

Modular Audio Description

A novel approach to AD
creation & delivery

Advanced Research in Audio Description
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Overview

The concept of Modular AD
Theoretical context
Research project
Studies conducted to date
Testing of the modular approach

The modular concept



Standard AD

uses natural pauses
in the original soundtrack



Extended AD

automatically pauses
a video for commentary



Modular AD [1]

combines Standard and Extended

- Standard AD forms the **core** part
- Extended AD delivers supplementary **modules**
- Supplementary modules are optional
- Allows user-activated delivery

Theoretical context

Previous research:

- ✓ Conducted for **Standard AD**
- ✓ Confirmed user preference for media products with AD (vs no AD)
- ✓ Identified positive user reception of alternative versions of standard AD:
 - Cinematic [2], [3], [4]
 - Emotive [5], [6]
 - Cognitive [7]
 - Linguistic preference studies [8], [9]

Research gap:

- ✓ **Extended AD** is less researched [10], [11]
- ✓ Considered for use only in extreme cases [12]
- ✓ Exists as a peripheral practice [13], [14]

(e.g. *YouDescribe* platform, since 2013 & Social Audio Description Collective's *YouTube* Channel, 3+ years)

Research questions

1. What types of information are present in the standard and extended AD and how is it organised?
2. What types of information would be most user-relevant to systematically include as extended AD?
3. How do users experience AD in its traditional form, and could this experience be enhanced by additional descriptive elements?

Study 1: Analysis of AD transcripts

Material: *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* (2022) trailer transcript described with both AD formats

Method: Comparative & qualitative textual analysis

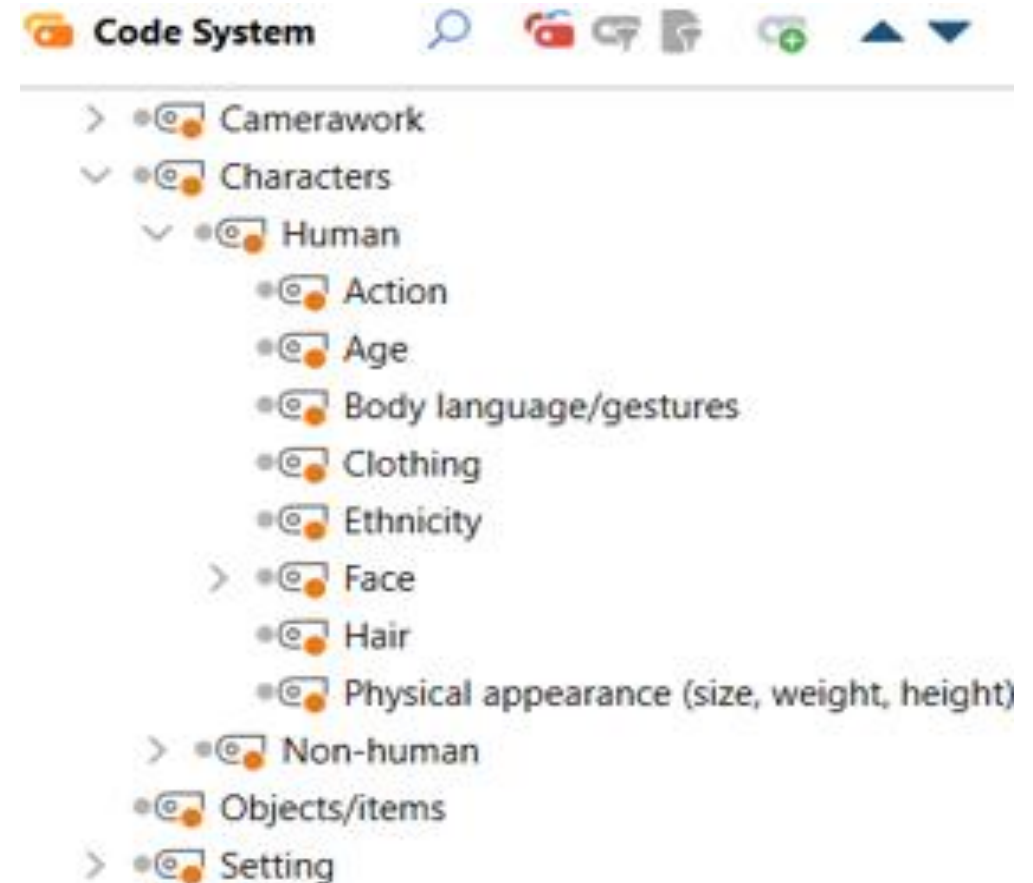
Standard AD

Water flows into Wakanda, sweeping people off their feet

Extended AD

A section of wall breaks and water floods into the colourful streets of Wakanda. People are swept off their feet into the current...

Figure 1: Information additional to standard AD coded in MAXQDA software based on Fresno's 5 categories [16]



Study 2: Consultation with experts

Method: Focus groups

- 2 online focus groups
- 8 professional audio describers
- 2-30 years of experience
- 2 with extended AD experience
- Stimulus - *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* (2022) film trailer

Ranking of shortlisted categories from Study 1:

1. Physical appearance
2. Ethnicity
3. Clothing
4. Setting
5. Cultural references
6. Age
7. Hair
8. Camerawork
9. Facial features

Study 3: Consultation with users

Method: Think-aloud protocol (TAP) & interviews

- 7 AD users
- Stimulus - *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* (2022) film trailer

Table 1: **Issues while listening to standard AD:**

Issues
Requests for more description:
Characters, scene, speaker identity
Technical concerns:
On-screen text/logo confusing
Volume of AD was not enough to hear

Quotes in response to extended AD:

P2: “I think it can be useful, but not for something that's like a trailer... Extended description just breaks into what's going on”

P4: “I think that was fantastic and I think it's really good to have the choice... the extended version actually resolved a lot of things”

P6: “Totally amazing. And it's how you would like it. My only thing that it's. It sounds sort of crazy, to say almost. Overly described. It's so much to take in your minds”

Key findings

- ✓ **Extended AD consistently includes all information delivered by standard AD and more**

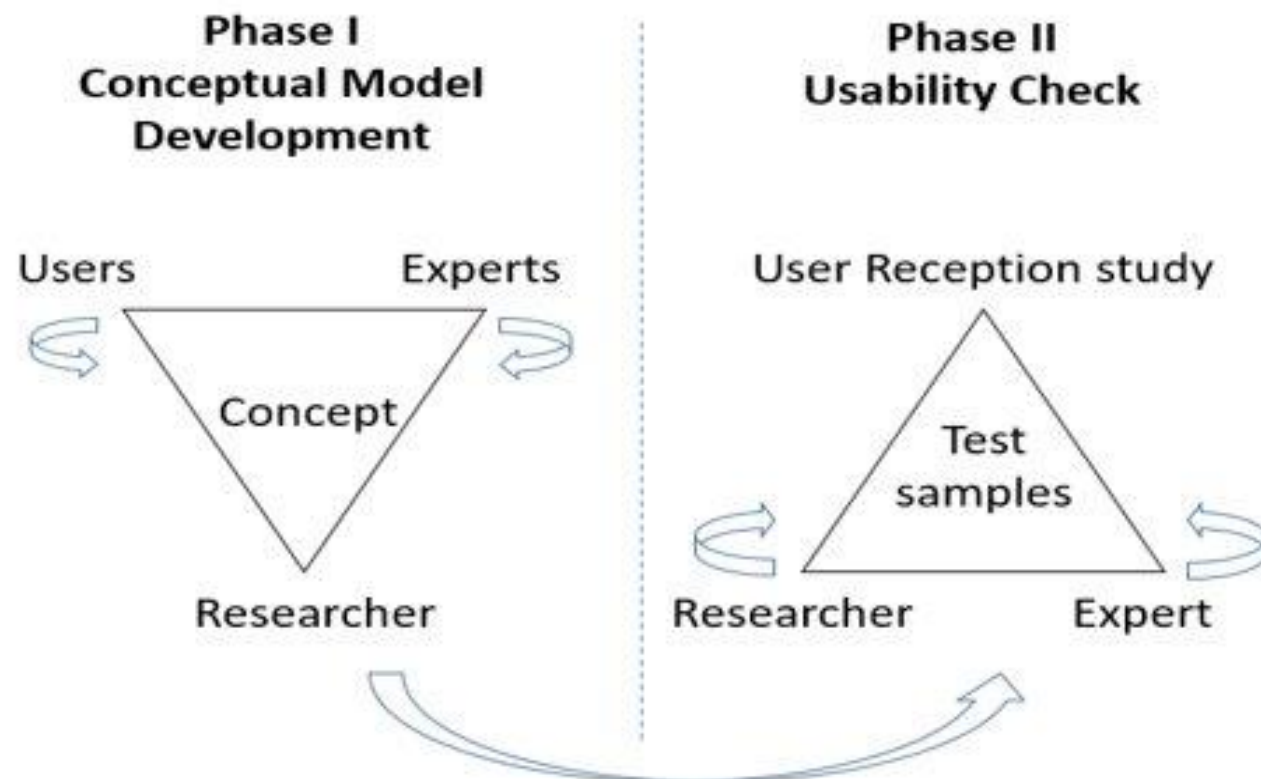
- ✓ **Top categories of information for supplementary modules:**
 - Physical appearance
 - Other character traits

- ✓ **Additional categories from describers and users:**
 - Action and movement
 - Identity/diversity
 - Naming of speakers

Genres where extended AD might work:

- Documentaries
- Sci-Fi
- Children's content
- Trailers
- Short films
- Horror

Testing of the modular approach



- Create own samples of modular audio description
- Conduct a user reception study
- Formulate recommendations for flexible delivery of AD to a wider range of audiences underpinned by Relevance Theory [17], [18] as a theoretical framework

Figure 2: Overall research project diagram adapted from Greco [15]

Thank you!

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