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AUDIO INTRODUCTIONS IN VIDEO GAMES
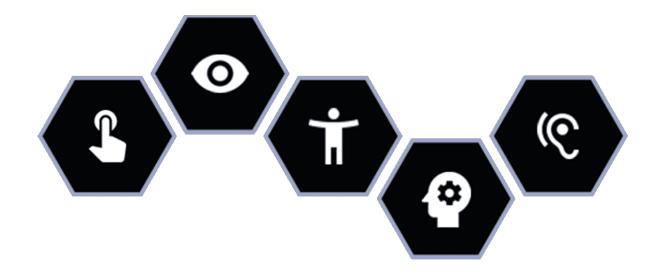
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INTRODUCTION

Video games as the main form of entertainment

Accessibility on the rise

GAME ACCESSIBILITY

Avoiding a conflict between the abilities of a player

and the barriers of a video game

Three barriers (Yuan et al., 2011):

❖ Receiving stimuli

❖ Determining a response

❖ Providing input

AUDIO DESCRIPTION

AD))))

Audio Description in multimedia products must be combined with original sounds, music and dialogues

Rad

General interest on including AD in video game, particularly in cutscenes (Larreina & Mangiron, in press)

AUDIO INTRODUCTIONS

"An Audio Introduction (AI) is a continuous piece of prose, providing factual and visual information about an audiovisual product that serves as a framework for blind and visually impaired patrons to (better) understand and appreciate a given source text."

(ADLAB Audio Description guidelines)

Why?
-Blind or low vision
-Neurodivergent
-Elderly

How?
-QR in package
-Online in web or store
-Menu

COMPARATIVE ANALYSES

Framework of the analysis

Elements of an opera (Rossi & Sindoni, 2017):

- Language (*libretto*)
- Music
- *Mise-en-scène*
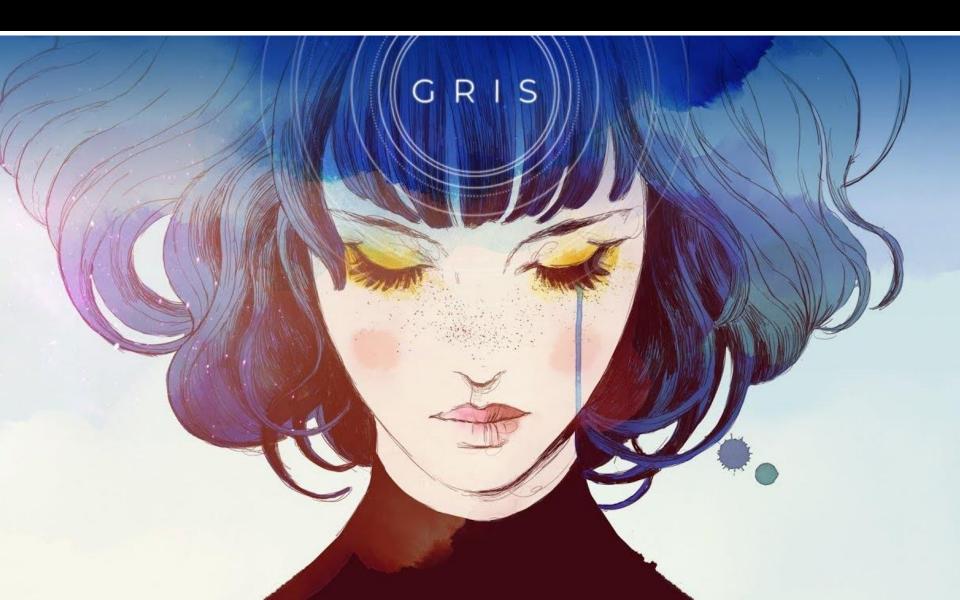
Elements of a video game (Newman, 2004):

- Graphics
- Sound
- Interface
- Gameplay
- Story

Template of an AI for opera (Iturregui & Permuy, 2019), what elements are shared with video games?

TEMPLATE FOR VIDEO GAME AI

TYPE OF ITEM	CONTENTS
Audio introduction presentation	Hello, my name is [insert audio describer's name] and I will accompany you during the audio introduction of the video game [insert name of video game], [genre of the video game: action, RPG...].
Video game introduction	It was developed by [insert company]. Information about the company. - Renowned video games by the company The music was composed by [insert composer]. The video game was launched on [date] and can be played in [platforms].
Background information	- Historical context - Special features of the genre - Release and public reception
Other aspects	[For example, intertextual references]
Characters	The main characters are: - [Insert name of character], wearing a [colour, texture, etc. piece of clothing] and has [description] [hairstyle, make-up specificities]
Synopsis	Brief synopsis of the whole video game.
Locations, scenery and visual style	- Rendering (cel shading, photorealistic...) - Level design (open-world, linear...)
Gameplay	A description of the way the characters can be controlled. A list of abilities available during the game could be detailed.
Interface	Elements that are generally shown to the player on the screen (life indicator, mini-map...)
Practical information	- Any other practical aspects. The video game has a medium duration of [insert duration] hours.

CASE STUDY

CASE STUDY

Hello, my name is Miguel Ángel and I will accompany you during the audio introduction of *Gris*, a platform-adventure video game available in Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox One, Xbox Series X/S and PC.

It was developed by Nomada Studio, which was formed in Catalonia by the developers Adrián Cuevas and Roger Mendoza, and the artist Conrad Roset. The music was composed by Berlinist. This video game is their first production and was launched on December 13, 2018.

The core concept is a metaphorical journey through depression. Levels are designed to evoke the stages of grief.

The main character shares her name with the title: Gris. She is a young girl with freckles and medium-length blue hair. She is wearing a long grey dress under a black cloak that flows as she moves.

The video game begins with the protagonist realizing she has lost her voice. The ambiance is tragic and everything appears to be gray. She then starts a journey that takes her to different locations where the colors of the world can be recovered. Apart from that, she also tries to create a constellation that allows her to reach the skies.
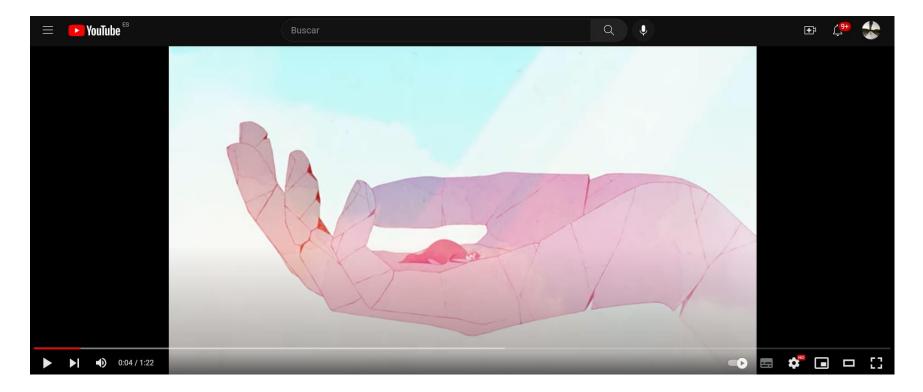
The video game has a cartoony style. Most scenes are composed as a watercolour painting. Locations vary across the levels from nature oriented themes, such as forests or underwater caves, to more civilized places. Buildings and statues resemble ancient Greek or Islamic architecture, even though they are mostly in ruins. Geometry is key to the art concept, as can be found in trees with square leaves or birds with a triangular shape.

Gris is a side-scrolling video game with no failure states and a strong platforming component, which implies coordinated jumping. The objective is to beat four different levels, all accessible from a central area. While advancing, the player shall collect stars that will open new paths. The gameplay is progressive and each level grants a new ability.

While playing, no information related to the gameplay is shown on the screen.

The video game has an average duration of 4 hours.

CASE STUDY

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvECQlxrhbw

CONCLUSION

→ Audio Introductions can be adapted for video games considering aspects such as interaction

→ Future line of research: applying the easy-to-understand language to the AI in order to increase its accessibility

→ Future line of research: performing a reception study in order to ascertain the AI works for the target users

THANKS!

Yuan, B., Folmer, E. & Harris, F.C. (2011). Game accessibility: A survey. *Universal Access in the Information Society*, *10*(1), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10209-010-0189-5

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Rossi, F. & Sindoni, M. G. (2017). The phantoms of the opera: Toward a multidimensional interpretative framework of analysis. In M. G. Sindoni, J. Wildfeuer & K. L. O'Halloran (eds.) 2017. *Mapping multimodal performance studies* (pp. 61-84). Routledge.

Newman, J. (2004). *Videogames*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203143421

Iturregui-Gallardo, G. & Permuy, I. C. (2019). A template for the audio introduction of operas: A proposal. *Hikma, 18*(2), 217-235.

Gris [Computer software] (2018). Spain: Nomada Studio.

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