

Audio Description with Audio Subtitling for Dutch Multilingual Films: Manipulating Textual Cohesion on Different Levels

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Article abstract

There is a strong trend towards multilingualism in Flemish and Dutch films today. In order to make such films accessible for a blind and visually impaired audience, the audio description (AD), which supplies the information from the visuals that cannot be accessed by this target audience, must be combined with audio subtitling (AST), for the translation of the dialogue. Today, a wide variety of strategies is used to accomplish this form of textual manipulation, but current practice is largely based on intuition. The present paper reports on the first phase of a research project carried out on four films, in collaboration with the AD scriptwriter and the sound engineer responsible for the recordings of the Dutch films with AD and AST, two of which will be considered here: *Oorlogswinter* (*Winter in Wartime* 2008) and *Tirza* (2010). The project makes use of four films, but due to limits of space we focus on two only, aiming to reply to three questions. First, we look at how the AST is inserted and whether it interacts with the films' foreign language dialogue exchanges. Then we consider whether intonation contributes to the coherence of the text. To conclude, the audio and written subtitles are compared. Finally, suggestions for further research are provided.

Audio Description with Audio Subtitling for Dutch Multilingual Films: Manipulating Textual Cohesion on Different Levels

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RÉSUMÉ

De nos jours, la tendance au multilinguisme est de plus en plus présente dans le cinéma flamand et néerlandais. Pour rendre ce type de productions cinématographiques accessibles aux non-voyants et aux malvoyants, l'audiodescription (AD), qui consiste à fournir au public cible l'information visuelle à laquelle il n'a pas accès, doit être combinée avec un sous-titrage audio (STA) pour la traduction des dialogues. S'ils utilisent un large éventail de stratégies pour accomplir cette forme très spécifique de manipulation textuelle, les praticiens se basent toutefois en grande partie sur leur intuition. Le présent article rend compte de la première phase d'un projet de recherche mené sur un corpus de 4 films, en collaboration avec le rédacteur du script AD et l'ingénieur du son responsables de la bande sonore de ces films néerlandais dont deux constituent le corpus du présent article: *Oorlogswinter* (*Winter in Wartime* 2008) et *Tirza* (2010). Tous deux sont dotés d'une AD et d'un STA. L'article veut répondre aux trois questions de recherche suivantes: comment le sous-titrage audio est-il intégré? Dans quelle mesure interagit-il avec les dialogues en langue étrangère? L'intonation contribue-t-elle à la cohérence textuelle? Durant cette première phase, les sous-titres audio et les sous-titres écrits ont également été comparés. Enfin, de nouvelles pistes de recherche sont proposées.

ABSTRACT

There is a strong trend towards multilingualism in Flemish and Dutch films today. In order to make such films accessible for a blind and visually impaired audience, the audio description (AD), which supplies the information from the visuals that cannot be accessed by this target audience, must be combined with audio subtitling (AST), for the translation of the dialogue. Today, a wide variety of strategies is used to accomplish this form of textual manipulation, but current practice is largely based on intuition. The present paper reports on the first phase of a research project carried out on four films, in collaboration with the AD scriptwriter and the sound engineer responsible for the recordings of the Dutch films with AD and AST, two of which will be considered here: *Oorlogswinter* (*Winter in Wartime* 2008) and *Tirza* (2010). The project makes use of four films, but due to limits of space we focus on two only, aiming to reply to three questions. First, we look at how the AST is inserted and whether it interacts with the films' foreign language dialogue exchanges. Then we consider whether intonation contributes to the coherence of the text. To conclude, the audio and written subtitles are compared. Finally, suggestions for further research are provided.

MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS

audiodescription, sous-titrage audio, multilinguisme, cohérence textuelle, manipulation audio description, audio subtitling, multilingualism, textual coherence, manipulation

1. DVDs with audio description in Flanders and the Netherlands

When Hermans (1985: 12) wrote that “all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose” in his seminal collection of articles entitled *The Manipulation of Literature*, he was not writing about one of the newer additions to the area of audiovisual translations, but he might have been. Audio description (AD) has become a permanent fixture in Europe’s media landscape today and is the standard solution for making audiovisual products accessible for visually impaired audiences. Research into audio description too has taken off in the course of the past decades, even though it is still relatively fragmented and scattered over a limited number of universities and researchers or research groups (Braun 2008). This situation is no different in Flanders and the Netherlands. AD in general is on the rise with new films being described for the cinema each year, while more and more live events are also made accessible through audio description, just like web videos and, starting January 2012, a Flemish television series. However, the number of DVDs with audio description, the type of AD that is the focus of this paper, remains limited, especially when compared to the number of films available with AD on DVD in the UK.¹

One reason for the slower development of AD in countries such as the Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders) may be the fact that they are so-called subtitling countries with a strong import of foreign, especially North American, films. The audio description of foreign language films therefore means combining AD with audio subtitling (AST) in order to make the dialogue accessible. However, of late, both the Dutch and Flemish film industries have been benefitting from an increased public and official interest in native Dutch language films. Indeed, the two countries’ film industries are booming thanks to their governments’ subsidy policies, the marked surge in quality and professionalism of the films, and the increasing popularity of home-made productions. Since Dutch language films are not faced with the additional challenge of combining AD with AST, or so it would seem at first, these home grown productions have become the preferred target for the launch of films with AD. *Blind* (2006) was the very first Dutch feature film to become available on DVD with AD.²

However, Dutch is a minority language, and Dutch/Flemish films therefore have a limited audience. This may be one reason why the trend towards multilingualism in films, which appears to be a European if not global trend (Dwyer 2005), is very marked in Flemish and Dutch cinema today (Vermeulen 2012). Not only does French regularly pop up in Flemish productions, being one of Belgium’s national languages, also other European languages are regularly spoken in both Flemish and Dutch films. This language mix may be felt to increase the international character of the films and improve their chances on the international market. Whatever the case may be, in so far as accessibility is concerned, this state of affairs reintroduces the need to combine AD with AST – as confirmed by the Dutch films that are the object of this investigation.

Indeed, the second film ever to be produced with AD in the Netherlands was *Zwartboek* (2006; English version: *Black Book* 2006),³ a World War II epic that takes place in the Netherlands (Remael and Vercauteren 2010). Its main language is Dutch, but the film also contains a few scenes in German. When the AD for *Zwartboek* was produced in 2007, the commissioners decided not to combine the AD with AST. Eventually, the audio described film was well-received by the Dutch visually impaired audience, the only criticism being that no translation was offered of the German

dialogues (van de Heijden 2011).⁴ With this in mind, all subsequent Dutch multilingual productions have been, and no doubt will be, provided with AST if they are audio described.

2. The combination of AD with AST, corpus and research questions

Braun and Orero (2010) summarize the challenges faced by this combined form of media accessibility, which requires a considerable amount of textual manipulation on different levels. First, they mention the “differences between visual and verbal meaning-making and between written and spoken language” (Braun and Orero 2010: 175). Indeed, AST relies on the written subtitles provided with a film and subtitles “often greatly reduce the source-text message, relying on the recipients’ ability to use visual input” (Braun and Orero 2010: 176). In addition, subtitling takes on some of the features of writing; in fact, it is a hybrid form that holds the middle between the two linguistic modes (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007). AST is a different variant, but equally hybrid: the film dialogue, written to be spoken, then summarized and rewritten to be read as subtitles by the audience, now have to be read out loud again as *audio* subtitles. In addition, the AD, which normally relies on the film dialogue to fill in some of the information gaps in the description when selecting the content to be described (Vercauteren 2010;⁵ 2012), must be made to interact with the AST instead, which might “‘deprive’ the AD of some of its anchorage” (Braun and Orero 2010: 176).

Furthermore, the foreign language dialogue exchanges may contain cultural references that need to be explained for the new target audience. This, too, needs to be covered by the AD plus AST combination. According to the two authors, “[A]ll of this necessitates adaptations either in the ASTs (compared with the written subtitles) or in the AD (compared with the AD in non-subtitled films), or in both” (Braun and Orero 2010: 176). With reference to technical issues, the authors highlight the importance of sound mixing and volume adjustment for productions combining so many different sound tracks. Other issues to be considered are “the number of voice talents to be used, their age and gender in relation to the film characters, and the question of whether the original dialogue, albeit incomprehensible, should be audible” (Braun and Orero 2010: 176). In addition, there is the way in which the AST is delivered (Braun and Orero 2010: 177). The study by Braun and Orero (2010) analyses 14 rather heterogeneous bilingual and multilingual productions available on DVD in terms of numbers of speakers, languages and genre. Their findings show that a wide variety of manipulative strategies is used in order to ensure that the purpose of the AD with AST combination, making the target text fully accessible, is achieved. They also demonstrate that current practice is largely based on intuition, presenting many weaknesses and inconsistencies.

The present research aims to reinvestigate some of the issues detailed above in a more limited but also more homogeneous corpus of Dutch films, in collaboration with one of the AD scriptwriters and subtitlers involved in the productions and the sound studio responsible for the recordings (see Acknowledgements). The corpus consists of three fictional dramas that are Dutch multilingual productions in which Dutch native speakers dominate: *Oorlogswinter* (2008; English version: *Winter in Wartime* 2008),⁶ *Tirza* (2010)⁷ and *Bride Flight* (2008).⁸ Due to limitations of space,

the present article focuses on the two first ones, available as commercial DVDs, *Oorlogswinter* and *Bride Flight*. The latter, *Bride Flight*, will not be considered at present. This film was the first to be provided with AD and AST, and the one that uses voice actors for the AD and AST rather than the voices of the actors themselves. The linguistic make-up of *Bride Flight* and its translated solution is also less complex than that of the other two films, which is why it has been omitted here.

What makes the corpus especially interesting is the AD writer's and producer's awareness of the challenges detailed by Braun and Orero (2010) and their conscious attempts to try out different methods especially in terms of recording, manipulating the voices used for the AST and the delivery of the AST with AD. Moreover, the three films have an interesting feature in common: some of the Dutch actors also speak the foreign language(s) of the films, which allowed the described version to use their voices for the Dutch AST. Whether this increases textual cohesion or causes confusion remains to be seen. In none of the films was the AST text created especially for the audio version. The interlingual subtitles had been commissioned before the decision was made to audio describe the films. Still, as the analysis will show, the subtitles were also manipulated to different degrees in the course of the AD/AST production process. At a later stage, the aim of this research project is to make new recordings of scenes revealed to be potentially challenging for the target audience and to use them for reception research.

Oorlogswinter, an adaptation of the eponymous Dutch children's book by Jan Terlouw (1982),⁹ takes place during the last year of World War II in a small town in the Netherlands, where protagonist Michiel van Beusekom, a 14-year-old boy, lives with his father Johan, the mayor of the town, his mother Lia and older sister, Erica. Michiel's uncle, Ben, unexpectedly comes to visit them and stays with the family for a prolonged period. The boy looks up to his uncle, who is supposedly a member of the resistance, whereas he later turns out to be a collaborator. During his uncle's stay, Michiel himself gets involved with the resistance, more or less accidentally. He ends up taking care of Jack, an English pilot who has been shot down and is now hiding in the woods near the town. The story mixes adventure with coming of age themes as Michiel's war experiences speed up his transition from childhood to adulthood.

Tirza is a family drama. As the film opens, its emotionally unstable protagonist Jörgen Hofmeester has just lost his job, is harassed by his ex-wife Alma and worried about his favourite daughter, Tirza, who has left for Namibia with her boyfriend Choukri but has not given a sign of life for weeks. When he decides to go and find her, he embarks on a journey that will end in a brutal confrontation with his other self: he is a psychopath and the murderer of Tirza as well as her boyfriend, whose bodies the police find in the back yard of Jörgen's summer house. Both Jörgen's *present* and the story of his physical journey through Namibia are punctuated with the story of his mental journey into memories of past events and incidents. In some scenes the borderline between what is real and what is relived memory becomes blurred. Jörgen's realization of what he has done comes while he is still in Namibia, about the same time as the police find the bodies of Tirza and Choukri, and he receives a phone call to this effect from his ex-wife in the Netherlands. On his African journey Jörgen is accompanied by Kaisa, a young Namibian girl from the slums, the place where he will eventually die in mysterious circumstances. On his mental journey into darkness, Jörgen is alone.

Both films tell fairly complex stories involving numerous characters, often in different stages of their lives, but *Tirza* also mixes reality and delusion. The purpose of the audio described productions, i.e., to allow their target audiences to reconstruct the stories achieving a kind of “dynamic equivalence” or “equivalent effect” (Nida 1964), is therefore ambitious. The focus of the analysis will be on three key issues:

- How is the AST inserted and how does it interact with the films’ foreign language dialogue exchanges?
- Does the manipulation of intonation contribute to the coherence of the text?
- Are the written subtitles manipulated for the spoken version?

In addition, it aims to identify potentially problematic scenes and/or recording techniques to be used in subsequent reception research.

3. *Oorlogswinter*

Oorlogswinter combines AD with AST in those scenes where either German or English is spoken. The English pilot, Jack, obviously speaks English, and the German soldiers speak German, but Michiel as well as other Dutch characters occasionally resort to English or German too, with varying degrees of success. This leads to a situation that is not uncommon in Dutch films where English/German spoken by a Dutch character is retranslated in Dutch subtitles, and in this case, Dutch AST.

For the AST of *Oorlogswinter*, the voices of the major Dutch actors were used: the young protagonist, Michiel (Martijn Lakemeier), his sister, Erica (Melody Klaver), his father, Johan (Raymond Thiry) and his mother, Lia (Anneke Blok). The English pilot’s Dutch voice is that of voice actor Mark van Eeuwen, and the AD is read by Ilari Hoevenaars, who also impersonates some of the AST’s of the minor characters. He thereby alternates with Mark van Eeuwen, depending on who is speaking to whom. This means that in some scenes Michiel, for instance, can be heard speaking English briefly, after which his English voice is silenced by himself reading the Dutch AST. The same happens when Erica, who becomes his accomplice, speaks English to Jack, and when his father or mother speak German to soldiers from the occupying forces.

3.1. *How is the AST inserted and how does it interact with the films’ foreign language dialogue exchanges?*

The recording method used in *Oorlogswinter* is similar to that of voiceover (see Franco, Matamala *et al.* 2010), where the original voices are heard for about half a second after which they are *subdued* by the Dutch voice of the AST. In this way the recording method of the AST differs from that of *Tirza* where the aim of the recording is to cover up the entire dialogue or at least to start in synchrony with each turn. In both films the German and English remain audible underneath and after the AST, to varying degrees. The AD in *Oorlogswinter* consistently announces who is present in a given scene, who moves about a given space or room while speaking, or who enters/leaves a room. Facial expressions and body movement form part of talk in interaction (Psathas 1995) and the AD renders this conversational feature where it is required to improve cohesion between the different aural information channels. An analysis of the first scene with AD, a fairly simple and slow-paced one, will serve as an example.

This first scene (Example 1), which takes place in the town's city hall (occupied by the Germans), features a brief conversation between German commander Auer, Johan and Michiel. It takes place after the boy has been apprehended near the crash site of the British fighter jet. Michiel and Auer are already in the commander's office when Johan arrives.

The exchange is mostly in German, with a few lines in Dutch. Virtually all the German is blocked out by the Dutch AST, remaining audible only as a kind of echo underneath. The purpose of this, says sound technician Mereijn van der Heijden, is to indicate that a foreign language is spoken. Given the historical background of the story, it should be obvious enough that this language is German, but it can also be identified now and again due to the way in which the voices are manipulated. Johan addresses the commander in German, and the form of address he uses (Herr Auer) is repeated in German in the AST by Raymond Thiry, the Dutch actor playing Johan, who doubles up as voice actor in the Dutch AST. In addition, some of Auer's German remains audible and comprehensible in the beginning of both his longer exchanges, which are then rendered in Dutch by Mark van Eeuwen, one of the two male voice actors, while Ilari Hoevenaars reads the AD. In the turn saying, Wir haben/We hebben deze jongen bij het vliegtuig opgepakt [**Wir haben/We have caught...**] and Er war/Hij was niet alleen [**Er war/He was...**], the Dutch commences after the German verbs **haben** [to have] and **war** [was].

- (1) AD (bold), AST (underlined), comments (in parentheses) – Dutch (italics), German (roman), our English gloss (in brackets)

De deur gaat open.

[The door opens.]

German soldier: Herr

Mijnheer van Beusekom

[.../Mister van Beusekom]

(German audible underneath only, this remains the same for the rest of the scene)

Michiel's vader Johan, komt binnen. Auer staat op.

[Michiel's father, Johan comes in. Auer gets up.]

Auer: *Mijnheer van Beusekom*

Johan: Herr Auer

Hoe gaat het?

[.../How are you?]

(the AST retains the German form of address)

Auer: *Goed. Gaat u zitten.*

[Fine. Do sit down.]

Wir haben

We hebben deze jongen bij het vliegtuig opgepakt.

[.../We have apprehended this boy near the plane.]

Van een burgemeesterszoon verwacht ik betere manieren.

[I expect a mayor's son to have better manners.]

Johan: *U heeft gelijk. Het zal nooit meer gebeuren.*

[You are right. It won't ever happen again.]

Johan: Michiel?

Hij kijkt z'n vader strak aan.

[He looks his father in the eye.]

Johan: Michiel!

De jongen geeft een stug knikje.

[The boy nods curtly.]

Auer: Er war

Hij was niet alleen.

[.../He was not alone.]

Wie was die andere jongen?

[Who was the other boy?]

Michiel: *Ik was alleen.*

[I was alone.]

(in Dutch)

Johan: *Hij zei dat ie alleen was.*

[He said that he was alone.]

(Oorlogswinter 2008)

One of the best examples of the way in which the AST uses the characters' English and Dutch voices occurs in the scene where Lia, Michiel's mother, goes to the city hall to try and talk to her husband, who has been arrested by the Germans. It is also a very dramatic and emotional scene in which intonation plays a major role (see 3.2).

During the conversation in German between Lia and a soldier, the AST allows the German to be heard before and sometimes in between the Dutch voices, as indicated in parenthesis in Example 2. The audible German words are also translated, that is, repeated in Dutch AST in which they are embedded (AST underlined), even though they should constitute no problem for a Dutch audience. The mixture and manipulation of Dutch and German in the recording sounds natural because it is the same actress who is speaking both languages. In the present example, this may also work because the exchanges are repetitive and the scene predictable to some extent. This is no doubt why the confused shouting match at the very end is no longer subtitled. Here the soundtrack can do the job. Moreover, the AD that rounds off the scene (*Ze wordt omringd door drie soldaten* [*She is surrounded by three soldiers*]), contributes to explaining the cacophony of voices on the soundtrack, demonstrating, again, the importance of AD-AST interaction:

- (2) AD (bold), AST (underlined), comments (in parentheses) – Dutch (italics), German (roman), our English gloss (in brackets)

Buiten. Moeder en Michiel haasten zich door het dorp. Met een mand vol spullen rennen ze door de sneeuw naar het gemeentehuis. Een vlag met hakenkruis wappert in de wind. Onwillekeurig pakt Michiel de hand van zijn moeder vast. Bij de deur houdt Lia hem tegen en fatsoeneert zijn haar.

[Outside. Mother and Michiel are running through the village. Carrying a basket full of stuff they run through the snow to the city hall. A flag with a swastika is flapping in the wind. Intuitively Michiel grabs his mother's hand. At the door, Lia slows him down and tidies his hair.]

Lia: *Beleefd blijven Michiel. Daarmee kom je 't verst.*
[Do remain polite Michiel. That always works out best.]

Lia klopt op de deur. De soldaat die open doet, knikt hen beleefd toe.
[Lia knocks on the door. The soldier who answers it, nods at them politely.]

Lia: *Goedemorgen, ik (möchte) zou graag (bitte) mijn echtgenoot willen spreken. Van Beusekom.*
[Good morning, I (would like) would like to (please) talk to my husband. Van Beusekom]

(a few German words come through in the middle of her sentence.)

Soldier: *Es tut mir leid/Het spijt me, ik kan u niet toelaten.*
[.../I'm sorry, I can't let you in.]

Lia: *Maar ik heb (Kleider) kleding en eten bij me.*
[But I have (clothes) clothes and food with me.]

Soldier: *Dank u wel. Ik zal ervoor zorgen...*
[Thank you. I will make sure...]

(German only audible underneath)

Lia: *Nee, dat wil ik hem zelf geven.*
[No, I want to give it to him myself.]

(German underneath)

Alstublieft.
[Please.]

Soldier: *Es tut mir leid/Het spijt me. Ik mag u echt niet binnenlaten.*
[.../I am sorry, I really can't let you in.]

(German underneath)

Ineens duwt Lia de soldaat aan de kant en schiet naar binnen.
[Suddenly, Lia pushes the soldier to one side and rushes inside.]

Soldier: *Halt! Blijf staan!*
[Halt! Stand still!]

Other soldiers: *Stehen bleiben!*
[Stand still!]

(in German)

Lia: *Ik moet mijn man zien. Ik wil hem alleen maar even zien.*
[I must see my husband. I only want to see him briefly.]

(This is followed by an emotional shouting match half in German half in Dutch between Lia and a few soldiers who try to calm her down.)

Ze wordt omringd door drie soldaten.
[She is surrounded by three soldiers].

(Oorlogswinter 2008)

Radically substituting the German dialogues with Dutch AST, removing all the German exchanges, might have made for greater clarity than the manipulated voiceover mix used at present, but it might complicate identifying the speakers. This can certainly be expected to be the case in scenes involving only male or only female voices. Moreover, it would mean paring down the number of voices telling the story of the film and detracting from the realism of the scene. The extent to which the present multiplication of languages, using the original actors' voices whenever possible and mixing them with snippets of original dialogue, works for a visually impaired audience, needs to be tested for different types of scenes.

3.2. Does the manipulation of intonation contribute to the coherence of the text?

The intonation used in the AST contributes greatly to character identification and to setting the mood of the scene, whereas the AD ‘narrates’ more than it ‘describes.’ Its narrative tone certainly plays a part in illuminating complex scenes, as will be demonstrated shortly.

In Example 1 above, it is not only the bits of German that help to identify the speaker or the person addressed. The tone of voice a particular character uses is also revealing. In this brief scene, the soldier announcing Johan’s arrival shouts both in the German and in the Dutch versions, the German officer sounds very stern when discussing the boy’s behaviour but is much more friendly when welcoming his father. Johan often takes on a conciliatory role in the conflicts between the Germans and members of his community, and his tone is indeed conciliatory when he addresses the commander, also in the AST.

Likewise, in the scene quoted in Example 2, the AST makes good use of intonation when rendering the confrontation between Lia and the Germans, who refuse to give her access to her husband. However, the most striking example of the manipulation of intonation combined with sound recording aiming to maintain filmic realism and credibility occurs in a scene where Michiel and his uncle Ben are listening to the BBC radio (Example 3). This scene exemplifies the attempts of the AD and AST to make use of narratively functional intonation, the careful interaction between English and Dutch and an attempt at juggling an explicit reference to the foreign language that is, in effect, suppressed.

Firstly, the AD identifies the presence of a radio in the room, linking up the current scene with the previous one, in which Michiel discovers a makeshift radio in Ben’s suitcase. This is confirmed by the whistling sound of the ill-tuned set. Once the noise subsides, an English speaker takes over, but the English is barely audible and the Dutch AST soon comes in, voiceover style, mimicking the radio voice’s intonation and voice quality. The translation stops when the English voice on the radio fades away and the narratively functional part of the broadcast, information on the advances of the Russian forces, has been reported.

- (3) AD (bold), AST (underlined), subtitles (underlined twice) – Dutch (italics), English (roman), our English gloss (in brackets)

Het vreemde apparaat is een radio. Michiel en Oom Ben luisteren.

[The strange piece of equipment is a radio set. Michiel and Uncle Ben are listening to it.]

Ben: *En hoe is het op school?*
[How’s school?]

Michiel: *Die is gesloten.*
[It’s closed.]

Radio voice: Stalin announced on the radio today that this is to be the final offensive of the war.

Stalin zei vandaag op de Russische radio dat dit de laatste aanval wordt.

Stalin zei vandaag op de Russische radio dat dit de laatste aanval wordt.

- [Stalin said today on the Russian radio that this is to be the final offensive.]
 (AST and subtitles for radio voice; 'Russian' has been added, 'of the war' has been deleted)
- Radio voice: The war is not over yet, he warned.
De oorlog is nog niet voorbij, waarschuwde hij.
De oorlog is nog niet voorbij, waarschuwde hij.
 (AST and subtitles for radio voice)
- Radio voice: But tonight our soldiers have entered the lair of the beast.
Maar vanavond zitten onze soldaten in het hol van de leeuw/the lair of the beast.
Maar vanavond zitten onze soldaten in het hol van de leeuw - the lair of the beast.
 [But tonight our soldiers are in the lion's den/...]
 (AST and subtitles for radio voice)
- Michiel: The what?
- Ben: The lair of the beast. *Het hol van de leeuw.*
 (no subtitles)

(*Oorlogswinter* 2008)

The last turn of the radio broadcast warrants an additional comment. The expression *the lair of the beast* is no longer in italics in the written subtitle, whereas the rest of the subtitled broadcast is, and after the AST voice has said *in het hol van de leeuw* [*in the lion's den*], the English *the lair of the beast* remains audible. Both subtitle modes thus draw attention to the expression in their own ways because Michiel, who is listening to the broadcast with his uncle, does not understand the expression, and asks Ben: *The what?*, after which Ben explains, repeating the English and translating it into Dutch once again.

3.3. Are the written subtitles manipulated for the spoken version?

In *Oorlogswinter*, the AST is usually identical to the subtitling that appears on screen, with the understanding that the AST also relies to some extent on the German or English that remains audible. Still, in a few instances the audio version deviates from the written subtitles. Only a few types of changes occur. The AST remains closer to the intonation or stress pattern of the spoken dialogue as reflected in the sentence structure, and/or aims to increase narrative cohesion.

In Example 4, Michiel is talking to Jack in his hideout in the woods. A few issues merit attention. Firstly, the initial short exchange between Michiel and Jack is not rendered in the AST, even though it is subtitled. This may be because the AD is too fast, but such non-translation of short exchanges or words that the audience is expected to understand often remain untranslated. Secondly, in Jack's turn, Als jij je mond niet houdt [*If you don't keep your mouth shut*], the unstressed personal pronoun *je* of the written subtitle Als je je mond niet houdt is replaced by its stressed variant. Jij may sound better than the two subsequent je forms, but it also remains closer to the stress and intonation of the spoken version, uttered in anger. Once again, this type of change recurs regularly throughout the film. Thirdly, and finally, Michiel's turn De Duitsers bij de pont gaan thee drinken. Elke dag, om drie uur [*The Germans*

by the ferry go and drink tea. Every day, at three o'clock] deviates from the written subtitle, *De Duitsers bij de pont drinken altijd om drie uur thee* [*The Germans by the ferry always drink tea at three o'clock*], and imitates the structure of the original English-Dutch dialogue spoken by Michiel (*The Duitsers by the pont go drink tea. Every day, at three o'clock*).

- (4) AD (bold italics), AST (underlined italics) and subtitles (double-underlined) – Dutch (italics), English (roman), our English gloss (in brackets)

Michiel heeft een spel kaarten in zijn hand en rookt een sigaret. De gewonde Jack ook. Jack gaat verzitten.

[Michiel is holding a book of cards. He is smoking a cigarette. So is Jack. He shifts his legs.]

Michiel: Okay?

Gaat het?

(no AST, subtitle)

Jack: Yeah, yeah.

Ja hoor.

(no AST, subtitle)

Michiel: Why do you want to go to Zwolle?

Waarom wil je naar Zwolle?

Waarom wil je naar Zwolle?

[Why do you want to go to Zwolle?]

(AST, subtitle)

Jack: I have a/*Daar zit iemand die me terug kan brengen naar Engeland.*

Daar zit iemand die me terug kan brengennaar Engeland.

[.../There is someone there who can take me back to England.]

(AST, subtitle)

Michiel: Maybe I can help.

Misschien kan ik helpen.

Misschien kan ik helpen.

[Maybe I can help.]

(AST, subtitle)

Jack: If you don't keep your mouth shut.

Als jij je mond niet houdt...

Als je mond niet houdt...

[If you don't keep your mouth shut...]

(AST with emphatic *jij*, subtitles with neutral *je*)

Michiel: Yeah, then you'll break my legs.

Ja, dan breek je m'n benen.

Ja, dan breek je m'n benen.

[Yeah, then you'll break my legs.]

(AST, subtitles)

Jack is onder de indruk. Michiel stopt zijn sigaret in z'n mond en herschikt de kaarten in zijn hand. Het zijn allemaal getekende pin-ups girls.

[Jack is impressed. Michiel puts his cigarette between his lips and reshuffles the cards in his hands. They all have drawings of pin-ups on the back.]

Michiel: I know/*Ik weet hoe je naar Zwolle kan.*
Ik weet hoe je naar Zwolle kan.

[.../I know how you can get to Zwolle.]

(AST, subtitle)

Jack luistert.

[Jack listens.]

Michiel: The Duitsers by the pont [sic] go drink tea. Every day, at three o'clock.

De Duitsers bij de pont gaan thee drinken. Elke dag, om drie uur.

De Duitsers bij de pont drinken altijd om drie uur thee.

(AST, subtitle)

[The Germans by the ferry go and drink tea. Every day, at three o'clock.]

Jack: So?

Dus?

(no AST, subtitle)

Michiel: Then we can cross the river in the pont.

Dan kunnen wij met de pont de rivier oversteken.

Dan kunnen wij met de ferry de rivier oversteken.

[Then we can cross the river in the ferry.]

(AST, subtitle)

Jack glimlacht.

[Jack smiles.]

(*Oorlogswinter* 2008)

Exactly the same happens in an earlier scene involving Michiel and Jack. In this scene Jack notices that Michiel is wearing the watch that used to belong to the co-pilot who died in the plane crash, and he asks, *How did you get that? The watch?*. The subtitle reads, *Hoe kom je aan dat horloge?* [*How did you get that watch?*], whereas the AST says, *Hoe kom je d'r aan? Dat horloge?* [*How did you get it? That watch?*]

Since the subtitles were not rewritten for the spoken version, these changes all happened during the recording stage. The actors listen to the English first and sometimes adapt the Dutch subtitle if the rephrased version sounds more natural to them. In some cases this means a return to the film dialogues. The AD with the AST version of *Oorlogswinter* makes serious efforts to respect the different voices of the characters, both through intonation and occasional reformulations. All the same, AST especially written to be spoken would be able to adapt much more; whether such a rewritten version would function better remains to be tested.

4. *Tirza*

In terms of language use, *Tirza* consists of two parts that are determined by the locations of the film. In the scenes that take place in the Netherlands everyone speaks Dutch, that is to say in the scenes that precede the journey to Namibia, in the flashbacks Jörgen has while he is on the road, and in scenes representing his thoughts about past events in Holland throughout the film. In the Namibian scenes, Jörgen is the only native speaker of Dutch. Consequently, all the characters, including Jörgen, normally speak English and are translated into Dutch by AST. There are two exceptions: Jörgen's occasional telephone conversations in Dutch with his ex-wife, and his conversations with Kaisa and a hotel bartender.

What makes *Tirza* different from *Oorlogswinter* is that Jörgen is the only Dutch person in the Namibian environment. In *Oorlogswinter*, the entire context of the film is Dutch, since the German soldiers are invaders and Jack, the English soldier, is also on foreign territory. In other words, the English or German exchanges are translated into Dutch by the AST, the Dutch translation ends up in its 'natural' environment. This is different in the Namibian scenes of *Tirza*. It is the Dutch protagonist who is in a foreign land, both literally and figuratively. It is therefore 'realistic' that he should speak English in Namibia, and in a subtitling country – which the Netherlands is – English is what the audience would expect to hear, while reading the subtitles. The spoken subtitles, however, take the film one step closer to another type of manipulative translation, a dubbed production, in which one language is heard in the 'natural' environment of another. This is why the producers of the AD and AST for *Tirza* opted for a recording method that was closer to dubbing than in *Oorlogswinter* (2011).⁴

The subtitles for *Tirza* were, again, delivered ready-made to SoundFocus. However, Nevero, the company responsible for the AD script, edited them to some extent, mainly with a view to improving the subtitles themselves, while some changes were made during recording (Susanne Verberk and Mereijn van der Heijden 2011; see note 4).⁴ The AD is read by one male voice (Thom Hoffman), whereas the lead actor Gijs Scholten van Aschat voices the AST for the protagonist, Jörgen. In addition, one voice actress reads the Dutch subtitles for the young girl, Kaisa (Kenzy Bean); one male voice (Ilari Hoevenaars) vocalizes the translations for all the other men, and one female voice (Saskia Krol) does the same for all the other women.

A major challenge for the AD is to help the visually impaired viewer make sense of the many scenes in which present and past, reality and fantasy or delusion are mixed, as Jörgen's mind often dictates the action within and across scenes. However, this specific problem merits a separate study and is outside the scope of the present paper.

4.1. How is the AST inserted and does it interact with the films' foreign language dialogue exchanges?

No textual cohesion breakdowns between AD, AST and the film narrative as a whole were observed, only minor glitches in credibility due to the voice used for the Namibian girl Kaisa, which will be discussed in the section dealing with intonation.

The analysis of the AD with AST shows that *Tirza* tries to edge a step closer to dubbing in the way its AST has been recorded. However, it does not manage to be consistent across the board. The recording is closer to dubbing than that of *Oorlogswinter* in that the AST starts immediately, over the first word the characters utter. Consequently, the AST covers up the film dialogue entirely in short, often formalized exchanges, such as encounters with an employee, with only the ubiquitous faint echo of the English remaining audible (but not intelligible) underneath, as was also the case in *Oorlogswinter*. However, this tactic does not always work well in longer exchanges or in complex conversations that are emotionally charged. In such exchanges, the subtitles appear to have been adapted to cover up a good portion of the English, but the audible language mix in these instances could remain distracting because the manipulation of the text draws too much attention to itself. Since this

issue is also linked to the way in which voices and intonation are managed, such complex emotional scenes will be dealt with in section 4.3, which looks into the adaptation of the subtitles.

The ‘dubbing tactic’ works well in the short exchange between Jörgen and the taxi driver who takes him to a hotel from the airport (Example 5). In this exchange, and similar ones, the Dutch of the AST is loud and clear, the English is barely noticeable (not transcribed below; gloss in parenthesis):

- (5) AST only (underlined) – Dutch (italics), our English gloss (in brackets)

Taxi driver: Gaat u op safari?

[Are you going on a safari?]

Jörgen: Nee, ik ben hier voor m’n dochter.

[No, I’m here for my daughter.]

Taxi driver: U gaat niet naar ‘t congres?

[You are not going to the conference?]

Jörgen: Nee, naar ‘n hotel.

[No, to a hotel.]

Taxi driver: Goed, baas.

[Fine, boss.]

Welk hotel?

[Which hotel?]

Jörgen: Het beste. En noem me geen ‘baas.’

[The best. And don’t call me ‘boss.’]

Zet me maar af bij het Hilton.

[Just drop me off at the Hilton.]

Taxi driver: Het Hilton?

[The Hilton?]

Dat heb je hier niet.

[There isn’t one here.]

(Tirza 2010)

However, this tactic no longer works, or the AST has had to be organized differently, in conversations with longer or more complex turns. The Dutch subtitles are then usually shorter than the underlying dialogues, and as a result parts of English sentences can be heard, mostly after or in between the Dutch AST, sometimes even before. In such instances the sound of the English returns to normal volume in *Tirza*, ensuring that the words surfacing from under the Dutch are audible and intelligible. Three types of utterances can be distinguished: short conversational markers, sentences or expressions that are close to Dutch and are partially covered by the Dutch version, and complete Dutch sentences or phrases that repeat the English or are repeated by it. In this case, the proximity of the two utterances introduces a form of redundancy in the dialogues, with the English and Dutch confirming each other, as occurred occasionally in *Oorlogswinter* (see Example 2).

In Example 6a below, from a scene in which Jörgen is being driven across town in a van, the English sentence of the spoken dialogue starts with a conversation marker and it is obviously longer than the Dutch sentence of the AST. In fact, the merger of the two languages is effected in such a way that the Dutch sentence completes the

English one. Exactly the same happens in Example 6b, an excerpt from a conversation between Jörgen and Kaisa:

(6a) AST (underlined) – Dutch (italics), English (roman), our English gloss (in brackets)

Jörgen: Ho ho ho! Hey! Can you drive a little bit more carefully please?
Ho ho, ho, hey! Can you drive a little bit/Kan het wat rustiger?
 [.../Can you drive more carefully?]

(6b) AST (underlined)

Jörgen: You mean outside, there? You want to sleep outside?
You mean outside/Bedoel je slapen in de open lucht?
 [.../You mean sleeping in the open air?]
Wil je dat echt?
 [Do you really want that?]

(Tirza 2010)

In both of the following Examples 7a and 7b, a complete English phrase or sentence and the Dutch one from the AST double up. In the first conversation a hotel receptionist addresses Jörgen, in the second Jörgen addresses Kaisa, for whom he has just bought a purse:

(7a) AST (underlined) – Dutch (italics), English (roman), our English gloss (in brackets)

Receptionist: Please fill this in and I'll get someone to show you your room.
Vult u dit alstublieft in dan haal ik iemand die u uw kamer wijst./
 [Please fill this in and I'll get someone to show you to your room.]

(7b) AST (underlined)

Jörgen: Put your money in there. Put your money in there.
Stop je geld daar maar in.
 [Put your money in there.]

(only once in Dutch, covers the second English sentence)

(Tirza 2010)

In all of the above examples, the Dutch is shorter than the dialogue due to its typical subtitling style, which abbreviates utterances or gets rid of repetitions in order to ensure the subtitles comply with reading speed requirements and space limitations. However, the AST has been inserted carefully and the two languages merely confirm each other's message. In *Tirza* the AD and AST experiment with this tactic quite actively even in longer and complex scenes, which will be considered presently.

Two languages remain untranslated in the AST in addition to a few narratively irrelevant exchanges in French and English in an airport scene that are not translated in the subtitles either. The first is the African language spoken by the Namibians and the second is the Arabic spoken in one very brief scene in which Choukri reads to Tirza from *1001 Nights*. Minor Namibian characters sometimes mix English with their native language, when they address Jörgen, for instance, and in those cases only the English is translated. The audience understands whatever the character understands, and the information that the viewing audience deduces from the images (e.g., the visible anger of a street vendor that explains why he starts shouting), is conveyed to the visually impaired viewers by the AD. In this way cohesion is maintained, even

though neither the European characters, nor the European audience, viewing or visually impaired, understand what the Africans are actually saying.¹⁰ In one scene, when Jörgen and Kaisa are staying in a bungalow park, Kaisa acts as an interpreter since the man behind the reception desk does not speak any English. Her short rewordings of the man's utterances are translated by the AST in one case (*kinderbedje* [*child's bed*]) and retained in English in the other (*bed, bed on the roof*), allowing Kaisa's broken English to shine through just once, even though the subtitles provide a Dutch translation. The short passage in Arabic occurs at a birthday party in Tirza's honour. Choukri is reading out loud and is subtitled (Example 8).

- (8) Subtitle (underlined twice) – Dutch (italics), our English gloss (in brackets)

Choukri: *Sheherazade wendde zich tot Sultan Sjahiar en vroeg:*
[Sheherazade turned to Sultan Sjahiar and asked:]

(Tirza 2010)

At that point, Choukri is interrupted quite abruptly by Jörgen whose racist attitude towards Arabs is obsessive – and the story moves on.¹¹

However, the mix and manipulation of language, or rather voice, that is most specific to the present film is that for which Jörgen is responsible. As a rule, he speaks Dutch to the Dutch characters in the film and English to the Namibian characters, including Kaisa. However, in some scenes with Kaisa, Jörgen uses the little girl as a sounding board. A conversation about mundane things, in English, drifts into long diatribes in which he expounds his views on mostly sex-related topics, or recalls events from his past, related to his finances, Tirza and/or his ex-wife Alma. Kaisa can do nothing but sit and listen, and the AD duly places her as a presence in all of these scenes, indicating that she is puzzled by Jörgen's words and behaviour, but also making clear that he is talking to himself as much as to her, in a kind of monologue, and that no response is expected. The scene below provides one example. Jörgen and Kaisa are walking around among the bungalows of the hotel at which they are staying. They are lost. In Example 9, the Dutch turns that are not italicized belong to the film dialogue and are spoken by Jörgen as a film character, the remaining text is also spoken by him, but in English and is covered up by the Dutch AST (underlined) with his own voice:

- (9) AD (bold), AST (underlined) – Dutch (italics), English (roman), our English gloss (in brackets)

Jörgen loopt met Kaisa op zijn rug over het stenen pad tussen de hutjes. Hij blijft staan en kijkt rond.

[Jörgen walks around with Kaisa on his back along the stone path between the huts. He stops and looks around].

[...]

Hij houdt een fles sterkedrank vast.

[He is holding a bottle of liquor].

[...]

Jörgen wankelt verder terwijl hij zoekend rondkijkt.

[He staggers along while looking round, searchingly]

[...]

In de verte ziet hij de ranke Afrikaanse vrouw met een ventilator een stenen trap oplopen.

[In the distance he sees an elegant African woman carrying a fan, climb some stone steps].

[...]

Jörgen blijft staan.

[Jorgen pauses].

Jörgen: Hey, can you hear what they are doing in these huts?

Hé, hoor je wat ze aan het doen zijn in die hutjes?

[Hey, can you hear what they are doing in these huts?]

Overschatte bezigheid. Op zich stelt het niets voor. Niets behalve de vernedering natuurlijk. Seksualiteit tussen volwassenen draait om de vernedering. Het genot zit in de vernedering. En in de vernedering, vind je de verlossing, maar ja, waar ligt de grens, wat is normaal? Als er bloed uit de anus komt, is het dan nog normaal?

[Overestimated occupation. Amounts to nothing in itself. Nothing except the humiliation, of course. Sex among adults is all about humiliation. The pleasure is in the humiliation. And in this humiliation one finds redemption, but then again, where is the borderline, what is normal? When there is blood spurting from the anus, is that still normal?]

Where is our hut? Kaisa, we're going round in circles.

Waar is onze hut? Kaisa, we lopen in 'n kringetje.

[Where is our hut? Kaisa, we are going round in circles].

(*Tirza* 2010)

The visually impaired audience only hears Dutch in these scenes, in some passages with a bit of faint English underneath, but spoken by the same voice and in an indistinguishable intonation. The scenes appear to work perfectly because of this. One decision related to the production of AD with AST may automatically entail other decisions. For instance, the mixing of AST and original dialogue may work depending on the function of the scene, as well as the voice and intonation used. In *Tirza*, the use of the same voice for both film dialogue and AST, as well as the actor's continuous performance, create cohesion across the switches from Dutch dialogue to Dutch AST and back. Then again, the fact that the exchanges in the scenes involving Jörgen and Kaisa are mostly monologues and that the protagonist is verbally dominant across the film, may simplify understanding too. In *Oorlogswinter*, by contrast, where several actors were also used to read their own AST, the complexity of some of the scenes (involving several speakers) might still be problematic for viewers not able to identify the speakers visually. Moreover, the recording method was different, relying more on voiceover techniques, possibly causing more 'noise' in some scenes. A more complex scene from *Tirza* is considered under 4.3.

4.2. Does the manipulation of intonation contribute to the coherence of the text?

The intonation of the male voice reading the audio description is similar to that of the voice actor in *Oorlogswinter*, i.e., it is descriptive-narrative, although it appears to tend more towards narration, allowing for a more interpretative reading that matches well with the voices doing the AST. It is impossible, of course, to measure

the narrative quality of the different AD voices, but the changes in intonation in the present film are especially noticeable where two scenes conveying very different emotions follow each other immediately through a cut. Towards the end of the film, for instance, when Jörgen tries to commit suicide in the Namibian desert, and the little girl Kaisa refuses to abandon him, the tone of the narrative AD's voice is very gentle, and its rhythm is slow, adapted to the pace and the music of the scene. Immediately after the cut, the story moves to the slums where Kaisa lives and the transition is conveyed through the changed intonation of the AD narrator as much as through his words: *Een taxi stopt aan de kant van de weg met de gammele houten bouwsels* [*A taxi comes to a halt by the side of the road that runs along the slums with wooden shacks*]. The voice is much crisper now and very matter of fact. Throughout the film, the AD voice remains clearly distinguishable from the AST voices.

With respect to the intonation of the ASTs, this production again appears to have moved closer to the acting that can be expected in a dubbed movie – even though the English voices never disappear completely. As in *Oorlogswinter*, “mechanical” voices, such as radio announcers or “invisible” telephone voices are rendered as such, e.g., when Jörgen, still in Holland, phones a youth hostel in Namibia in order to find out if Tirza is staying there. However, all the AST voices generally act out their roles, covering virtually the same range of emotions as the voices of the characters in the film. This is also done by the male and female voices (one each) acting out the minor characters, such as the taxi driver and the woman running a café/brothel in Windhoek. Actually, only Kaisa is less convincing, though perfectly clear at all times, because the voice used for the little girl sounds too old for her. In fact, the voice actor playing Kaisa is a young girl, but a less experienced voice-actor (Mereijn van der Heijden 2011; see note 4). This is unfortunate, even though the potential “damage” to credibility remains limited because Kaisa's interventions are always short. The girl often communicates through gestures and looks, which the AD describes. The effectiveness of the actress's voice is another feature that could be tested with a sample audience. There did not appear to be any confusing voice clashes in the film, i.e., scenes in which one female or male voice impersonates different female/male characters, even though such scenes do occur. In the initial hotel scene, for example, it is the narrative context and differences in intonation that indicate who is speaking: first the taxi driver who has taken Jörgen to his hotel, and then the receptionist.

To conclude, when comparing Jörgen's voice as a character and his voice reading the AST, no significant differences could be detected. What is more, since this character is so ubiquitous, his vocalization of the AST focuses the attention on him, detracting interest from the possibly more constrained acting of the other voices. In other words, generalizations about what works and what does not work in AST, must always be approached within the context of the film under consideration. In addition, changes in one aspect of the production method automatically entail changes in related issues. As section 4.3 will show, Jörgen's enactment of the AST character goes hand in hand with adaptations in the AST (when compared with the subtitles on screen). In addition, it is determined (or facilitated?) by the way in which the character code switches. And this in its turn is only feasible because movements between languages and combinations of Dutch AST with Dutch dialogue are carried by the same voice. Notwithstanding this, whether a visually impaired audience will always be able to follow these transitions would need to be tested.

4.3. Are the written subtitles manipulated for the spoken version?

I conclude with a word about the linguistic form of the AST. The treatment of the AST in terms of phrasing follows its treatment in terms of recording. In simple, standardized situations, the subtitles are transferred literally, with the occasional added conversational marker in Dutch. However, some of the comments of the audio-describer regarding the subtitles were also incorporated into the AST, whereas in other cases they were not. Why this was done in some cases and not in others is not always clear; some of the changes were intuitive, but I will consider a few examples presently. In addition, some changes were obviously made during the recording, as happened with the recording of the AST of the other two films. However, in this respect the three films appear to reflect a sliding scale, ranging from very minor additions in *Bride Flight* (which was not part of the corpus for this paper) to more obvious but still rather limited adaptations in *Oorlogswinter*, to quite noticeable interventions in *Tirza* – even though the subtitles were never entirely rewritten.

When discussing the way in which the AST has been inserted in the recording, I pointed out above that the longer and more emotional a scene becomes, the more difficult it is for the AST to block out the underlying dialogue. Indeed, most of the manipulations of the AST in *Tirza* occur in emotional scenes; most of these in which Jörgen holds the floor. Again, the AST can rely on his voice and his constant acting/intonation. The best example of this practice occurs in the following excerpt from a scene in which Jörgen is venting his anger about the Dutch financial advisor who caused him to go bankrupt. He is sitting at the hotel bar, inebriated, with the bartender as his only (uneasy) audience and, again, he mixes Dutch and English, just like he did in the previous example. Example 10 shows how the AST has been reformulated to resemble conversation more closely, the concomitant effect being that the text is longer and covers the English better. Most of the time, the AST returns to the dialogue exchanges of the film, as happened very occasionally in *Oorlogswinter*, due to the initiative of the voice actors reading their own parts during the recording. An excerpt from the film script is given below to indicate where he switches to Dutch:

- (10) AST (underlined), subtitles (underlined twice) – Dutch (italics), English (roman), our English gloss (in brackets)

- Jörgen: Hè, when you bring the money it's yes mister Hofmeester, of course mister Hofmeester. Wil je nog een koekje meneer Hofmeester?
[.../Would you like another cookie, mister Hofmeester?]
Als je't geld brengt, dan is het: Ja meneer Hofmeester, natuurlijk mijnheer Hofmeester! Wil je nog een koekje meneer Hofmeester?
[When you bring the money, it is: yes, mister Hofmeester, of course Mr. Hofmeester! Would you like another cookie Mr. Hofmeester?]
Breng je geld mee, dan is het:
[You bring money, then it is:]
Ja, Mr Hofmeester.
[Yes, Mr. Hofmeester.]
- Jörgen: But if you want the money back, then goddamn they don't even know you.
Maar wil je 't geld terug, dan kennen ze je godverdomme niet eens.
[But you want the money back, then goddamn they don't even know you.]
Wil je 't terug, dan

[You want it back, then]
kennen ze je verdomme niet eens.
 [they damn well don't even know you.]

(*Tirza* 2010)

In this scene at the bar, Jörgen again mixes English and Dutch, as he does in his 'conversations' with Kaisa. However, this time the English version does remain audible in some places. The rhythm of emotional ranting can be very jerky and even in its extended version the AST cannot entirely neutralize this. It seems unlikely that the English was kept audible on purpose here, since the voice speaking the two texts is the same and does not have to be identified on the basis of the English dialogue. The best solution in such cases would no doubt be not just to manipulate the subtitles but to radically rewrite the AST since it does more harm than good for it to follow traditional subtitling rules.¹²

In fact, the tactic of manipulating the subtitles is also applied to a limited extent in other, shorter scenes in *Tirza*, and used to identify speakers. For instance, the taxi driver who chauffeurs Jörgen around Windhoek is always the same person. In an addition to the subtitles, the AST have him say *Baas* [Boss], when addressing Jörgen, both at the beginning of the film and at the very end, in an attempt to make his way of speaking more idiosyncratic and recognizable. Shorter scenes with other characters for which the AST is adapted are given below. The first exchange (Example 11a) takes place at a market whilst the second (Example 11b) is part of a conversation between Jörgen and his taxi driver. In Example 11b, the reformulation is more explicit and therefore supports narrative coherence.

- (11a) AST (underlined) and subtitles (underlined twice) – Dutch (italics), English (roman), our English gloss (in brackets)

Jörgen: Is that my size?
Is dat mijn maat?
 [Is that my size?]
Is dat mijn maat?
 [Is that my size?]

Vendor: What size do you have?
Welke maat hebt u?
 [What size do you have?]
Welke?
 [Which?]

(*Tirza* 2010)

- (11b) AST (underlined) and subtitles (underlined twice) – Dutch (italics), English (roman), our English gloss (in brackets)

Taxi driver: All the youngsters go to these dunes.
Alle jonge lui gaan naar die duinen.
 [All the youngsters go to these dunes.]
Daar gaan alle backpackers naartoe.
 [That's where all the backpackers go.]

(*Tirza* 2010)

5. Concluding thoughts and further research

Combining audio description with audio subtitling is no easy task, but one that will become an integral part of the media accessibility scene if the present trend towards multilingualism in films persists. Moreover, the more visually impaired audiences become familiar with films with AD, the more enthusiastic they become. Brief interviews with visually impaired members of the audience at the first screenings of the films that constitute the corpus of this study indicated that they are in favour of AST in addition to AD, even if they had reservations about some of the strategies used (Susanne Verberk and Mereijn van der Heijden 2011; see note 4).

I have indicated at various points in this article that a number of questions remain and that they are difficult to resolve, for different reasons. More specifically we investigated (1) how the AST was inserted in the films of our sample and how it interacts with the films' foreign language dialogue exchanges; (2) whether the manipulation of intonation contributes to the coherence of the filmic text with AD, and (3) whether the written subtitles had been manipulated for the spoken version, and to what effect. One core issue in the replies to all our research questions is that any AD/AST problem must be considered in context: the context of the film (genre), the linguistic make-up of the film (including its use of code-switching), the local and genre-bound impact of intonation and sound effects, the scene in which a conversation takes place and the number and type of voices to be used for AD and AST. All of these factors have an impact on the effectiveness of the recording and the manipulation of the voices. The use of the characters' original voices was shown to be an asset, but even so, mixing dialogue and AST can remain confusing, especially if the mixture is due to the length of the dialogue exchanges as compared to the AST, and not to conscious design. Manipulation appears to have its limits, or may, indeed, have to be expanded: a complete rewrite of the subtitles for the AST could increase textual cohesion.

This study has allowed us to identify a number of problems and issues to be tested, as has been regularly indicated in the body of the text. The next stage of this research will consist of identifying challenging scenes in which the necessary variables can be controlled and then trying out different recordings with different combinations to be tested in reception and perception research. Although the reactions we receive will remain a matter of personal preference to some extent, it is to be hoped that they will help in identifying what works better in specific circumstances to enhance media accessibility and filmic experience for visually impaired audiences.

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NOTES

1. With regard to commercially available DVDs with AD, the Netherlands are doing better than Flanders with three DVDs in Flanders and seven in the Netherlands respectively, at the time of writing (January 2012).

2. *Blind* (2006): Directed by Tamar VAN DEN DOP. The Netherlands. DVD (2007). Burbank: Buena Vista Home Entertainment. Visited on 30 June 2012, <<http://www.blinddefilm.nl/>>.
3. *Zwartboek* (2006): Directed by Paul VERHOEVEN. The Netherlands. Visited on 30 June 2012, <<http://www.zwartboekdefilm.nl/>>.
Black Book (2006). English version of *Zwartboek* (2006). DVD (2007). Distribution A-Film. Visited on 30 June 2012, <<http://www.sonyclassics.com/blackbook/>>.
4. VAN DE HEIJDEN, Mereijn (20 May 2011): personal communication, Antwerp.
5. VERCAUTEREN, Gert (2010): The audio description of space in film. A narratological approach to content selection in AD. Paper presented at the international conference *Emerging Topics in Translation and Interpreting*, Trieste, 16-18 June 2010.
6. *Oorlogswinter* (2008): Directed by Martin KOOLHOVEN. The Netherlands. DVD (2009). Video/Film Express.
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8. *Bride Flight* (2008): Directed by Ben SOMBOGAART. DVD (2009). Distribution A-Film. Visited on 10 June 2012, <<http://www.brideflightmovie.com>>.
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10. In subtitling this is often standard practice, as Susanne Verberk pointed out to me in a personal communication. Still, this practice has been criticized on some occasions, and it is a practice that can reflect power relations, and/or views on who is worth subtitling and who is not (Remael 2008).
11. The argument relating to the non-translation of the African languages holds for this passage too. The quote is rendered in the subtitles, but not in the AST. Both the English subtitler and Susanne Verberk had recommended that the subtitle, too, be removed, in order to be consistent with the treatment of the African languages, but this was not done. In the present case the decision to translate, or not, clearly affects the interpretation of the scene. If the viewer/listener knows that Choukri is reading from *1001 Nights* (and not *The Koran*, for instance) Jörgen's furious reaction is more clearly or explicitly undermined. On the other hand, giving away the disproportionate nature of Jörgen's reaction in such an explicit manner, may be premature at this stage.
12. This was confirmed by Susanne Verberk, who will be rewriting the subtitles to be tested with a target audience.
13. *Nevero*. Visited on 11 June 2012, <<http://www.nevero.be>>.
14. *SoundFocus*. Visited on 11 June 2012, <<http://www.soundfocus.nl>>.

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