Universiteit Antwerpen

Faculteit Letteren
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No sound but the AD

**How does AD alter the filmic narrative?
The case of the Flemish TV series *De Nachtwacht*.**

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Background

Quote by sound designer Vincent LoBrutto:

"Although the feature film is perceived as a visual medium,
50 percent of the motion picture experience is aural". (LoBrutto, 1994)

Background

2 questions:

- What does the (narrative) sound profile of "a film" look like?

- What happens to the (narrative) sound profile of the film when AD is added?

State of the Art in AD

Still very little research

- Mostly product-oriented and descriptive (e.g. Remael (2012), Reviers (2018), Vercauteren & Reviers (2021));

- Few experimental studies (e.g. Fryer (2013), Lopez & colleagues (2009, 2020, 2021)

=> Possible explanation: lack of a shared conceptual and methodological framework.

Case Study – *De Nachtwacht S05E07 - Gwendolyn*

➢ Fantasy series for children/young adults

➢ 37 episodes with AD + audioguide

➢ "AD created as audiobook"

Methodology

- Analysis of (part of) episode S05E07 *Gwendolyn*
  - *00:00:00 – 00:03:11*
  - *00:03:51 – 00:06:10*
  - *00:12:50 – 00:17:30*

- Annotation in *Elan* on two broad levels:
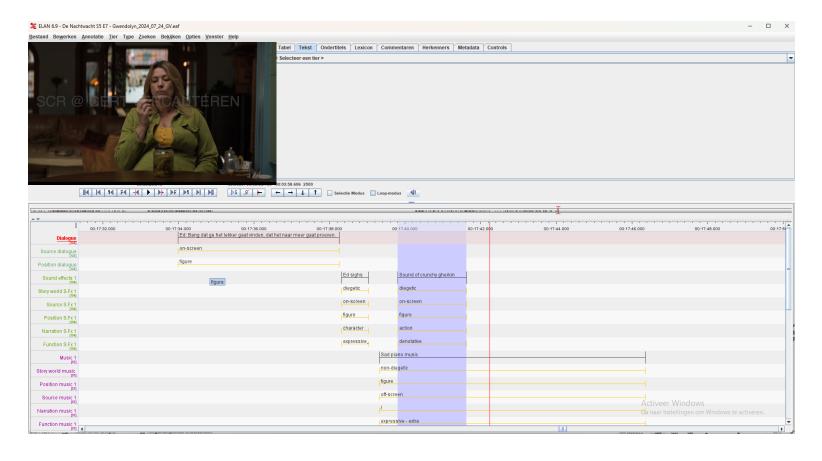
Type of Sound:

- Dialogue
- Music
- Sound Effect
- Voice Over
- Audio Description
- Silence

Characteristics of Sound:

- Storyworld
- Source
- Position
- Narrative constituent
- Narrative function

Methodology

Results

Number of sounds in the scenes

	No AD	AD
Dialogue	135 (31,3%)	135 (35,7 %)
Sound effects	261 (60,4 %)	209 (55,3 %)
Music	36 (8,3 %)	34 (9 %)
AD	0	(65)
TOTAL SOUNDS	432	378 (443)

Results

Position of the sounds in the narrative

	No AD	AD
Figure	133 (51%)	94 (45%)
Ground	128 (49%)	115 (55%)

Results

Sounds linked to narrative constituent

	No AD	AD
Actions	172 (66 %)	139 (67%)
Characters	13 (5 %)	11 (5%)
Objects	33 (12,6 %)	26 (12,4 %)
Space	21 (8,0 %)	14 (6,7%)
Time	9 (3,4 %)	9 (4,3 %)
No reference	13 (5%)	10 (4,8 %)

Results

Sounds linked to narrative constituent

	No AD	AD
Actions	172 (66 %)	139 (67%)
Characters	13 (5 %)	11 (5%)
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No reference	13 (5%)	10 (4,8 %)

Actants +/- 17,5 % { Characters, Objects

Setting +/- 11 % { Space, Time

Results

Narrative functions of sounds

	No AD	AD
Denotative	208 (79,7 %)	166 (79,4 %)
Expressive intradiegetic	39 (14,9 %)	33 (15,8 %)
Expressive extradiegetic	14 (5,4 %)	10 (4,8 %)
Symbolic	0	0
Aesthetic	0	0

Results

Sounds in the audio description

65 blocks of AD => 63 references to sounds in the narrative:

- 26 references to sounds that can still be heard
- 22 references to sounds that moved from a figure to a ground position
- 15 references to sounds that can no longer be heard in the AD version

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Results

Sounds in the audio description

- 52 sounds disappeared in the AD version => 15 (28,8%) mentioned in the AD
- 39 sounds moved from figure to ground => 22 (56,4 %) mentioned in the AD

Related to the total amount of sound effects:

- 37 of 261 sounds disappeared => 14,1%

BUT: all ground sounds still audible in the AD version.

If not: possibly up to 54 of 261 disappeared => 20,7%

Conclusions

Question 1 => 50% of the filmic experience is aural

➢ In qualitative terms => definitely

➢ In quantitative terms => up for debate
  ➢ Very often a supportive function for the visuals
    ➢ (e.g. 58 footsteps)
  ➢ Predominantly denotative
  ➢ Only +/- 20% expressive function

Multimodal cohesion

Conclusions

Question 2 => Impact of AD on the narrative

➢ Between 14,2% and 20,7% of sound effects get lost
  ➢ +/- 20 % for 3 main narrative constituents (actions, actants setting)

➢ Considerable change in terms of construction of the narrative

➢ Impact on the reconstruction of the narrative => still to be researched

➢ Various avenues for further research

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Questions & Contact

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