Chapter 12

Audio Description and Its Application in Spanish Language Glottodidactics

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ABSTRACT

Audio description is an intersemiotic translation consisting of translating visual content and images into a verbal layer. Most often, it is used in audiovisual materials, in museums, cinemas, theaters, stadiums, etc. It can also be successfully applied to foreign language classes. On the one hand, it creates excellent opportunities to practice all language skills in an integrated manner and to gain the intercultural competence. The aim of the chapter is to present the audio description technique in terms of transferring it and using it during language classes as a technique supporting the use of audiovisual materials, placing special emphasis on the student’s intercultural competence, which, according to the author’s assumption, is the result of the learner’s ethnographic attitude. The learner, basing on the study of his own culture, being free from prejudices, analyzes the culture of a foreign language and compares it with his/her own culture in order to interpret, understand, and describe it, not to evaluate it.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning are a social process because knowledge is constructed socially not in isolation (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989, p. 34):

Given the chance to observe and practice in situ the behavior of members of a culture, people pick up relevant jargon, imitate behavior, and gradually start to act in accordance with its norms. These cultural practices are often recondite and extremely complex. Nonetheless, given the opportunity to observe and practice them, people adopt them with great success.

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Such an approach towards glottodidactic process creates conditions for an exchange with other participants while shaping knowledge constructs, which are confronted with previous life experience and thus also professional experience. Therefore, one might observe and analyze the discussed topic in a wider and richer context.

It is worthwhile to pay closer attention to the term of glottodidactics in the context of how it is used in the chapter. Glottodidactics is a process of teaching and learning foreign languages. It is based on the interdisciplinary approach, which analyses and depicts the interdependencies between the reality and the foreign language, also taking into consideration the didactic process. In the context of this chapter, it focuses on shaping intercultural competencies and teaching Spanish with hyper-contextual commentary, audio-description as a form of translation. This technique can be used to make cultural events more accessible for people who so far due to their physical or mental limitations have not been able to or have only partially participated in the given event. It can be also successfully introduced to the training programs of the future teachers to facilitate observation of the native and foreign language cultures and later present them in the form of audio-description. It is necessary to develop intercultural competencies among the future teachers because failing to do so might result in unreflective behaviors and conclusions among students whose contact with other cultures will be hindered which in turn may create a ground for unfair stereotypes and prejudices (Palion-Musioł & Tatoj, 2016).

A theoretical perspective, which focuses on social aspects of glottodidactics is based on situated cognition of Wenger and proposition of Lave (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). They assume that glottodidactic process is an activity enrooted into society and thus it is a community of practice due to which one might observe mutual learning experience of the engaged in a given discipline. Such a discipline here is didactics. According to Experimental Learning Model, the efficiency and effectiveness of learning depend on how much the students will be able to apply learned skills, habits, and behaviors (cf. Kolb, 1984). Therefore, it is essential for the students to acquire knowledge through action and active participation in such community, learn from their own experience while solving problems, combine theory and practice and learn through situations which are important and meaningful for them. It is also crucial to create glottodidactic conditions, so acquired knowledge can be used in students’ personal or professional life and facilitate interactions with other people. Such glottodidactic approach favors communication competencies, collaboration, and cultural mediation. It also supports creative development, change of mindset and greater individual engagement which are key elements in a didactic process. Therefore, the glottodidactic process does not only comprise a transmission and passive learning of the group, but it is also a process of social, continuously changing participation with a relational character. Learning can be expressed in a community of practice membership (belonging), participation in community practices (doing), identity construction (becoming) and negotiation of meanings (experiencing). On the other hand, learning as stepping out of the community is realized through starting relationships with other communities (Rozkosz, 2017, p. 101). It takes place in order to build a bridge between those circles and thus enrich the artifacts of the internal history of the community with different experiences and practices which comprise a base for interdisciplinary defining and shaping of problems of the given community and its members. Therefore, situated cognition is especially important for the glottodidactic process, when its participants are able to connect knowing and doing as necessary elements in authentic practice.