn't need to describe it, but the actors always do it in a different way.

Diana: He did just say something, like, no need to describe that, that there's no need to say that Don Diego smiles since that can be heard from his voice. (Group 1)

(36) Cecilia: We also discussed that are those stage specs okay, then can we mention the stage, is it a park, should we verbally refer to is as a stage or leave out the fact that this is physically a stage?

(...)

Fiona: Like, can't we just say it in the technical AD? (Group 1)

(37) Ketola: As a general question, we probably need to describe it every time there's a black-out.

Cecilia: Yes, so if it's just like "It gets dark", "The darkness falls", "The lights are turned off"… That might be a bit technical.

Bella: But if the technical describer says that, then the "The lights are turned off" could function well. The technical [describer] could also mention things like the scene ending.

Cecilia: It could even be good like that, that we differentiate [the technical AD] from the rest like that. (Group 2)

(38) Cecilia: If I got paid for this, no way.

Bella: Not under any circumstances.

Ketola: Nobody could imagine doing this and get paid hourly. Or well, people would do it if somebody paid for it but--

Cecilia: It wouldn't make sense for anyone to pay for it.. (Group 1)

(39) Describer 4: However, it's unclear whether a similar project could be produced in a financially sensible way… (Questionnaire)

(40) Describer 4: As it was a university course and this kind of a long pilot production it was maybe even good that the describer team was bit and the actors also participated in the production of the AD, but if we actually think about professional work and financial sensibility of it, there were too many of us and too often. (…) There should maybe be 2-3 describers, but no more than that. (Questionnaire)

SUOMENKIELINEN LYHENNELMÄ

KONVENTIONAALISTEN JA EPÄKONVENTIONAALISTEN KUVAILUTULKKAUSRATKAISUJEN KÄYTTÖ TEATTERI-KUVAILUTULKKAUKSESSA

Johdanto

Pro gradu -tutkielmassani tarkastelen teatterin kuvailutulkkausta ja etenkin siinä käytettyjä konventionaalisia ja epäkonventionaalisiakuvailutulkkausratkaisuja, sekä kuvailutulkkien näkemyksiä ja kommentteja kyseisten ratkaisujen toimivuudesta. Tutkimukseni pyrkii tuomaan lisätietoa kuvailutulkkausprosessista sekä pohtimaan, pitäisikö kuvailutulkkauksen nykyisiä konventioita laajentaa kattamaan myös nykyisin epäkonventionaalisiksi luokiteltuja kuvailutulkkaustapoja.

Kuvailutulkkaus on verbaalisesti tuotettavaa tulketta, jonka avulla kuvailutulkki verbaalisesti ilmaisee visuaalisia tapahtumia ja ilmiöitä sokealle tai näkövammaiselle asiakkaalle (Holland 2008, 170). Kuvailutulkkausta on tutkittu vasta muutaman vuosikymmenen ajan, ja etenkin Suomessa kuvailutulkkauksen tutkimusta on toistaiseksi julkaistu melko suppeasti (mm. Hirvonen 2013; 2014, Reiman 2017). Ammattimaisesti kuvailutulkkeina toimii vain pieni määrä henkilöitä, ja heistä osa on ilmaissut, että kuvailutulkkausta ei tulisi opettaa yliopistoissa opiskelijoille, sillä alalle on vaikeaa työllistyä (Roviomaa s.d., s.p.). Tästä huolimatta tarvetta kuvailutulkkaukselle kuitenkin on, sillä Suomen väestöstä noin 3% on jollakin tavalla näkövammaisia (Gissler 2015, s.p) ja näkövammaisten määrä todennäköisesti tulee kasvamaan väestön vanhentuessa. Myös Suomen lait ja EU-direktiivit edellyttävät kuvailutulkkauspalvelujen tuottamista aiempaa enenevissä määrin. Täten mielestäni kuvailutulkkausta on tärkeää tutkia ja alaa kehittää, jotta se ei jämähdä paikoilleen ja jotta asiakkaille tarjottujen kuvailutulkkauspalvelujen laatu voidaan pitää korkeana.

Oma tutkimukseni keskittyy amatööriteatterinäytelmään *Fedoriam* tuotetun kuvailutulkkauksen luomisprosessiin. Kyseisen kuvailutulkkauksen tuotti joukko Tampereen yliopiston käännöstieteiden opiskelijoita, ja osallistuin itsekin kuvailutulkkeen luontiin. Tutkimalla kuvailutulkkausprosessia etnografisesti pystyn analysoimaan, miten kuvailutulkit käyttivät konventionaalisia eli kuvailutulkkausohjeistusten mukaisia tulkkausratkaisuja, ja miten he poikkesivat näistä jo kuvailutulkkauksen syntyvaiheessa. Täten tutkimus tarjoaa

arvokasta tietoa siitä, miten kuvailutulke syntyy, sekä nostaa keskusteltavaksi sen, tulisiko nykyisiä suomalaisia kuvailutulkkausohjeita (FAD 2013) päivittää kattamaan useampia kuvailutulkkausmetodeja.

Tutkimukseni aineistona käytän *Fedoriam*-näytelmän harjoituksissa sekä kuvailutulkkien ryhmätapaamisissa nauhoitettuja ääniraitoja, joissa kuvailutulkkauksesta keskustellaan, sekä kuvailutulkkien täyttämiä kyselylomakevastauksia, joissa he kertoivat kokemuksistaan kyseisen projektin parissa. Näiden lisäksi käytän aineistonani *Fedoriam*-näytelmään luotua kuvailutulkkauskäsikirjoitusta sekä omia kokemuksiani projektissa työskentelystä. Vertaan aineistoani ja siinä esiintyviä metodeja Näkövammaisten kulttuuripalvelu ry:n julkaisemiin *Kuvailutulkkaustoimikunnan ohjeisiin kuvailutulkeille* (FAD 2013).

Teoria

Kuvailutulkkausta on ollut olemassa niin kauan, kun näkevät ihmiset ovat kuvailleet ympäristöään niille, jotka eivät sitä pysty näkemään (Benecke 2004, 178), mutta kuvailutulkkauksen ammattilaistasoinen tutkimus ja tarjonta palveluna alkoi useimpien lähteiden mukaan vasta 1980-luvulla (mm. Lodge ym. 1994). Englanninkielistä termiä *audio description* on tosin käytetty jo 1970-luvun alkupuolelta saakka (Aaltonen 2007, 8). Yleisesti on hyväksytty teoria, jonka mukaan ammatilaistasoinen kuvailutulkkaus sai alkunsa Yhdysvalloissa teatterissa, joskin näyttöä löytyy myös siitä, että elokuvien kuvailutulkkausta aloitettiin samoihin aikoihin tuottamaan myös Venäjällä (Lodge ym. 1994, 140). Osa kuvailutulkkauksen tutkijoista puolestaan näkee ammattimaisen kuvailutulkkauksen alkaneen Espanjassa jo 1940-luvulla (Reviers 2016, 232), joskaan tämä näkemys ei ole saavuttanut suurta suosiota.

Laajemmin kuvailutulkkauksen katsotaan levinneen Eurooppaan 1980-luvulla, jolloin teatterikuvailutulkkausta alettiin järjestämään muun muassa Isossa-Britanniassa ja Ranskassa (Lodge ym. 1994, 140). Kuvailutulkkaus levisi 1990-luvulla televisio- ja elokuvateollisuuden puolelle (Reviers 2016, 232), ja kuvailutulkkauksen tutkiminen keskittyi nopeasti juuri elokuvien ja televisio-ohjelmien kuvailutulkkaukseen. Vuonna 1991 Euroopassa aloitettiin monikansallinen AUDETEL-projekti, jonka avulla pyrittiin luomaan säädöksiä ja ohjeistuksia kuvailutulkkauksen luomiselle (Lodge ym. 1994, 140-144). Näistä yrityksistä huolimatta kuvailutulkkauksen kehitys ja sen tutkiminen ovat edenneet hyvin epätasaiseen tahtiin eri Euroopan maissa (Mazur & Chmiel 2012, 5).

Suomeen kuvailutulkkaus levisi 1980-luvulla, joskin tuolloin sitä kutsuttiin termillä *kummitusääni*. Termiä *kuvailutulkkaus* on Suomessa käytetty 1990-luvulta asti, jolloin Näkövammaisten kulttuuripalvelu alkoi tarjota kuvailutulkkausta osassa ohjelmistaan. (Aaltonen 2007, 8.) Suomessa kuvailutulkkaus alkoi muiden Euroopan maiden tavoin teatterin ja muiden elävien taiteiden parista, ja verrattuna kuvailutulkkauksen eurooppalaisin kärkimaihin kuten Isoon-Britanniaan ja Ranskaan, Suomessa kuvailutulkkaus levisi televisioon ja elokuviin vasta myöhäisessä vaiheessa. Ensimmäinen kuvailutulkattu televisiosarja *Varpuset* esitettiin vuonna 2005, ja ensimmäinen kuvailutulkattu elokuva *Postia pappi Jaakobille* julkaistiin vuonna 2009 (FFVI 2015, s.d., s.p.). Viime vuosien aikana etenkin elokuvien kuvailutulkkaus on kuitenkin kasvanut huomattavasti, ja vuodesta 2019 eteenpäin kaikkien dokumentti- ja näytelmäelokuvien, jotka saavat rahoitusta Suomen elokuvasäätiöltä, tulee olla kuvailutulkattuja (FFF 2020, s.d., s.p.). Teatterin kuvailutulkkausta ei Suomessa rahoiteta tai säädellä samalla tavalla, minkä vuoksi on vaikea sanoa, kuinka paljon teatteriesityksiä Suomessa on kuvailutulkattu.

Suomessa ei ole selkeää lakia kuvailutulkkauksen tarjoamiseen liittyen, joskin Yhdenvertaisuuslakia voidaan käyttää perusteena vaatia kuvailutulkkauspalveluita, sillä laki kieltää syrjinnän vammaisuuden perusteella sekä velvoittaa palveluntarjoajat tekemään kohtuullisia mukautuksia vammaisten ihmisten yhdenvertaisuuden toteuttamiseksi (Finlex 1325/2014, 3. luku, §8; §15). Lisäksi säädös Tietoyhteiskuntakaaresta velvoittaa televisiokanavia liittämään muihin kuin suomen- tai ruotsinkielisiin ohjelmiin selostuksen tai palvelun, jolla teksti muutetaan ääneksi (Finlex 2014/917, luku 25 §211). Myös EU:n saavutettavuusdirektiivi ja siihen perustuva Suomen digipalvelulaki säätelevät Internetissä tarjottavien palveluiden saavutettavuuden varmistamista muun muassa kuvailutulkkauksen avulla (MOF n.d., n.p.). Näiden lisäksi myös YK:n Yleissopimus vammaisten henkilöiden oikeuksista takaa vammaisille yhtäläisen oikeuden osallistua kulttuuripalveluihin (UN 2006).

Teatterikuvailutulkkaus on kuvailutulkkauksen alalaji. Vaikka ammatilaistasoisen kuvailutulkkauksen juuret ovat teatterikuvailutulkkauksessa, on teatterikuvailutulkkaus kehittynyt monia muita kuvailutulkkauksen lajeja hitaammin, ja teatterikuvailutulkkausta on tarjolla heikommin kuin televisio- ja elokuvakuvailutulkkausta (Reviers 2016, 344). Monissa maissa kuvailutulkkauksen ei uskota sopivan teatteriin (Whitfield & Fels 2013, 223), eikä sen tuottamista rahoiteta samalla tavalla kuin esimerkiksi elokuvien kuvailutulkkausta (Reviers 2016, 235).

Sisällöllisesti teatterikuvailutulkkaus jaetaan usein kahteen eri osioon: asujen ja lavasteiden kuvailuun sekä näytelmän tapahtumien kuvailuun (Holland 2008, 170). Kummankin osion kuvailu on tärkeää, jotta näkövammainen katsoja saa yhtäläisen kokemuksen näytelmästä näkevän katsojan kanssa. Kansainvälisesti kuvailutulkkausta on tutkittu enemmän, ja sitä varten on luotu erilaisia ohjeistuksia, joista tunnetuimpia lienevät ADLAB-projektista syntyneet kattavat ohjeistukset (Remael ym. 2014). Itse keskityn tutkielmassani vain niihin ohjeistuksiin, jotka ovat relevantteja teatterikuvailutulkkaukselle, jota tutkielmani käsittelee. Ohjeille tyypillistä on neuvoa kuvailutulkkia tuottamaan objektiivista, selkeäkielistä tulketta, jossa ei tuoda esiin kenenkään mielipiteitä tai tulkintoja, vaan vain kuvaillaan sitä, mitä kuvailutulkki näkee (Remael ym. 2014).

Tässä tutkielmassa käytän termiä *konventionaalinen kuvailutulkkaus* viittaamaan kuvailutulkkaukseen, joka noudattaa kuvailutulkkausohjeistuksia, ja termiä *epäkonventionaalinen kuvailutulkkaus* viittaamaan kuvailutulkkaukseen, joka poikkeaa ohjeistuksista. Epäkonventionaalisen kuvailutulkkauksen rinnalla puhutaan usein myös *integroidusta* eli sisäänrakennetusta kuvailutulkkauksesta, jota on tutkittu etenkin teatterin (Udo & Fels 2009a; 2009b, Fryer 2018) ja oopperan (Eardley-Weaver 2013) puolella. Integroitu kuvailutulkkaus on aina epäkonventionaalista. Teatterin kuvailutulkkauksessa sille tyypillisiä piirteitä ovat muun muassa luovuus, subjektiivisuus, ohjaajan vision esilletuominen, tulkkeen tuottaminen samanaikaisesti näytelmän kanssa ja yhteistyössä teatteriryhmän kanssa, sekä tulkkeen esittäminen avoimesti koko yleisölle (Fryer 2018, s.p.). Konventionaaliselle kuvailutulkkaukselle tyypillisiä piirteitä ovat puolestaan esimerkiksi kuvailutulkkeen neutraalius ja objektiivisuus, selkeä ja yleiskielinen kielenkäyttö, kuvailutulkkeen tuottaminen ilman että teatteriryhmä osallistuu sen tuottamiseen, sekä valmiin kuvailutulkkeen esittäminen halukkaille kuulijoille kuulokejärjestelmän avulla (mm. Remael ym. 2014).

Aineisto, tutkimusmetodit ja tutkimusetiikka

Keräsin aineistoni etnografisesti osallistumalla kuvailutulkkauksen tuottamiseen Teatteriryhmä Sokkelon näytelmään *Fedoriam*. Ryhmä Tampereen yliopiston käännöstieteiden opiskelijoita tuotti kuvailutulkkeen näytelmään. Aineistoni koostuu kahdesta näytelmän harjoituksissa tallennetusta ääninauhasta, kahdesta kuvailutulkkien ryhmätapaamisessa tallennetusta ääninauhasta, näytelmän kuvailutulkkauskäsikirjoituksesta, sekä kuvailutulkkien täyttämästä kyselylomakkeesta, jossa he kertoivat kokemuksistaan ja mielipiteistään kuvailutulkkausprojektista. Tutkimuskysymykseni muodostin keräämäni aineiston pohjalta.

Aineistoani analysoimalla pyrin selvittämään, miten kuvailutulkkauksen luomisessa on käytetty konventionaalisia ja epäkonventionaalisia kuvailutulkkausmetodeja. Analyysini perustuu aineistoesimerkkeihin sekä omiin kokemuksiini ja tietoihini kyseisestä projektista, sekä näiden vertailuun kuvailutulkkausohjeistuksiin. Analyysin avulla pyrin havainnoimaan, miten erilaisia kuvailutulkkausratkaisuja tehtiin, miten päätöksistä keskusteltiin, ja kokivatko kuvailutulkit tekemänsä ratkaisut toimiviksi. Analyysin pohjalta on täten mahdollista pohtia, onko epäkonventionaalisten kuvailutulkkausratkaisujen käyttäminen hyödyllistä, ja voisiko suomalainen teatterikuvailutulkkausyhteistö hyötyä ohjeistusten päivittämisestä ja nykyään epäkonventionaalisiksi luokiteltavien kuvailutulkkausratkaisujen normalisoimisesta ja laajemmasta käyttöönotosta.

Kaikilta aineistossani esiintyviltä henkilöiltä on saatu lupa aineiston keräämiseen ja käyttämiseen tässä pro gradu -tutkielmassa sillä ehdolla, että aineistoesimerkit esitetään anonymisoituina, eikä niitä pysty yhdistämään kyseisiin henkilöisin. Poikkeuksena tähän ovat näytelmän käsikirjoittaja ja ohjaaja sekä kuvailutulkkausopiskelijoita ohjeistanut lehtori, jotka ovat suostuneet nimetyiksi tulemiseen tutkielmassa. Lisäksi projektiin osallistuneet kuvailutulkit halusivat tulla nimetyiksi tutkielmassa. Heidät on täten nimetty tutkielman kiitoksissa, mutta aineistoesimerkeissä heihin viitataan anonymisoiduilla pseudonymeillä, jotka on listattu englanninkielisessä tutkielmassa taulukossa 2. Kaikkea tutkielmaan liittyvää aineistoa on säilytetty salasanasuojauksen takana, eikä ulkopuolisilla henkilöillä ole ollut pääsyä siihen. Kun tutkimusaineistoa ei enää tarvita, se tullaan poistamaan pysyvästi.

Aineistoanalyysi

Kokonaisuudessaan *Fedoriamiin* tuotettu kuvailutulkkaus oli epäkonventionaalinen, sillä se sisälsi jo lähtökohtaisesti useita integroidun kuvailutulkkauksen piirteitä. Kuvailutulke luotiin samanaikaisesti näytelmän kanssa, se sisäänrakennettiin näytelmään yhteistyössä teatteriryhmän kanssa, ja esityksen aikana kuvailutulke esitettiin avoimesti koko yleisölle mikrofonien avulla. Kuvailutulkkeen luominen ja esittäminen epäkonventionaalisesti olivat päätöksiä, jotka tehtiin jo projektin alussa, ja joiden tekemiseen valtaosa kuvailutulkeista ei vaikuttanut, vaan päätökset olivat pääasiallisesti näytelmäkäsikirjoittajan ja yliopistoluennoitsijan tekemä. Lisäksi jo projektin lähtökohdat, joissa kuvailutulketta oli luomassa kuusi yliopisto-opiskelijaa, olivat kuvailutulkkauksen konventoista selkeästi poikkeavat.

Kuvailutulkkeessa ja sen luomisprosesissa oli lisäksi useita muita epäkonventionaalisia piirteitä. Koska kuvailutulketta luotiin samanaikaisesti näytelmäharjoitusten kanssa ja kuvailutulkit tulivat mukaan projektiin jo hyvin varhaisessa vaiheessa, kuvailutulkkeen luomiseen käytettiin lopulta useita kuukausia. Kuvailutulkit osallistuivat näytelmäharjoituksiin keskimäärin kerran viikossa yli neljän kuukauden ajan, minkä lisäksi he pitivät omia ryhmätapaamisia, joissa he hioivat kuvailutulketta. Kaiken kaikkiaan kuvailutulkkeen luomiseen käytettiin mahdollisesti jopa yli 200 työtuntia.

Kuvailutulkkien rooleja projekteissa ei missään vaiheessa määritelty kunnolla, ja projektin aikana kuvailutulkkeja pyydetiin toimimaan muun muassa näyttelijöinä, kuiskaajina, ohjaajina, verkkosivujen päivittäjänä ja kahvinkeittäjinä. Ryhmäkeskusteluissaan kuvailutulkit pohtivat, että teatteriryhmäläisille ei taida olla selvää, mitä kuvailutulkit ovat paikalla tekemässä. Huomioitavaa kuitenkin on, että kuvailutulkit eivät valittaneet teatteriryhmän jäsenille asiasta, vaan toimivat kaikissa pyydetyissä rooleissa näyttelijänroolia lukuun ottamatta.

Kuvailutulkkien tapa lähestyä kuvailutulketta oli konventioista poikkeavasti hyvin *auteur*-keskeistä, eli kuvailutulkit yrittivät sisällyttää ohjaajan vision myös kuvailutulkkeeseen. Käytännössä tämä näkyi niin, että kuvailutulkit tuntuivat hakevan ohjaajan hyväksyntää kuvailutulkkeelle. Ohjaajan lisäksi kuvailutulkit yrittivät usein myös sisällyttää näytelmäkäsikirjoittajan vision tulkkeeseensa. Tämä tuotti toisinaan myös haasteita, kun ohjaajan ja näytelmäkäsikirjoittajan visiot erosivat toisistaan. Lisäksi etenkin ohjaajan visio näytelmästä ja kuvailutulkkauksesta ei projektin ensimmäisten kuukausien aikana ollut kovin vahva, mikä selkeästi heijastui kuvailutulkkien työhön, kun nämä pyrkivät alati mukautumaan vaihtuvaan visioon, ja täten kuvailutulketta uudelleenkirjoitettiin lukuisia kertoja.

Yhteistyö muun teatteriryhmän kanssa oli epäkonventionaalista myös siksi, että myös näyttelijöillä oli mahdollisuus vaikuttaa siihen, mitä ja miten kuvailutulkataan. Osa kuvailutulkeista kommentoikin jälkikäteen, että myös näyttelijät olivat olleet mukana luomassa kuvailutulketta sen sijaan, että se olisi ollut pelkästään kuvailutulkkien luoma. Kuvailutulkkeen harjoitteleminen näytelmäharjoituksissa johti myös siihen, että kuvailutulkit muokkasivat kuvailutulkkeen sisältöä parhaansa mukaan niin, että esimerkiksi hahmojen ulkonäköjä ei kuvailtaisi tavalla, jonka kukaan näyttelijöistä voisi kokea loukkaavana. Tämä päätös johti lopulta siihen, että hahmojen fyysisiä piirteitä, kuten ulkonäköä tai ikää, ei kuvailtu lainkaan, vaan hahmoista kuvailtiin vain näiden käyttämät vaatteet.

Sisällöllisesti kuvailutulke poikkesi konventioista merkittävästi siinä, miten se jätti kokonaan kuvailematta hahmojen ilmeet ja suuren osan näiden elekielestä. Kuvailutulkit itse reflektoivat tätä poisjättöä näytelmän jälkeen saatuaan yleisöpalautetta aiheesta, ja useampi kuvailutulkki kommentoi, ettei ollut edes tajunnut, että ilmeiden kuvailu oli jätetty tulkkeesta pois. Ilmeiden kuvailemisen poisjättö ei täten vaikuttanut intentionaaliselta päätökseltä. Huomioitavaa kuitenkin on, että kuvailutulkit olivat keskustelleet keskenään ilmeiden kuvailusta tapausesimerkin kautta, ja todenneet kyseisessä tapauksessa, että hahmon hymyilyä ei tarvitse kuvailla, sillä sen kuulee hahmon äänestä. On mahdollista, että tämä yksittäistapauksessa tehty päätös jäi alitajuntaisesti kuvailutulkeille mieleen, ja he tämän perusteella päättivät, että mitään ilmeitä ei tarvitse kuvailla. Sisällöllisesti kuvailutulke poikkeaa konventioista myös siinä, että se eksplisiittisesti puhuu teatterin lavasta ja viittaa näytelmän hahmoihin hahmoina useampaan otteeseen, joskin on mahdollista, että nämä viittaukset olivat viime hetkellä käsikirjoitukseen tehtyjä lisäyksiä, joita kuvailutulkit eivät olleet ehtineet harkita pitkään.

Kuvailutulkkeessa ja kuvailutulkkausprosessissa ilmeni kuitenkin myös useita konventionaalisia piirteitä. Näistä selkeimpänä ilmeni kuvailutulkkien useaan kertaan toistamat kommentit siitä, että toisin kuin teatteriryhmäläiset, he tietävät millaista kuvailutulkkeen kuuluu olla. Kuvailutulkeilla selkeästi oli mielessään jonkinlaiset hyvän kuvailutulkkeen raamit, joihin he halusivat oman kuvailutulkkeensa sopivan. Näihin raameihin todennäköisesti vaikutti kuvailutulkeille jaettu *Näkövammaislautakunnan ohjeistus kuvailtulkeille* (FAD 2013).

Konventiot näkyivät selvästi kuvailutulkkeen luomisprosessin aikana tavassa, jolla kuvailutulkit torjuivat ohjaajan ja näytelmäkäsikirjoittajan visioita kuvailutulkkaukselle silloin, kun he kokivat, että visiot eivät olisi konventioiden mukaisia. Kuvailutulkit halusivat muun muassa tehdä selkeän eron lavasteiden ja valaistuksen avulla luotujen illuusioiden sekä varsinaisten tapahtumien välille muun muassa siten, että valaistuksen muutoksista puhuttiin aina valaistuksen muutoksina, eikä esimerkiksi auringonpaisteena, kuten ohjaaja ja näytelmäkäsikirjoittaja olisivat toivoneet. Kuvailutulkit halusivat myös pitää oman roolinsa selkeästi erillään näytelmästä, huolimatta siitä, että kuvailutulke itsessään integroitiin näytelmään. Kuvailutulkit torjuivat näytelmäkäsikirjoittajan esittämän idean siitä, että he toimisivat näytelmän tanssiaiskohtauksen aikana ikään kuin radiojuontajina, jotka voisivat esitellä ja kuvailla sisään kävelevät hahmot myös näytelmänsisäisesti muille hahmoille. Kuvailutulkkien mielestä kuvailutulkkeen integroiminen näin vahvasti osaksi näytelmää olisi ollut hämmentävää.

Kielenkäytöllisesti kuvailutulke oli vahvasti konventioiden mukaista. Kuvailutulkit pyrkivät käyttämään selkeää kieltä ja kokonaisia lauserakenteita. Etenkin persoonapronominien ja hahmojen nimien käyttöä kuvailutulkit pohtivat pitkään, sillä he halusivat tulkkeen kuulostavan luonnolliselta ja välttää mahdolliset sekaannukset. Kuvailutulkit pyrkivät myös välttämään pitkiä kuvauksia, jotta kuvailutulke ei häiritsisi näytelmän rytmiä. Valtaosa kuvailuista onkin vain virkkeen mittaisia.

Kokonaisuudessaan kuvailutulkkausprosessi ja valmis kuvailutulkkaus sisälsi täten sekä konventionaalisia että epäkonventionaalisia piirteitä. Huomioitavaa on, että valtaosa epäkonventionaalisista piirteistä oli sellaisia, joihin kuvailutulkit eivät joko voineet juurikaan vaikuttaa, tai sellaisia, jotka eivät olleet intentionaalisesti tehtyjä valintoja. Kuvailtulkkien *auteur*-painotteinen lähestymistapa tosin on poikkeus tähän, sillä se pysyi vahvana läpi projektin, ja siten tuskin oli vahinko. Konventionaaliset piirteet puolestaan olivat hyvin vahvasti sellaisia, joista kuvailutulkit keskustelivat paljon. Täten kuvailutulkkeessa ja projektissa esiintyvä konventionaalisuus vaikuttaa huomattavasti intentionaalisemmalta kuin projektin epäkonventionaalisuus. Kuvailutulkit selkeästi pyrkivät luomaan konventionaalista kuvailutulkkausta myös tilanteessa, jossa projektin raamit ohjasivat kuvailutulketta epäkonventionaalisempaan suuntaan.

Päätäntö

Tämä tutkimus osoittaa, miten teatterinäytelmän kuvailutulkkausprosessissa voidaan käyttää limittäin sekä konventionaalisia että epäkonventionaalisia kuvailutulkkausmetodeja. Merkittävä huomio on, että sekä kuvailutulkit että kuvailutulketta kuunnellut yleisö koki käytetyt epäkonventionaaliset kuvailutulkkausratkaisut pääosin toimiviksi. Teatterin tuominen osaksi näkövammaisen ihmisen elämää esimerkiksi kuvailutulkkauksen keinoin parantaa tämän elämänlaatua, kuten Ferziger ym. (2020) tutkimus osoitti, ja tätä tulkintaa tukee myös osalta katsojilta saatu palaute siitä, miten kuvailutulke oli näytelmän paras aspekti (Ketola 2020, Teams-call).

Konventionaaliset kuvailutulkkausmetodit eivät analyysin perusteella osoittautuneet selkeästi paremmaksi vaihtoehdoksi, vaikka kuvailutulkit monesti päätyivätkin käyttämään niitä. Tämä tulos nostaa esiin kysymyksen siitä, pitäisikö nykyisiä kuvailutulkkausohjeistuksia päivittää niin, että ohjeistukset kannustaisivat kuvailutulkkeja myös epäkonventionaalisten metodien käyttöön tilanteen niin salliessa. Epäkonventionaalisten metodien standardoiminen voisi rikastuttaa suomalaista kuvailutulkkausalaa, ja etenkin avoimesti esitettävään

kuvailutulkkaukseen siirtyminen nostattaisi kuvailutulkkausta näkyvämpään asemaan, jolloin se todennäköisesti sekä palvelisi useampia asiakkaita että lisäisi tietoisuutta ja mielenkiintoa kuvailutulkkauksen tutkimusta, kehittämistä ja toteuttamista kohtaan. Tämän tutkimuksen pohjalta onkin perusteltua esittää, että suomalaisia kuvailutulkkausohjeita tulisi päivittää.

Tämä tutkimus vahvistaa Udon ja Felsin (2009b) tekemiä huomioita siitä, että aiempi tietoisuus kuvailutulkkauksesta vaikuttaa saavan kuvailutulkin haluamaan tuottaa konventioiden mukaista tulkkausta, kun taas kuvailutulkkauksen vieraus voi synnyttää innovatiivisia ajatuksia siitä, miten kuvailutulkkauksen voisi järjestää. Tämä konventionaalisen ajattelutavan ja uusien innovaatioiden vastakkainasettelu näkyy omassa aineistossani siinä, miten eri tavoin kuvailutulkit ja näytelmän ohjaaja ja käsikirjoittaja suhtautuvat kuvailutulkkeen tarjoamiin mahdollisuuksiin. Samalla tutkimus vahvistaa myös Igaredan ja Matamalan (2012) väitettä siitä, että kuvailutulkkauksen luomisessa kuvailutulkin aiempi kokemus ei ole merkittävän tekijä laadukkaan tulkkeen luomiselle (Igareda & Matamala 2012, 119). Myös Lodge ym. (1994) väite siitä, että kuvailutulkkeen luominen vaati monialaista tietoa ja taitoa, osoittautui todeksi projektin aikana kuvailutulkkien joutuessa joustamaan useisiin erilaisiin rooleihin. Tutkimus myös mukailee Fryerin (2018) esittämää epäkonventionaalisen kuvailutulkkauksen piirteiden lajittelua, sillä lähes jokainen Fryerin yksilöimä aspekti esiintyi kuvailutulkkausprosessissa, ja useimmissa tapauksissa kuvailutulkit kokivat näiden aspektien poikkeavan nykyisistä konventioista. Ottaen huomioon sen, että kuvailutulketta oli tekemässä joukko opiskelijoita, tämä tutkimus myös todentaa Whitfield ja Felsin (2013) väitteen siitä, että kuvailutulkkauksen tekemistä on helppo oppia, ja että kuvailutulkkauksen pystyy sisällyttämään teatterinäytelmään saumattomasti.

Kokonaisuudessaan tämä tutkimus osoittaa, että kuvailutulketta voi tehdä tavalla, joka inkorporoi sekä konventionaalisia että epäkonventionaalisia kuvailutulkkausmetodeja, ja että näistä metodeista mikään ei ole objektiivisesti "se oikea" tapa tuottaa kuvailutulketta. Tutkimus osoittaa myös, että laadukasta ja yleisön arvostamaa kuvailutulketta voivat tuottaa myös sellaiset kuvailutulkit, joilla ei ole aiempaa kokemusta kuvailutulkkauksesta. Kuvailutulkkeen tekemisen oppiminen ei täten vaadi pitkää koulutusta, minkä vuoksi ei pitäisi olla mitään syytä siihen, miksi kuvailutulkkausta ei voisi opettaa kaikille siitä kiinnostuneille. Tämä lisäisi kuvailutulkkauspalvelujen saatavuutta, ja voisi täten parantaa näkövammaisten oikeuksien toteutumista. Tutkimuksen perusteella yleisö myös piti epäkonventionaalisia aspekteja sisältävästä kuvailutulkkeesta, joten on syytä pohtia, pitäisikö nykyisiä kuvailutulkkauksen konventioita laajentaa niin, että kuvailutulkkeja voitaisiin jatkossa kannustaa tuottamaan

kuvailutulkkausta tavalla, joka mahdollisuuksien mukaan tekee kuvailutulkkauksesta näkyvämpää ja nostattaa tietoisuuta sen tarjoamista mahdollisuuksista.

Kuvailutulkkauksen ja etenkin epäkonventionaalisen kuvailutulkkauksen tutkimista kannattaa jatkaa, sillä alaa on toistaiseksi tutkittu suppeasti. Teatterikuvailutulkkausta tutkiessa tutkimusta lienee helpointa toteuttaa yhteistyössä amatööriteatterien kanssa, sillä näiden toimintatavat ovat todennäköisesti joustavampia kuin ammattiteatterien. Ammattiteatterien kanssa yhteistyön tekeminen toki lisäisi kuvailutulkkauksen näkyvyyttä. Mielestäni olisi myös tärkeää, että kuvailutulkkauksen tutkimiseen otettaisiin mukaan myös kuvailutulkkeen käyttäjiä, eli sokeita ja näkövammaisia henkilöitä, sillä heidän innovaationsa kuvailutulkkauksen tarjoamiin mahdollisuuksiin ja erilaisiin käyttötarkoituksiin liittyen voisivat rikastuttaa alaa, ja sen sijaan, että käyttäjät otetaan mukaan vasta valmiin kuvailutulkkauksen arvioimiseen, voisi heidät ottaa mukaan jo kuvailutulkkauksen valmistusprosessiin. Mahdollisia tulevia, relevantteja tutkimuskysymyksiä voisivat olla muun muassa konventionaalisen ja epäkonventionaalisen kuvailutulkkauksen yleisövastaanotto, optimaalisen vaiheen selvittäminen kuvailutulkkauksen integroimiseen näytelmäproduktioon, sekä sen tutkiminen, miten kuvailutulkkien aiempi kokemus vaikuttaa siihen, miten kuvailutulkkauskonventiot näkyvät kuvailutulkkien tuottamassa kuvailutulkkauksessa.