



University of Antwerp
| TRICS | Translation, Interpreting
and Intercultural Studies

Professional Identity Profiles Among Audio Describers

Alicja Zajdel

Anna Jankowska & Iris Schrijver

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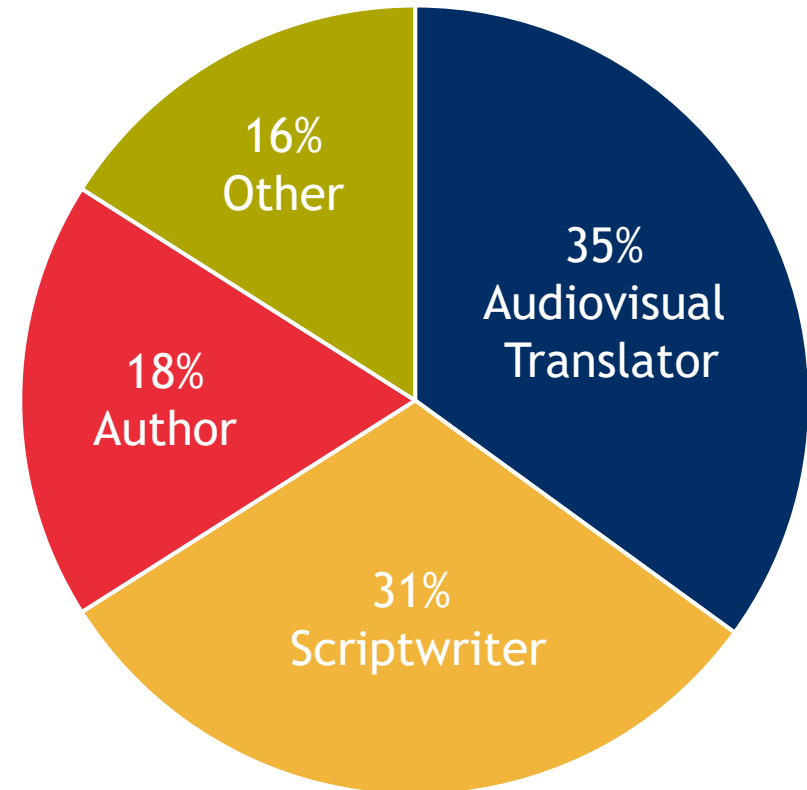
Introduction

- Professional identity = how people understand themselves as professionals
- AD = interesting context for identity research
- No knowledge of a foreign language required
- Variety of educational backgrounds

Introduction

In your opinion, which professional figure does a describer most closely resemble?

(ADLAB PRO 2017)



Online questionnaire (2022)

- Highly creative job
- Requires expert skills
- Low visibility of describers
- Low-to-middling prestige of the profession
- Lack of understanding of the profession
- Most respondents not translators

Country	Translator	Non-translator	TOTAL
UK	1	28	29
Poland	3	14	17
Spain	12	3	15
Germany	2	13	15
USA	0	10	10
Sweden	3	7	10

(Zajdel, Jankowska & Schrijver, forthcoming)

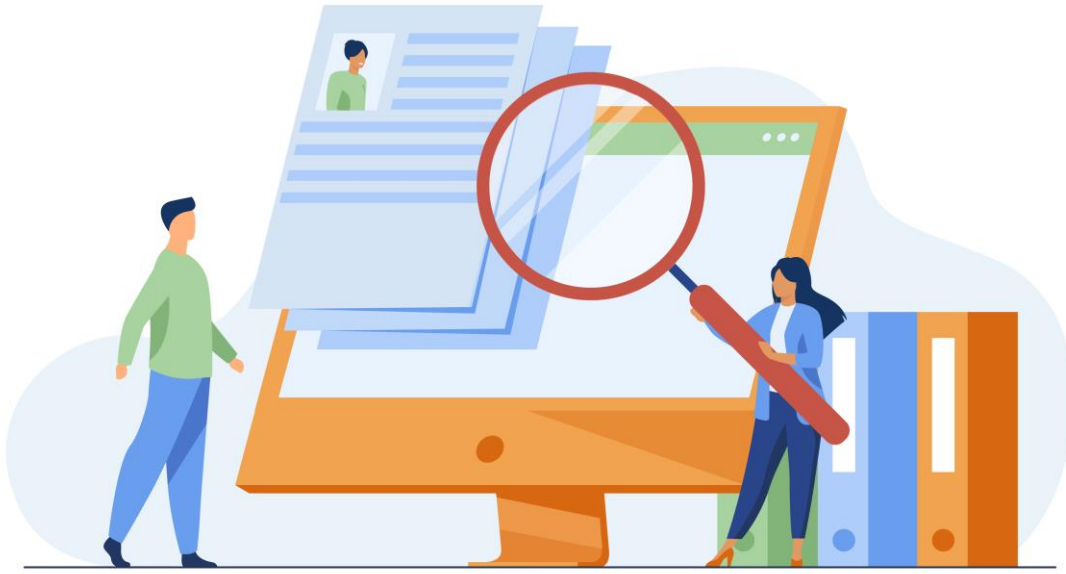


Job titles are used to make assumptions about a role-holder's knowledge, skills, and abilities, and may therefore be used as a basis for assessing similarity and difference with others.

(Melling, 2019)

Job titles are important vehicles for identity expression and image construction, serving as core prisms through which we present ourselves to the world.

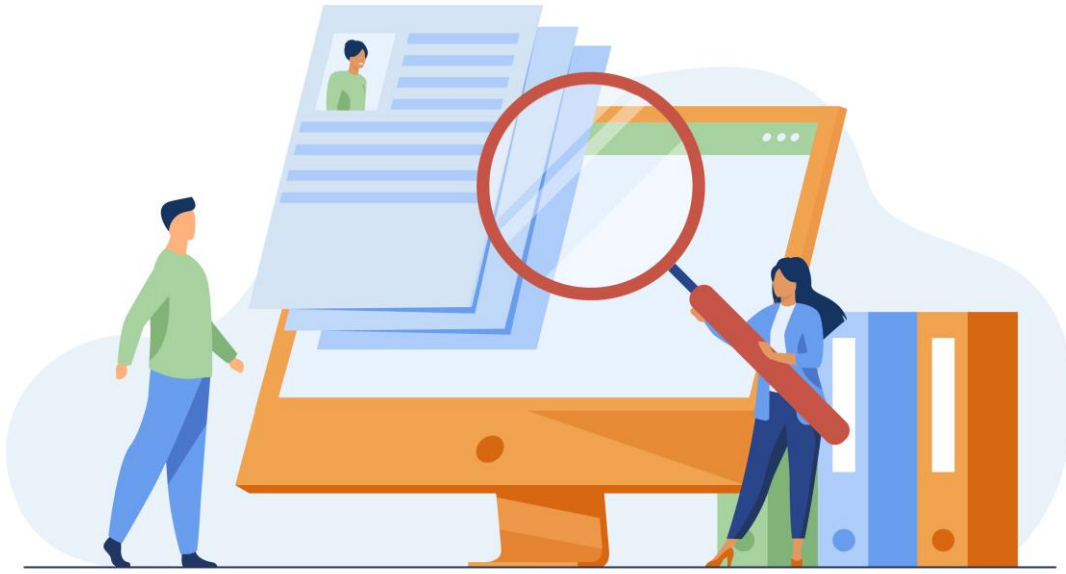
(Grant et al., 2014)



Online content analysis

Questions & Aims

- How do describers present themselves online?
- What skills/competences do they highlight?
- Is there a link between job titles and educational background?



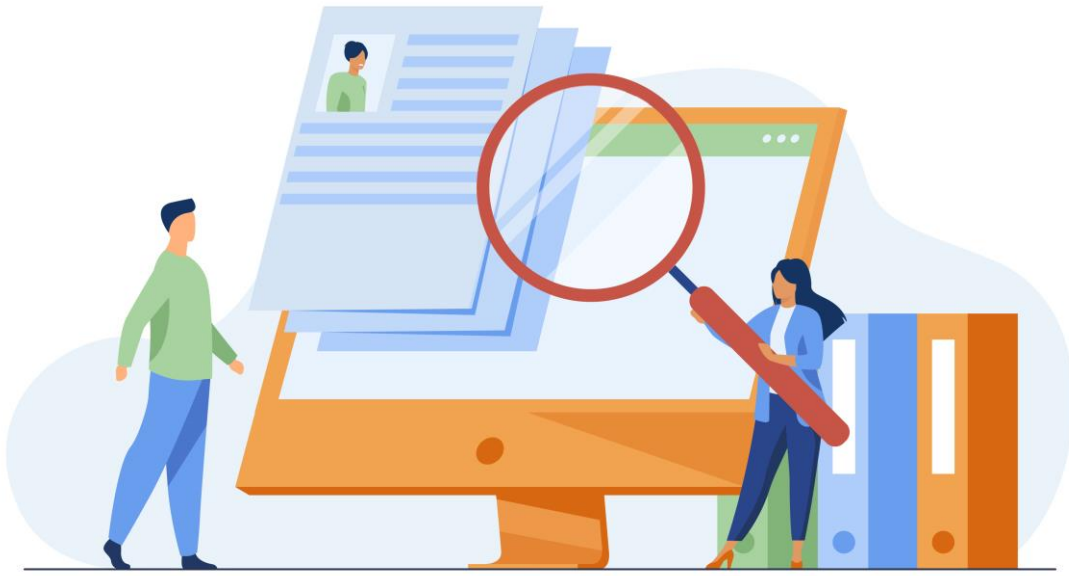
Online content analysis

What?

- LinkedIn Profiles (52)
- Websites of describers (12)
- Interviews with describers (16) (blogs, podcasts etc.)
- Job advertisements (9)

How?

- Thematic analysis in Nvivo
- Word frequency



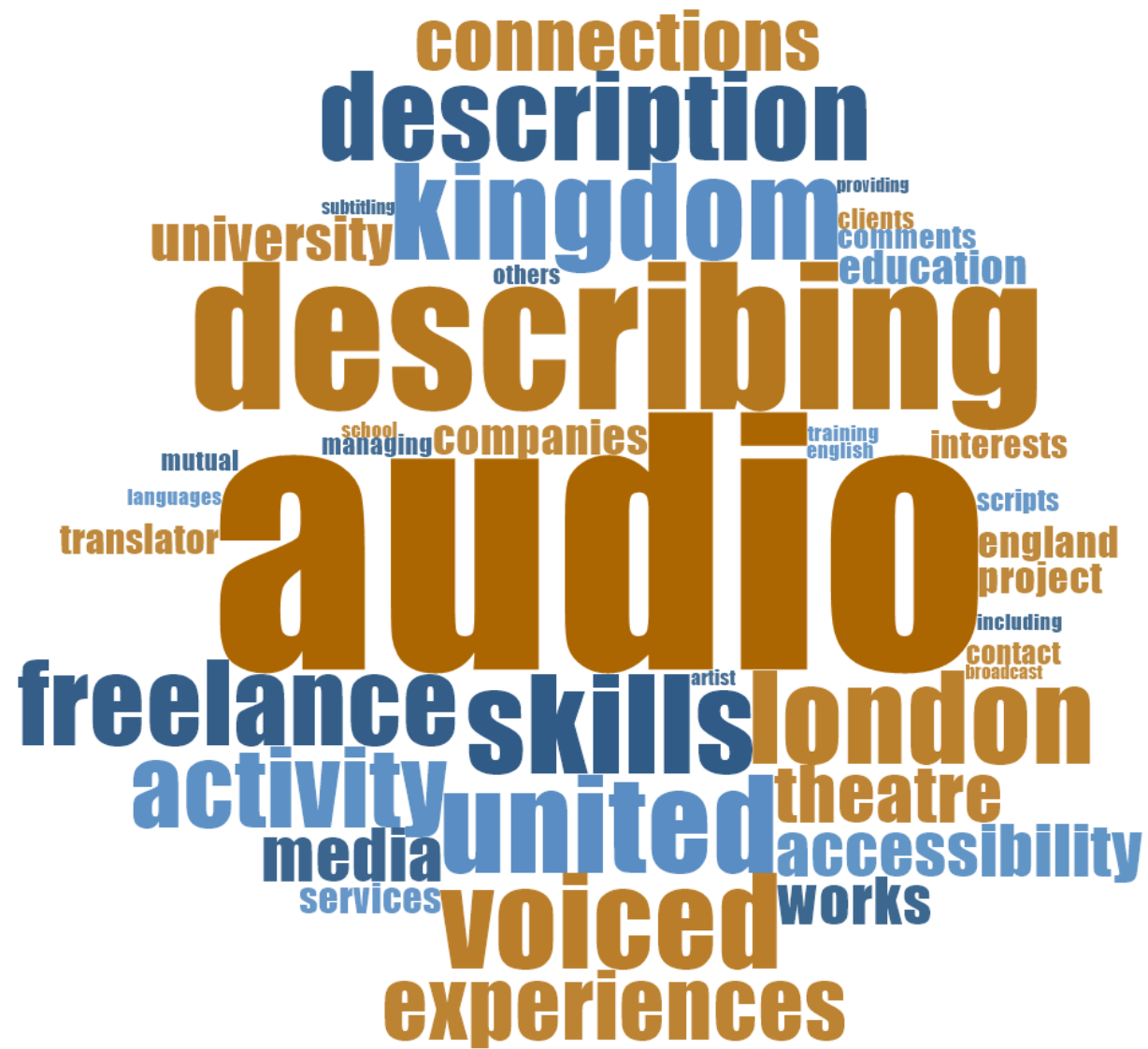
Online content analysis

Results

- Rarely just one job title
- Usually in combinations of 3-4
- Large proportion of non-translators

Country	Translator	Non-translator	TOTAL
UK	4	26	30
Poland	6	5	11
Spain	9	2	11







“live is more like a radio or television commentator role”

“a love of language and one’s voice to tell a story”

**Performer,
voice actor**

“input from visually impaired viewers”

“awareness in sensory, spatial and tactile elements that can be used to communicate when sight is limited”

**Accessibility
expert**

**Audio
Describer**

**Writer,
editor**

“the art of wordsmithing”

“play with words”

“detailed and varied research into pretty much anything you can think of”

**Translator,
linguist**

**Film/theatre
enthusiast**

“bringing together filmmaking and writing experience”

“a very thorough understanding of the director’s vision”

“look for ways in which the most relevant visual information can be turned into words and associations”

Job Ads

- Audio Describer
- AD Scriptor
- AD Scriptwriter
- AD Writer
- AD Writer/Editor
- AD Quality Control Technician



Job Ads: What do they tell us about the profession?

- **Scarce job listings (9/mostly expired)**
- **From pre-novice to multi-skilled professional**

- Write audio description scripts, synopses [Audio Description is a form of narration that provides a visual description of on-screen events for a visually impaired audience]
- Edit audio description scripts
- Adapt English scripts for lip sync dubbing projects
- QC audio description and dubbing projects
- Work specified on-call schedule as needed, in addition to regular schedule

- Write and/or proofread audio description scripts for film and television content.
- Ability to meet deadlines as determined by DVW Project Manager and communicate any issues that could impact the delivery of the script.
- Ensure that AD scripts meet DVW's and client's quality standards.
- QC/proofread AD scripts by other writers.

- The role involves scripting Audio Description
- Maintaining and creating programme templates with characters, locations, and episode synopsis (collaborative working)
- Understanding and employing different 'admin' procedures such as breaks, shot changes, and notes to the voiceover
- At a point to be agreed with the Audio Description Production Manager, the job holder will progress to voicing Audio Description:
 - Create voiced recordings of scripts
 - Understand and monitor audio levels and maintain awareness of recording equipment
 - Training in Auphonic software (audio QC)
 - Comprehensive QC of voice files
 - Knowledge sharing/collaborative working (feeding back to scripters on their work)
 - Reversioning Audio Description files from archive content
- Including audio editing
- Participate fully in a continuous process of performance improvement on a team and individual level, including the training of new ITV staff
- Any other duties that may be required by management from time to time

Is AD taken seriously?

„The work that I do with Audio Description and Accessibility is not my direct role at Netflix, nor was it work assigned to me by someone else, it’s just something I do because I love it.”



NOV 13, 2018

My Journey into Audio Description At Netflix



Erica Kram

Project Manager, Title Operations, Unscripted Original Series



When I started working at Netflix nearly four years ago, I felt all the emotions you would expect to feel starting a new job: excited, nervous, optimistic. During the interview process, I heard so much about the culture but had no idea what to expect. Months after settling into my role on the Content Operations team, I thought I had a good understanding of what the ‘Freedom & Responsibility’ culture meant. I found that I was trusted to do my job without being micromanaged, I was able to set my own schedule based on the work that needed to be done, and I had a strong relationship with my manager in which I could give and receive open and honest feedback. I had seen it for myself -- working for Netflix really does live up to the reputation in all the ways I had hoped for.

Conclusions (so far)

- Describers are not always translators
- Most combine AD with other jobs
- Patterns among combinations
- Polarized profession

Discussion

- Do different profiles of describers perceive the job differently?
- What implications does this have for training? What skills do they share?
- Does the lack of standardized training contribute to the lack of visibility and awareness about describers' work?



**As an audio describer of TV programmes,
I sometimes feel I have one of the most
interesting and unusual jobs
of anyone I know.**



Thank you!

Alicja Zajdel

University of Antwerp

Contact

✉ alicia.zajdel@uantwerpen.be

[@AlicjaZajdel](#)

References

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Grant, A. M., Berg, J. M., & Cable, D. M. (2014). Job titles as identity badges: How self-reflective titles can reduce emotional exhaustion. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57(4).

Melling, L. (2019). What's in a name? Job title and working identity in professional services staff in higher education. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 23(2–3).