Future Audio Describers in Museums: Interpreting Visual Thinking through Practice[1]

Müzelerde Geleceğin Sesli Betimleyicileri: Uygulama Yoluyla Görsel Düşünmenin Yorumlanması

Research/Araştırma

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to conduct a functional evaluation of the visual thinking strategies employed by prospective audio description specialists, who are positioned as both audiences and performers. Within the scope of the study, fourteen students enrolled in the elective audio description course at Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science and Technology University were asked to visit the Adana Archaeology Museum and create object descriptions based on a translation commission. The commission outlined the purpose, context, and target audience—blind and/or partially sighted individuals—following the principles of skopos theory. These descriptions were then analyzed in accordance with skopos theory and Abigail Housen's (2007) five visual thinking strategies: accountive (personal, narrative-based observation), constructive (structural analysis), classifying, interpretive, and re-creative. The findings revealed that accountive and constructive strategies were predominantly employed. It was also observed that some students considered the needs of the 'implied visitor'—a conceptual adaptation of Iser's (1978) 'implied reader' that reflects the describer's mental model of their audience—by using inclusive language, directional expressions, and familiar measurements, while others focused primarily on the factual characteristics of the objects. The results indicate that students generally approached museum description as an informative task rather than as an experiential or interpretive practice. This highlights the need for further pedagogical development, particularly in fostering greater awareness of audience-oriented strategies.

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ÖZET

Bu çalışma, hem birer katılımcı hem de uygulayıcı konumunda olan geleceğin sesli betimleme uzmanlarının kullandığı görsel düşünme stratejilerinin işlevsel bir değerlendirmesini yapmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma kapsamında, Adana Alparslan Türkeş Bilim ve Teknoloji Üniversitesi Mütercim ve Tercümanlık Bölümü'nde seçmeli sesli betimleme dersini alan ondört öğrenci, Adana Arkeoloji Müzesi'ni ziyaret etmeye ve seçtikleri objeleri bir çeviri talimatı doğrultusunda betimlemeye davet edilmiştir. Bu talimat, skopos kuramı doğrultusunda betimlemenin amacı, bağlamı ve hedef kitlesi—görme engelli ve/veya az gören bireyler—gibi unsurları içermektedir. Öğrencilerin oluşturduğu betimlemeler, skopos kuramı ve Abigail Housen'ın (2007) ortaya koyduğu beş görsel düşünme stratejisi -anlatımsal (kişisel, hikâyeleştirilmiş gözlem), yapılandırıcı (yapısal analiz), sınıflayıcı, yorumlayıcı ve yeniden yaratıcı stratejiler- çerçevesinde analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, öğrencilerin ağırlıklı olarak anlatımsal ve yapılandırıcı stratejileri kullandığını ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca bazı öğrencilerin, hedef kitlenin ihtiyaçlarını göz önünde bulundurarak kapsayıcı dil, yön bildiren ifadeler ve tanıdık ölçü birimleri kullandıkları; bazılarının ise daha çok objelerin nesnel özelliklerine odaklandıkları gözlemlenmiştir. Bu bağlamda, öğrencilerin zihinsel olarak betimlemeyi kime yönelik yaptığını yansıtan 'örtük ziyaretçi' kavramı, Wolfgang Iser'in (1978) 'örtük okur' kuramından uyarlanarak, analiz aracı olarak kullanılmıştır. Sonuçlar, öğrencilerin müze betimlemesine genellikle bilgi aktarımına dayalı bir görev olarak yaklaştıklarını; bu tür bir betimlemeyi deneyimsel veya yorumlayıcı bir eylem olarak görmediklerini göstermektedir. Bu durum, hedef kitleye yönelik stratejik farkındalığın gelişimi için pedagojik müdahalelere ve daha derinlemesine eğitime duyulan ihtiyacı ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: müze betimlemeleri, görsel düşünme stratejileri, skopos kuramı, örtük ziyaretçi

1. Introduction

The intersection of translation studies and museum research is a multifaceted and dynamic field that has seen significant advancements in recent years. Museum research has been recently explored in translation studies from the perspectives of structures that are continuously given historical meanings and reconstructed through human activity (Simon, 2013), interlingual representation, namely the process of transfer between ways of seeing and information systems (Guillot, 2014), and a critical-functionalist perspective that views translation as a multi-layered representational practice with cultural, political and social functions (Liao, 2018). Due to their cultural and historical significance, museums play a crucial role in facilitating learning and the reconstruction of cultural narratives through the presentation of collections. Recently, translation studies have increasingly engaged with museum research, exploring how interlingual and intersemiotic translation contribute to making museum content more accessible and meaningful for diverse audiences. These institutions can be categorized into diverse genres, including historical museums, which focus on the past, art museums, which showcase artistic and cultural traditions, science museums, which educate visitors about scientific principles and discoveries, and anthropological museums, which explore human cultures and societies. The specific type of museum is determined by the nature of the collections it houses. In Turkey, where there are

different types of museums such as cinema, mosaic or archaeology, Adana Archaeology Museum is one of the prominent museums with educational and cultural functions, along with its historical collections including the stone statue of Tarhunda, the Hittite Storm God.

The ability of museums to fulfil their educational and cultural functions is contingent upon their ability to engage their visitors because similar to all visual arts, museums are a space where emotive and critical processes are operated together (Bennet, 1998). Accessibility studies within translation studies (Hutchinson & Eardley, 2019; Bartolini, 2023; Bartolini & Manfredi, 2022) reveal that museums can be appreciated by both individuals with and without disabilities. These studies emphasize the importance of audio description, intersemiotic translation, and inclusive design in enhancing museum accessibility. Hutchinson and Eardley (2019) highlight the difficulty of preserving textual fidelity in audio descriptions while also ensuring engagement for blind and/or partially sighted audiences. Bartolini (2023) examines the potential of audio descriptions to transcend basic objectivity by integrating narrative components that enrich cultural engagement. Bartolini and Manfredi (2022) examine the intersection of interlingual and intersemiotic translation in the context of museum accessibility, advocating for a functional approach to audio description training. The studies indicate that museums, when equipped with well-designed accessibility measures, can offer meaningful experiences to all visitors, irrespective of their sensory abilities. This objective is to promote social inclusion. It is possible for blind and/or partially sighted people to benefit from the same museum experience as sighted individuals with the use of semi-live or recorded audio description techniques. The success of this experience relies entirely on the describer's translation strategies, as they shape how the museum content is conveyed and perceived by blind and/or partially sighted visitors.

The relationship among the visitor, the describer, and the object is dynamic, with meaning shaped through perception, interpretation, and interaction. Therefore, the describer should primarily be viewed as a visitor possessing technical and historical knowledge, as well as a performer who actively constructs and communicates the museum experience. This dynamicity reflects the "translator as reader-viewer" perspective (Venuti, 1995; Hermans, 2007), wherein the translator initially interprets and internalizes the source text prior to recreating it for a new audience. The describer must first experience and cognitively process the visual elements of the museum before effectively converting them into verbal descriptions suited for blind and/or partially sighted audiences. By considering the describer as both an audience member and a performer, one can emphasize their dual role in perceiving and producing meaning.

The aim of this study is to evaluate the descriptive scripts of the students taking the audio description course at the Department of Translation and Interpreting, at Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science and Technology University, who are the future museum audio describers, both as visitors and as performers, in order to reveal their visual thinking strategies. This study hypothesizes that the visual thinking strategies employed by student describers are influenced by their own museum experiences, which in turn shape their wording choices in descriptions. By analyzing their texts, this study aims to

reveal how their museum experiences manifest in their descriptions. To achieve this aim, the written description scripts of the students in Adana Archaeology Museum will be analyzed based on Hans Vermeer's (1996) skopos theory as the theoretical framework and Abigail Housen's (2007) visual thinking strategies. The study participants were limited to fourteen students who were enrolled in the Audio Description Course at the Department of Translation and Interpreting, Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science and Technology University, as this course is offered as elective. All student participants signed informed consent forms, and their written outputs were anonymized before analysis. The results of the study are expected to shed light on the visual thinking strategies of students, who are the future audio describers, and prepare the ground for the creation of new exercises that can be integrated into the course on this subject. The Ethics Committee of Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science and Technology University has provided its approval for this study.

2. Literature Review

As museums "offer engaging and memorable visitor experiences" (Hutchinson & Eardley, 2021, p. 427), the purpose of creating museum audio descriptions for blind and/or partially sighted individuals needs to ensure that the physical, cognitive and/or emotional experience of the person after leaving the museum is memorable. Providing the historical background as well as appropriate wording are important issues in this engagement. ADLAB Pro (2016-2019), in conjunction with didactic materials on the content of audio description for static art spaces and the principles of wording, established the foundations for audio description of static arts in semi-live and recorded occasions for future audio describers. The materials emphasize that the initial description should encompass historical information about the object and the artist, and that the describer should employ vivid vocabulary and imagery (Eardley et al., 2017) to enhance the audience's retention of information (ADLAB PRO, 2016-2019). In the context of tours with scripted and recorded museum audio descriptions, the audio recordings, constructed in advance, to be played to individuals via the headsets are expected to ensure grammatical correctness and tailoring to the needs of the target audience with short and concise sentences along with a vivid language (ADLAB PRO/Audio description for static arts, 2016). However, in practice, the museum descriptions are written in a more technical language with "a restricted (yet not poor) variety of vocabulary" (Perego, 2019, p. 339), and the sentences are longer and more perplexing than recommended in the guidelines. Furthermore, the guidelines underscore the significance of incorporating the ambience of the museum into the description, encompassing the tactile experience and the architectural design, namely the spaces through which visitors traverse. (Rai et al., 2010)

In the context of semi-live tours, the description of static arts allows for greater flexibility than screen audio descriptions, which rely on personal interpretations. However, it is crucial for the describer to recognize when the visitor has lost interest and to conclude the description promptly. At this point, one of the most contentious issues in audio description, the distinction between objective and subjective preferences in

translation, also pertains to museum audio descriptions. Museum audio descriptions can exhibit subjectivity, thereby contributing to the museum experiences of both sighted and blind and/or partially sighted individuals, and fostering their social inclusion together (Bartolini, 2023, p. 95). This assertion is underpinned by the recognition that the target audience possesses divergent visual experiences and varied cultural needs. In a comparative study of museum descriptions in Europe and America, it was emphasized that American descriptions are closer to the objectivity-oriented pole, while European descriptions are more narrative and use expressions that trigger emotion (Hutchinson & Eardley, 2021, p. 438). In short, it can be indicated that museum descriptions can be created with a style consisting of vivid wording, statements based on objective observations and sometimes personal comments.

In this study, the extent to which personal interpretations were included is of particular relevance, given that the student describers were tasked with creating descriptions that would convey the museum experience to their target audience. Personal commentary may not elicit the same response as it is predicated on individual experiences, and thus may not be representative of the target audience. Museum visitors' experiences, whether positive or negative, also depend on the museum curators and the objects themselves, depending on how they are displayed (Çolak & Karakan, 2024). While the display of objects is up to the curators, visitors' own motivations such as "knowledge exploration, social interaction, and psychological restoration" (Li, 2024, p. 1) directly influence their experience. It should be noted that despite these motivations, which are part of visitors' perspectives, visitors' understanding, interpretation and interaction with an exhibition may not always be what the institution planned (King et al., 2023, p. 8). Museum spaces can be improved through feedback on visitor experiences (Gao & Yu, 2024). It enables a dynamic relationship between the visitors and the museum spaces. Interactive approaches to museum work now turn visitors into active audiences and meaning-making performers (Macdonald, 2006).

This research builds on previous studies by conceptualizing museum describers as both audience members engaged in an active cognitive process during museum visits and as performers who generate descriptive texts. Describing a museum necessitates a cognitively engaging experience, making it a challenging, if not impossible, task. The analysis of student-generated descriptions introduces the concept of the implied visitor, an adaptation of Wolfgang Iser's (1978) 'implied reader', to investigate how describers conceptualize their audience. The implied visitor denotes the conceptual audience for the audio descriptions, whose requirements and anticipations influence the linguistic and structural decisions made by the describers. This approach illuminates how describers balance factual accuracy and sensory involvement. The formulations employed in their texts offer insight into their cognitive strategies. In this scenario, visual literacy emerges as a crucial element. Bartolini (2023, p. 94) observes that "distinct AD experiences may, for instance, be delineated by drawing on Housen's visual thinking strategy," which encompasses the accountive, constructive, classifying, interpretive, and re-creative stages. The objective of these stages is to improve young individuals' critical thinking in visual reasoning and their communication skills through interaction with art (Housen, 2007; Housen & Yenawine, 2018).

Since the student describers' target audience is blind and/or partially sighted people, their visual thinking strategies will be discussed by considering their wordings in parallel with Housen's visual thinking strategies. According to Housen (2007), with accountive thinking strategy, the visitors can only say what they see based on their observations; with constructive thinking strategy, the visitors' observations will be linked to their own experiences or knowledge of the world; with the classifying thinking strategy, the visitor turns into an audience who can relate the piece of art to its historical background; with the interpretive thinking strategy, there is an interaction between the visitor and the piece of art, and with the re-creative thinking strategy, the visitor's mind combines the personal knowledge with the universal knowledge. The student describers in this study were expected to consider the purpose of the description and the target audience in order to create a text with a certain thinking strategy by experiencing objects visually in a certain way. For this purpose, a commission was created based on the skopos theory.

3. An Overview of Skopos Theory

Developed by Hans J. Vermeer in the 1970s and later elaborated with Katharina Reiss (Reiss & Vermeer, 2014), skopos theory, where the meaning of 'skopos' is purpose in Greek, considers translation as an action with a purpose and a function. Vermeer, with this theory, introduced a functional perspective to translation and brought a new viewpoint to the classical definition of translation based on the principle of equivalence between the source text and the target text. The principles of the theory can be briefly listed as follows: the purpose of the act of translation, which may be different from the purpose of the source text, affects translation decisions throughout the whole process; these decisions should be in line with the needs and expectations of the target audience; and the translator plays an active role in the decision-making process (Vermeer, 1996, pp. 12–15). The translation process starts with a commission determining the instructions that clearly state the purpose, recipients and context. This is associated with the fact that the target text is not an exact copy of the source text (Vermeer, 1996). The coherence of the translation within itself, i.e. the coherence rule, and the coherence with the source text, i.e. the fidelity rule, are indicators of a successful translation (Du, 2012, p. 2192). According to the rule of coherence, the translator may make some adjustments in the text in order to produce a translation that is comprehensible to the recipients, whereas the rule of fidelity requires that the translation is not completely detached from the source text (Hongyu, 2024, p. 170). Among the three rules, the skopos rule prevails the coherence and the fidelity rules because the purpose of the act of translation determines the translator's strategies. In the end, a translatum, i.e. the target text resulting from the act of translation (Reiss & Vermeer, 2014) is produced. The objective of this study is to devise description scripts, representing the preparatory phase preceding the audio descriptions of the artefacts in the Adana Archaeology Museum. The description commission, comprising a series of instructions meticulously devised by the course instructor, draws upon both extant literature and the discourse within the classroom. This commission encompasses the description context and the intended recipients. Prior to their museum visits, students were provided with a

translation brief outlining the purpose, target audience, and expectations of the audio description task. Recipients are blind and/or partially sighted individuals; the context of the description is the description of static materials and the aim of the description is to provide the target audience with a museum experience. According to this method based on skopos theory, the biggest and most important point of discussion in the study is the concept of fidelity, because museum description means the transformation of visual signs into verbal signs. The definition of fidelity in this type of translation is not sharply demarcated, as transforming visual signs into verbal language often requires interpretive flexibility (Matamala & Orero, 2007). Therefore, the concept of fidelity in museum translations as well as in this study can be considered as a holistic transference of objects into words in relation to their position in the museum.

4. Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) and Their Role in Museum Audio Description

Abigail Housen's visual thinking strategies (2001, 2007) are a widely recognized framework for understanding how individuals engage with and interpret visual information. Originally developed from Housen's observations of movements of visitors in museums (DeSantis & Housen, 2009) and then, put forth as a pedagogical tool in art education for aesthetic development in the 1970s, this model categorizes five distinct thinking strategies that emerge in response to visual stimuli, particularly in museum and educational settings (Housen, 2001, 2007). The first stage includes accountive visitors who can describe what they see in an artifact based on their emotions and personal associations. In the second stage, constructive viewers start to detach themselves from the work of art as their emotions diminish by including "the values of their social, moral and conventional world" (DeSantis & Housen, 2009, p. 10). In the third stage, classifying viewers take an analytical and critical approach like art historians. These viewers assume that the purpose and message of art can be clarified and rationalized when categorized. In the fourth stage, interpretive viewers desire to establish a connection with the artwork. They are attracted to color, shape, and line as they investigate the canvas and allow the message to unfold. Critical skills are employed to substantiate the intuitions and sentiments of spectators as they investigate the symbolic implications of the work. Each art encounter presents novel sensations, ideas, and comparisons. The identity and value of the work of art may be reinterpreted, which leads these observers to perceive their own processes as subject to chance and change (DeSantis & Housen, 2009, p. 11). In the last stage, re-creative viewers have developed a longstanding tradition of observing and contemplating art. The artwork transcends mere materials such as paper and paint. The observer perceives the object as resembling reality and possessing a distinct spirit (Housen, 2007, p. 8). In the context of museum audio description, these thinking strategies play a crucial role in shaping the way describers construct verbal representations of artworks, artifacts, and exhibition spaces. The describers' cognitive engagement with the visual material determines the depth, structure, and accessibility of the descriptions they produce for blind and partially sighted audiences. In the case of descriptions of the Adana Archaeology Museum, this study will observe whether learners use accountive

and constructive strategies by merely describing what they see or emphasize what they see with deeper interpretations or classifications.

5. Methodology

Prior to the museum description courses, students were provided with guidelines on the subject of description, as well as information pertaining to the nature of museums. Before the museum visit, a general introduction to the museum was provided, followed by a virtual museum tour conducted in the classroom setting. Following a discussion on translation strategies, a commission was established. The researcher did not observe in person the audio description process. The analysis was predicated on the written submissions from students following their museum tour. In summary, these measures were implemented to enhance students' proficiency in visual thinking strategies. As visual thinking strategy is a personal process, this study will discuss the visual thinking strategies of student describers based on the word choices used in the texts they created in accordance with the commission.

In their texts, students were commissioned to describe an object of their choice from general to specific in accordance with that commission. Therefore, in their descriptions, they were asked to start with the entrance of the museum, the place where the selected object was located, its location in relation to that place and then to include visual details. It was stated that the recipients are blind and/or partially sighted people, a factor that ought to be given due consideration during the formulation of the descriptive texts. This instruction stressed how important it was to give clear, concise accounts that left out any unnecessary details while still including important ones like color, facial expressions, and clothing. It was further emphasized that the objective of descriptions in instructional contexts extends beyond mere information provision; it is also intended to facilitate the recipient's experience of the museum. The commission, inclusive of all aforementioned points, was thus formulated and disseminated to the students via Google Classroom:

The Commission	English Translation
1. Önce eserle ilgili tarihi bilgi verilmeli. Bunu yaparken, önce eserin altında yer alan yazı dahil edilmeli, daha sonra eserin hangi döneme ait olduğunu, eğer ilgili eser bir nesneyse bu nesnenin o dönemde nasıl bir işleve sahip olduğunu anlatmamız gerekmektedir.	1. First, historical information about the artifact should be given. While doing this, first the writing under the artifact should be included, then we need to explain the period to which the artifact belongs, and if the artifact is an object, what kind of function this object had in that period.

2. Karşımızdaki kişilerin görme engelli olduğunu unutmamalıyız. Yani bilgi ağırlıklı betimlemeler yazarken, bunu çok yoğun tutmamalı, yüz ifadeleri, kıyafetler gibi ayrıntılara mutlaka yer vermeliyiz.	2. We should not forget that the people in front of us are blind and/or partially sighted people. In other words, when writing information-intensive descriptions, we should not keep it too intense, we should definitely include details such as facial expressions and clothes.
3. Anlatım tarzı hem betimleyici hem anlatısal olmalı.	3.The style should be both descriptive and narrative.
4. Renklere mutlaka yer vermeliyiz. (Fransa'nın yaptığı gibi 'limon sarısı' gibi niteleyici ifadelere de yer verebiliriz renkleri anlatırken veya olduğu haliyle sadece 'sarı' olarak da bırakabiliriz. Tüm betimlemede tek bir seçim yapmak tutarlılık açısından önemli.)	4. We should definitely include colors. (We can include adjectives such as 'lemon yellow' as the French do, or we can leave it as 'yellow' as it is. Making a single choice in the whole description is important for consistency).
5. Benzetmelerden ziyade metaforlara yer verebiliriz. Çünkü benzetme yaparken başka bir kavram da devreye gireceğinden yoruma ve anlaşılmamaya sebep olabilir. Ama çok aşırıya kaçmadan 'gibi' kullanabiliriz (örneğin, 'güneş gibi', 'ay gibi', 'araba gibi' vs. günlük hayatta bilineceğini düşündüğümüz kavramlara yer verebiliriz.)	5. We can include metaphors rather than similes. Because when making a simile, another concept will also come into play, which may cause interpretation and incomprehension. But we can use 'like' in moderation (e.g. 'like the sun', 'like the moon', 'like a car' etc.).
6. Tüm bunları yaparken genelden özele gitmekte fayda var. Dolayısıyla, müzenin girişi, bulunduğunuz kısma müze içerisinde hangi yönlerle ulaşıldığı, eserin bulunduğu odanın genel hatları gibi genel bilgilerle başlayıp, seçtiğiniz nesnenin betimlemesine geçmelisiniz. Bu betimleme de genelden özele doğru gitmelidir.	6. In doing all this, it is useful to go from the general to the specific. Therefore, you should start with general information such as the entrance of the museum, the directions in which you can reach the part you are in the museum, the general outline of the room where the artifact is located, and then move on to the description of the object you have chosen. This description should go from the general to the specific.
7. Kısacası, sadece bilgi vermekle kalmayarak, karşıdaki kişiye müze deneyimini yaratacak duyguyu da vermeniz gerekiyor.	7. In short, you should not only provide information, but also give the other person the feeling that will create the museum experience.

It is evident from the commission that the intention was for the students to be active audiences rather than passive visitors. In other words, the student, who is in the

position of the performer who will make the description, is asked to create the description after their own experience as an audience.

6. The Visual Thinking Strategies of The Describers Through Their Descriptions

Each of the fourteen descriptions was handled individually and analyzed under the headings appropriate to the commission as follows.

6.1. General Information about the Museum

Firstly, descriptions about the entrance to the museum were given. An example of this is as follows:

Turkish Description	English Translation
Müzede A0'dan A7'ye, B0 dan B3'e kadar bölümleri ile beraber bir adet havuz, kafe ve çocuk eğitim alanı bulunmaktadır. Müze genel olarak loş bir ortama sahip olup, müze girişi **A1'den (Paleolitik çağ, Neolitik çağ, Kalkolitik çağ, Tunç çağ)** başlayıp bu döneme ait eserler mevcuttur.	**The museum has sections from A0 to A7, B0 to B3, as well as a pool, café and children's education area.** The museum has a dim environment in general, and the museum entrance **starts from A1 (Paleolithic Age, Neolithic Age, Chalcolithic Age, Bronze Age)** and there are artifacts belonging to this period.

The museum is described in the text as a physical space divided into sections A0 to B3. Furthermore, the social functions of the museum are emphasized, including the pool, café and children's education area. It is evident that an accountive thinking strategy has been employed in this description, as it reflects how the describer, as a visitor, perceives the physical details he/she encounters upon entering the museum. The use of parentheses in the description can be interpreted as an indication that the describer perceives the museum description as a written text intended to assist the blind and/or partially sighted individuals. The museum is divided into various sections. Students are required to describe the section in which the object of their choice is located.

6.2. What kind of a place is the hall I am in?

In this section, the task assigned to student describers was to take the object to be described to their perception centers and describe the area in which the object was located. The following example of a description that meets these criteria is provided:

Turkish Description	English Translation
Adana Müzesine giriş yapıp **dümdüz ilerliyoruz** ve müzenin girişinden ilerledikten sonra **sola saparak** da gidilebilen Mozaik Müzesi kısmına giriş yapıyoruz.	We enter the Adana Museum and **go straight ahead** and enter the Mosaic Museum, which can also be reached by **turning left** after the entrance of the museum.

In this description, as in the above example, it can be posited that the describer has employed an accountive thinking strategy, as the description delineates the trajectory, he pursued to achieve his objective following his entry into the museum, drawing upon his personal experience and utilizing place and direction expressions. According to this instruction, the student could also describe contextual features within the display area, such as architectural details, placement, or accompanying materials related to the object. In this instance, a classifying thinking strategy could also have been employed, for example, the lower floor of the artefacts from the Hellenistic and Byzantine periods. However, in this instance, the descriptive perception was centered on the relevant area, positioned it in the museum building and gave directions.

6.3. What kind of object am I facing?

The artefacts in the museum are not merely defined by their external appearance. From a holistic perspective, it can be posited that these artefacts belong to a specific period and occupy a distinct point in chronological order among the artifacts belonging to that period. In accordance with the commission's objective of devising a description that progresses from general to specific, the student describers were initially tasked with providing the location of the relevant work. The following example illustrates a description of the location of the work:

6.3.1. The Disposition of the Artifact

Turkish Description	English Translation
Eserin **karşı çaprazında** Assurnasipal'in Babil Steli yer almaktadır. Eser **tam köşede** durmaktadır. Eser kalın bir duvara gömülü bir şekilde ve **camla korunmuş** vaziyettedir. Assurnasipal'in Babil Steli'ni arkamıza alıp yürüdüğümüzde sağımızda 4 adet orta büyüklükte heykel de yer almaktadır. Bu yolun sağı Anadolu Hiyeroglif Yazılı Stel ve Demir Çağı bölümü yazısıyla ilerlemektedir.	On **the opposite diagonal** is the Babylonian Stele of Assurnasipal. The artifact stands **right in the corner**. It is embedded in a thick wall and **protected by glass**. When we walk with the Babylonian Stele of Assurnasipal behind us, there are 4 medium-sized statues on our right. To the right of this road is the Anatolian Hieroglyphic Stele and the Iron Age section.

In this particular instance, the spatial disposition of the work in question is delineated in relation to another work situated diagonally opposite it. This establishes a spatial link between the two artefacts. This approach entails a more profound analysis of the visual elements, thus indicating the utilization of a constructive thinking strategy.

Conversely, the accountive thinking strategy is also employed in this example, as it conveys the direct observation of how the artifact was preserved.

6.3.2. The Dimensions of the Artifact

Turkish Description	English Translation
Bu kristal heykel **bir parmak boyundadır**, elleri göğsü ile karnının **tam ortasında birbiri ile birleşmiş** ve dirseklerinin oralar tam **90 derece ile burkulmuştur.**	This crystal sculpture is **one finger tall**, its hands are **joined at the center of its chest** and abdomen and its elbows are **twisted at 90 degrees.**

It is evident that the author employed a constructive thinking strategy, aiming to construct the dimensions of the work in the minds of the target audience through a meticulous analysis of the physical characteristics of the object. This approach involved the use of everyday expressions and measurement units that were presumed to be familiar to blind and/or partially sighted audiences, such as "one finger tall", "joined at the center of its chest", or "twisted at 90 degrees". These formulations aimed to facilitate spatial and tactile imagination, making the described object more cognitively accessible.

6.3.3. Information on Raw Materials and Exhibition Techniques

Turkish Description	English Translation
Heykel iki boğa tarafından çekilen bir arabanın üzerinde duran bir adam heykelidir. Bu adam belirtildiği üzere Fırtına Tanrısı Tarhunda'dır. Araba ve boğalar **bazalt taşından** yapılmıştır. İki boğa tarafından çekilen araba **kabartma tekniğiyle** yapılmıştır.	The statue is of a man standing on a chariot pulled by two bulls. This man is reportedly Tarhunda, the Storm God. The chariot and the bulls are **made of basalt stone**. The chariot pulled by two bulls is **made with relief technique.**

In this example, it can be argued that the student employed the constructive thinking strategy by providing a structural and technical analysis of the object. Specifically, the student identified the figure as 'Tarhunda,' the Storm God, and described its composition—namely, a man standing on a chariot pulled by two bulls. The student further noted that the chariot and bulls were made of basalt stone and that the object was produced using the relief technique. This demonstrates an attempt to classify the object based on material, form, and method of creation, reflecting an analytical approach that goes beyond surface description.

6.3.4. External Appearance of the Artefact

Turkish Description	English Translation
Solgun koyu yeşil rengi ve şeffaflığının yanında **hafif kirli ve bulanık bir görüntüsü** olan bu şişe **diğerleri gibi yıllanmışlığını** bizlere apaçık yansıtıyor.	With its **pale dark green color and transparency**, but with **a slightly dirty and cloudy appearance**, this bottle, like the others, clearly reflects **its old age.**

The color of the bottle is described as pale, dark green and transparent, and this can be taken as an example of accountive thinking strategy, insofar as it directly reflects the author's observations. However, the establishment of a direct relationship between the bottle's slightly dirty and cloudy appearance and its perceived aging—achieved through a comparison with other similar objects—can be interpreted as an instance of re-creative thinking. By attributing a temporal quality ("clearly reflects its old age") to a physical characteristic, the student goes beyond descriptive observation and engages in an imaginative reconstruction of the object's history. Another example for the description of the external appearance is as follows:

Turkish Description	English Translation
Miğfer üzerinde **C harfi şeklinde** ve açık ucu Roma askerinin kafasını gösteren, **kan kırmızısı renginde** ve **fırça süpürge benzeri** miğfer süslemesi bulunmaktadır.	The helmet has **a blood-red**, **brush broom-like** helmet decoration **in the shape of the letter C** with the open end showing the head of a Roman soldier.

In this description, it can be asserted that the student derived benefit from the interpretive thinking strategy, as evidenced by the observation that the ornament on the helmet assumes the shape of the letter C, evokes the form of a brush, and is tinged with a deep crimson shade. The employment of a simile by the student is noteworthy, as it entails the explicit delineation of the object's shape and color, accompanied by the utilization of an adjective to describe its color. However, it should be noted that the letter C analogy may not be equally engaging for a congenitally blind audience using Braille.

6.3.5. The Function of the Artifact

Turkish Description	English Translation
Bu bebek figürü, Hygieia heykelinin **sağlık ve iyileşme ile derin bir ilişkisini vurgular** ve tıbbın **evrensel doğasını temsil eder.**	This infant figure emphasizes Hygieia's **deep association with health and healing and represents the universal nature of medicine.**

In this description, a re-creative thinking strategy was employed by attributing the symbolic meaning of the other figure, which constitutes an integral part of the entire Hygieia artifact. As the museum's records only included the name of the statue, the student consulted supplementary sources, including online platforms and secondary literature, to gather further details about the object's origin, symbolism, and usage.

6.3.6. The Information on the Labels

Turkish Description	English Translation
Lahdin yanındaki yazıda Türkçe ve İngilizce açıklaması bulunmaktadır. Bu açıklamanın içeriği şu şekildedir…	The inscription next to the sarcophagus has an explanation in Turkish and English. The content of this explanation is as follows...

The labels affixed to artefacts in the museum offer a comprehensive historical overview, while others succinctly provide the artefact's name and the historical period to which it belongs. The utilization of label information can be categorized into two distinct approaches: its incorporation within the descriptive elements of the artefacts or its presentation as an independent entity preceding or following the description. The preference for one of these strategies is contingent on the nature of the description, whether it be recorded or semi-live. In their studies, students were observed to use label information as before or after the descriptions. It can be deduced that the students provided a description with the accountive thinking strategy, as they employed the informative text they had encountered directly.

6.4. Findings

The analysis demonstrates that the future audio describers, whose description context was the Adana Archaeology Museum, operated in accordance with the instructions stipulated in the commission. They commenced by providing general information about the museum, subsequently delineated the area where the selected object was situated, and then proceeded to describe all the visual elements of the object in question with a general-to-specific text construction. In order to provide the atmosphere that will create the museum experience, which is the other instruction in the commission, the language of *we*, adverbs of place and direction, and similes were employed in addition to the social facilities that were highlighted. It is striking that the descriptions under each object are not of the same length and detail; therefore, the describer had to resort to additional sources for information. The reliability of the additional sources is key here. The necessity of collaborating with the curator in this kind of research is once again emphasized by this shortcoming. While most descriptions included spatial positioning and material composition (e.g. "It is embedded in a thick wall and protected by glass"), only a few made attempts to evoke a sensory or emotional connection. One such instance was the description of a helmet: "The helmet has a blood-red, brush broom-like helmet decoration in the shape of the letter C with the open end showing the head of a Roman soldier." This example demonstrates an effort to integrate visual details with narrative imagination, aligning with interpretive or re-creative strategies. However, one can note that this example also denotes some confusion about the definition of the target group due to the use of analogy of 'the letter C'. In this case, it can be argued that for such a commission, it would be more appropriate to include clearer expressions such as congenitally blind, adventitiously blind or partially sighted. The feasibility of achieving such a precise distinction in practice remains a subject of debate.

Nevertheless, the audio description course could encompass a range of exercises tailored to each target group. In the event of a clearly defined target audience, students will be able to visualize it in their minds, leading to the utilization of appropriate thinking strategies. However, if the information in long tags is embedded in the text, which is not a recommended approach in this case, it will directly impact the vocabulary in the description. As illustrated by the provided examples, it can be posited that the describers employed a comprehensive array of cognitive strategies. Through a qualitative content analysis of the description texts, it was observed that students frequently employed accountive and constructive thinking strategies. The descriptions were analyzed using Housen's (2007) framework, and the classification was based on key linguistic markers and recurring patterns in the texts. Students' descriptions often indicated the existence of an implied visitor, a mental construct that embodies the intended audience, influencing the lexical and structural decisions made by the describers. This was particularly evident in descriptions where students employed accessible measurements, such as "one finger tall," directional markers like "to the right of this road," or referenced social spaces such as cafés to indicate a multisensory environment. These formulations suggest that certain students, either consciously or intuitively, developed a conceptual visitor in their minds and adjusted their language accordingly. The variability in the conceptualization of this implied visitor is noteworthy. Some texts aimed to create a comprehensive sensory experience, while others focused solely on factual reporting, indicating varying levels of audience needs internalization. The implied visitor functions as a diagnostic tool: its presence or absence, along with the complexity assigned to it, enables an evaluation of students' linguistic choices, cognition and audience awareness. This suggests that students perceived their descriptions primarily as a means of information transmission rather than subjective interpretation. Moreover, the students' dual function as museum visitors and describers seems to have affected their descriptive techniques. Experiencing the items directly as audience members let them emotionally and intellectually absorb visual aspects, which they subsequently rebuilt via performative narrative. Their lexical decisions, tempo, and attention to detail were shaped by this multi-layered interaction.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to do a functional assessment of the visual thinking strategies utilized by aspiring audio description professionals, who function as both viewers and performers. To fulfill this objective, a cohort of fourteen students from the Department of Translation and Interpreting at Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science and Technology University, participating in the elective audio description course, were instructed to visit the Adana Archaeology Museum and create a description of an object of their selection. Students received a commission and were required to employ particular visual thinking skills, considering the needs of blind and/or partially sighted individuals. Textual studies indicated that all five of Housen's (2007) visual thinking strategies—accountive, constructive, classifying, interpretive, and re-creative—were evident in the descriptions. Nevertheless, accountive and constructive strategies were primarily utilized. This

tendency may be ascribed to the instructor's leadership and the impact of the museum environment.

The Adana Archaeology Museum was viewed mostly as a repository of historical knowledge, leading students to prioritize the communication of factual information over the expression of interpretive or emotional reactions. Their descriptions indicated a comprehension of the museum as an instructional environment rather than a tourist or immersion attraction. The analysis suggests that student describers predominantly engaged with audio description as an informational practice rather than as an experiential or interpretive one. Moreover, the use of inclusive expressions, spatial directions, and metaphors demonstrates a partial awareness of the sensory needs of the target audience. However, the ambiguity surrounding the specific nature of the visual disability—whether the recipients were congenitally blind, adventitiously blind, or partially sighted—led to varying levels of audience engagement across descriptions. This suggests a need for more explicit training on audience profiles within the course. In this context, the concept of the implied visitor—an adaptation of Iser's (1978) 'implied reader'—emerges as a useful analytical tool. However, although the implied visitor served as an analytical tool to explore students' conceptualizations of audience, the lack of a clearly defined target group in the commission may have hindered students' ability to fully internalize and consistently address the sensory and cognitive needs of that audience. While some students clearly constructed their texts with the implied visitor in mind by incorporating tactile cues and accessible language, others relied solely on visual descriptors without fully considering the sensory experience of the audience. Integrating the implied visitor perspective into training methodologies could therefore help future describers develop more balanced and inclusive descriptive strategies.

Finally, this study also highlights the pedagogical value of including pilot exercises within the curriculum, allowing students to test and reflect on their descriptive decisions before moving to more complex productions. Although this study is limited in scope, it lays the groundwork for further research involving larger groups of students and comparative studies between blind and sighted describers, which could offer deeper insights into how different cognitive strategies manifest in museum audio description.

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