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AUDIO DESCRIPTION TRAINING IN SPAIN: A SURVEY-BASED OVERVIEW OF TEACHING PRACTICES¹

Nuria Mendoza Domínguez

nuria.mendozad@e-campus.uab.cat
Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona
nmendoza@nebrija.es
Universidad Nebrija

Anna Matamala

Anna.Matamala@uab.cat
Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona

Abstract

Audio description is a translation of images into words aiming to provide an alternative to the visual content for those who cannot access it. It can be considered an

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intersemiotic translation and, as such, it has often been taught as part of courses in audiovisual translation and media accessibility studies. However, studies on the specifics of the didactics of audio description are missing. This paper presents the results of a survey aiming to map the current situation regarding the teaching of audio description in Spain. It reports on the results obtained from 27 Spanish participants who answered a questionnaire produced as part of ADLAB PRO, an Erasmus+ project funded by the European Commission whose ultimate goal is to create training material for the training of audio describers. In order to contextualize such research, the paper also provides an overview of the training of audio describers in Spain.

Resumen

La audiodescripción (AD) consiste en la conversión de imágenes a palabras para ofrecer una alternativa a los contenidos visuales a quienes no pueden acceder a estos. Puede considerarse como un tipo de traducción intersemiótica y como tal, está frecuentemente incluida en los currícula de traducción audiovisual y en los estudios de accesibilidad a los medios. Sin embargo, los estudios sobre didáctica de la audiodescripción son casi inexistentes. Este trabajo presenta los resultados de un cuestionario cuyo objetivo es obtener un panorama actual de la enseñanza de la audiodescripción en España. Analiza los resultados de los 27 participantes españoles que respondieron al cuestionario, desarrollado como parte de ADLAB PRO, un proyecto Erasmus+ financiado por la Comisión Europea. Su objetivo fundamental es crear material didáctico para la formación de los audiodescriptores. Para poder contextualizar esta investigación, el artículo explica cómo se aborda la didáctica de la audiodescripción en España.

Keywords: Audio description. Translation didactics. Audiovisual translation. Media accessibility. ADLAB PRO.

Palabras clave: Audiodescripción. Didáctica de la traducción. Traducción audiovisual. Accesibilidad a los medios. ADLAB PRO.

1. Introduction

Fifteen years ago the question of accessibility in Spain was a still on the drawing board from all points of view. In the case of audio description (AD), the audio describers were mainly volunteers, and university courses on AD were very few and far between since there was not yet any significant commercial demand. Neither was there any social, legal or professional recognition in the sector to speak of (Orero 2005a). The year 2003 was key for the development of elements of accessibility, being the European Year of People with Disabilities. This provided an impulse for events such as the European Congress on Media and Disability that same year in Athens. Similarly, in 2004 in Spain the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs approved the First Accessibility Plan, "Design for All". Within this plan the topic of audio-visual accessibility appeared in the analysis of the problems that were detected. Among other measures taken were strategies for awareness-raising, training and inclusion in the course designs of universities which, at that time, were contemplating the development of adapted teaching materials as a parallel resource. There were other key actions and events during those years which laid the basis for current advances in accessibility. Legal backing was also achieved in 2003 with the passing of Act 51/2003 on Equality of Opportunities, Non-discrimination and Accessibility. Finally, in Spain, AD was placed firmly on the agenda with the creation of the regulation UNE 153020:2005. In short, all these documents, laws, standards, European directives and national programmes contributed to an increase in the social and political projection of accessibility in universities (Orero 2005b).

The subject of audio-visual accessibility in Spain, studied within the framework of audiovisual translation (AVT), has awakened growing interest in the last ten years. However, with regard to training approaches, and especially in the areas of AD, there are still few references in the bibliography, perhaps because it is a recent and relatively new area (Cerezo Merchán 2013). The research we present here is situated within this context. Our objective is to make a panoramic observation of the teaching profiles of AD trainers in Spain and the types of courses they teach, as well as the basic skills necessary for training audio describers. We therefore analyse the results of the Spanish

participants in a survey carried out under the umbrella of ADLAB PRO, an Erasmus+ project financed by the European Commission (ADLAB PRO n.d.).

This paper begins with an overview of the scientific contributions to the study of AD and training. We describe the ADLAB PRO, within which this research has been carried out, and describe the methodology used for the study. In section 5 the research results are presented and we conclude with some general considerations and possibilities for future research.

We understand AD as intersemiotic translation in which images are converted into words. Intersemiotic translation, in this respect, can be carried out on a product created in the same language as the AD (for example, audio description in Spanish of a film in Spanish) or on content previously translated interlinguistically (for example, audio description in Spanish of a film in English dubbed in Spanish).

2. Audio description training

The increase in the projection and visibility of accessibility is seen partly in open debate on the professional competences that the audio describer should possess. This debate began more than ten years ago when the first studies on AD and training took place.

Matamala (2006) analysed the role that the universities should play in raising awareness of the acquisition of translation and language competences for AD and for subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH). Her work brought together existing guides from other countries and Spain (regulation UNE 153020:2005 had just been approved), as well as expert opinions in relation to the requirements necessary to be able to audio describe and the competences needed by professionals in the sector. All agents without exception included recommendations and guidance related to the use of language, both for AD and for SDH. Matamala also mentioned the most important requirements indicated by the Audio Description Association (<http://audiodescription.co.uk/>), which included aspects referring to the use of language such as the capacity for summarising and use of vocabulary, and others referring to the clarity and pleasantness of the voice.

Matamala made reference to other authors such as Navarrete (2007), who stated that the audio describer should possess literary competences, and Snyder (2007, 2008), who was later the author of a reference training manual and guide (2014), and for whom mastery of the language was also one of the pillars of AD. Others added the capacity for observation, editing and speaking skills. Matamala's study also highlighted the role of the university as the main agent

in the debate on the acquisition of language and translation competences which are required by audio describers. In the academic arena, many of the initiatives in the field of AD begin in the faculties of Translation and Interpreting.

Another major study on AD and training was carried out by Díaz Cintas (2006), and states that centres offering courses on audio visual accessibility ten years ago were scarce. The academic debate on the competences that needed to be acquired by professionals in the field (both SDH and AD) was also limited. On the question of competences, Díaz Cintas set out from the basis that in the field of audio-visual accessibility, students and future professionals should be trained with a view to the situation in Spain in the short term. He divided the units of competences into four categories: linguistic, thematic or content-based, technological and applied, and finally personal and general.

Linguistic competences

Knowledge of one's own language
Creativity, sensitivity to language
Editing texts in one's own language
Knowledge of English

Technological and applied competences

Computer programs and Internet
Willingness to learn software
Documentation strategies

Thematic and content-based competences

Knowledge of disability and accessibility
Knowledge of film language and semiotics
Labour market and legislation for AD and SDH
Theory and practice of AD
Knowledge of theatre
History of art

Personal and general competences

Broad general culture
Capacity for analysis, synthesis and interpretation
Ability to relate ideas quickly
Critical reasoning
Employment flexibility, ability to meet deadlines
Teamwork
Intermediation skills

It should be said that Díaz Cintas anticipated technological advances and their influence in the increase in AD services, and the need for future audio describers to have a profound knowledge of the virtual world. He concluded with the importance of initiating a serious debate on the acquisition of competences by audio describers as an unescapable condition for the increase in AD services, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in the coming years.

Other studies on AD training have covered the way in which AD courses should be designed. In that respect, having reviewed the competences that the audio describer should possess, Matamala & Orero (2007) explained how an AD module should be designed as part of a Master's Degree in Audio Visual Translation at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. The design specified the competences and learning outcomes foreseen, as well as the way the course

would be taught, including specific exercises. Also in relation to AD training, Basich Peralta *et al.* (2009) briefly contextualised competence-based learning, pointing to the common competences needed in the audio description and the translation professions. Based on shared areas of competences the authors advocated the inclusion of AD in university translation programmes in terms of the competences, skills and knowledge to be acquired. Other studies carried out at the same time on AD and training (Remael & Vercauteren 2007) reflected on how existing guides and rules, essential though they are, do not always answer the questions the audio describers have about which elements should be included in a specific AD. From this premise, the authors set out to prove that film narrative can be helpful for selecting the visual information and turning it into a useful teaching tool for AD training. Another author focusing on teaching, Marzà Ibáñez (2010), presented a proposal for the prioritisation and relevance of visual information to be included in an audio description project, again by means of film narrative. One of Marzà Ibáñez's key contributions is her proposal for assessment criteria in an academic context which allows the inherent subjectivity in AD to be reconciled with the systematisation required in training.

Finally, we would like to mention studies by Cambeiro Andrade *et al.* (2007), Reyes (2007), and more recent ones by Martínez Martínez (2012) and Álvarez de Morales Mercado (2017), who carried out a methodological application of socio-constructivist theory of learning with the production and analysis of AD in two specific architectural spaces in Granada.

Another approach we consider in this paper is that of authors who see the use of AD as a teaching tool in language learning (Talaván 2018; Talaván *et al.* 2014) or in relation to the acquisition of vocabulary (Vermeulen & Ibáñez Moreno 2013). On a more applied level, manuals have been published in the English-speaking world (Fryer 2016; Snyder 2014), but there are no such manuals dedicated exclusively to the teaching of AD in Spanish. It is, however, included as a topic in general manuals such as those by Martínez Sierra (2012), Rica Peromingo (2016) and Talaván *et al.* (2016).

Despite progress in AD training, studies in Spain are still few and far between and more research needs to be carried out to throw light on current teaching practices and the profile of the trainers. The aim of this paper is to contribute to that.

3. The ADLAB PRO Project

ADLAB PRO is a project financed by the European Union which has as one of its main objectives the creation of teaching materials for training professional audio describers. The first phase of the project involves an overview of existing courses and the competences included in them, as well as current practices in training for the acquisition of academic and professional competences in the sector. The project is led by the University of Trieste and participated in by partner universities (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, University of Antwerp and the Adam Mickiewicz University), companies such as Utopian Voices Ltd (<https://www.utopianvoices.com/>) and Soundfocus (<http://soundfocus.nl/>), user associations, such as the Royal National Institute of the Blind (<https://www.rnib.org.uk/>) and radio broadcasters (Slovenian Radio and TV), all from six different countries (Spain, Italy, UK, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia). The project began in 2016 and will last three years. It consists of the following phases:

- (1) Evaluation of current teaching practices: the project aims to provide a close view of courses currently teaching AD through a questionnaire to collect quantitative data and interviews for qualitative data.
- (2) Definition of the professional profile of audio describers: the aim of this phase is to identify the competences that audio describers should possess, using the results of a second questionnaire and interviews with active professionals and end users.
- (3) Course design: using the results from the two previous phases, a course will be designed for the training of audio describers.
- (4) Production of teaching materials: setting out from the design in phase 3, teaching content will be created in different formats and languages, with the objective that they can be used in different teaching contexts. In parallel to the creation of materials, the project will carry out an evaluation of them.
- (5) Recognition of the course and assignation of credits: in this phase the quantification of the course will be studied in terms of credits as well as the way in which it can be included and validated on a European level, both in the university ambit and in company training courses.

The research presented in this paper is part of the first phase of the project, led by the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poland. It involved the distribution of a questionnaire on a European level to provide an overview of current teaching

practices. In the following section we describe the methodology used to collect the data, which in this paper is limited to that obtained in Spain.

4. Methodological aspects

In order to collect data on current AD teaching practices a questionnaire was designed, coordinated by the researchers Agnieszka Chmiel and Iwona Mazur. The final objective was to present an overview of AD teaching practices and courses Europe-wide to be able to understand the similarities and differences between countries and the different needs of each. A qualitative study of teaching materials was carried out, the results of which can be consulted in the final report.

The Polish team drafted the first version of the questionnaire and it was reviewed by different members of the team in a number of online and face-to-face working sessions. The final version of the questionnaire was agreed and tested in a pilot study.

The questionnaire included questions about AD teaching both in universities and in professional settings and it was set out as follows:

- (1) Instructions and description of the general structure.
- (2) Teacher/trainer profile.
- (3) Section on university courses: level, format, face-to-face/online/blended learning, duration, average number of students, activities and assessment systems used.
- (4) Section on professional training courses: format, duration, average number of students, skills and activities, certification. This section includes courses in the form of workshops, Continuing Professional Development training (henceforth CPD), company courses and one-to-one training.
- (5) General questions: importance of specific and transferable competences, number of participants in total.

Written in English, the questionnaire was distributed on line using the Instantly service, in accessible format. The addressees were people who gave or had given courses in AD at any level and in any kind of environment. Bearing in mind that some of the teacher/trainers had given several courses but wished to limit the time of their response to 25 minutes, the number of courses per participant was limited to six (a maximum of three university courses and three professional

courses), all given within the last three years. Participation was anonymous and only at the end could participants provide contact information, if they wished to continue taking part in the project.

For the distribution of the questionnaires each member of the project drew up a list of possible contacts to distribute the questionnaires to. A total of 86 participants in 6 European countries gave information about 192 courses, of which 93 were higher education courses and 99 professional training courses (ADLAB PRO 2017: 4). The purpose of this paper is to analyse the questionnaires completed in Spain. A search of the AD courses in Spain and the most active academics in scientific publications in the field led us to identify 29 possible teacher/trainers who we wrote to by e-mail to request their participation, alongside other possible participants, giving a total of 38 possible respondents. Finally, there were 27 participants who gave information about a total of 66 courses of which 46 were academic and 20 professional.

5. Results

First, we will present data for all respondents and others of a general nature. Secondly, we will give details of the data obtained about the acquisition of competences by audio describers. Finally, we will offer an in-depth analysis of the responses obtained for academic and professional courses.

5.1 General questions

All respondents were asked about their profile. As might be expected as a result of the selection process, all of them gave or had given classes in AD. The responses (which could be multiple) to the question “Who are you?” showed that the profile of respondents was basically divided between researchers, university lecturers and audio describers.

Isolating the profiles, we were able to observe that 74% were university lecturers, 63% were researchers and 37% were audio describers (Figure 1). 30% worked in executive positions in companies offering AD services. A much lower percentage (7%) were users of AD services, and 4% were AD voicing recorders.

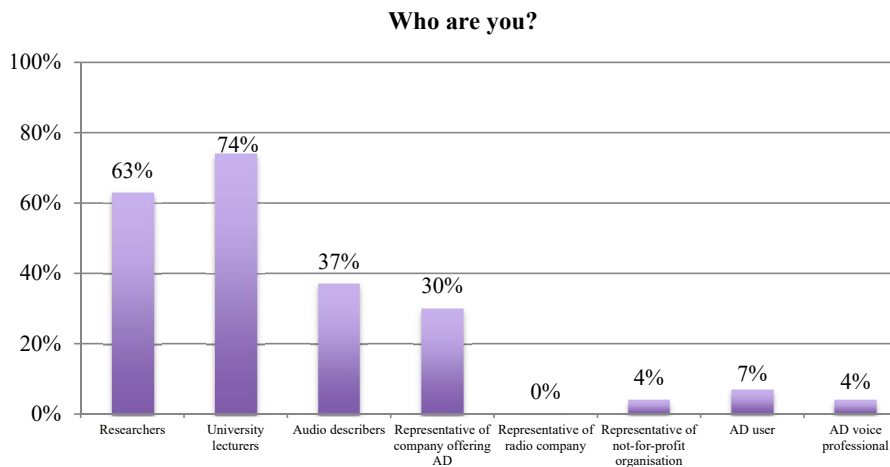


Figure 1. Profile of respondents. Isolated categories (%)

When analysed, according to the most frequent combinations among the different categories (Figure 2), the first combination is that of researcher and university lecturer, with 59% simultaneously identifying with both profiles. Combinations of academic and professional profiles were considerably less: 15% are university lecturers and audio describers. Of these, 11% are researchers and university lecturers as well as audio describers. Those who only work as describers as their main activity accounted for 15%.

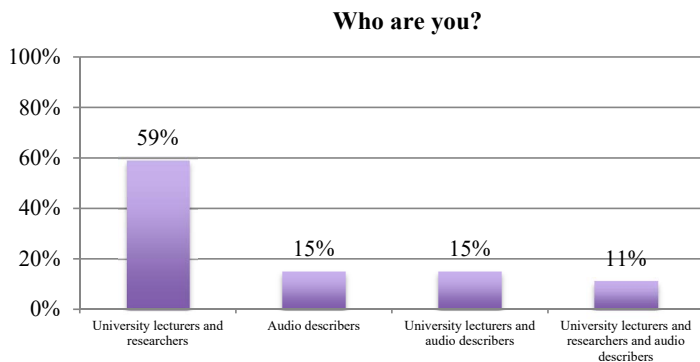


Figure 2. Profile of respondents. Most frequent combinations of categories (%)

The results described indicate that the academic world and the professional world of AD follow similar paths, although better communications between the worlds of business and the university as well as better mutual knowledge are recommended in SDH (Cerezo Merchán 2013: 181). Several factors can influence this shortfall in interconnection. Among them it is worth highlighting the difficulties experienced by professionals who are not PhDs to give classes at university. On the one hand, if a professional with these characteristics intends to give classes at Bachelor's degree level their employment category would almost certainly be that of Adjunct Lecturer. On the other, there are many professionals who would be able to teach but who do not hold PhDs, and as a result of the Spanish university system these would be rejected at Master's degree level where a certain percentage of lecturers holding PhDs is required. However, better interconnection between the two worlds would contribute to ensuring teaching focuses in the classroom that cover the real needs of the profession. It would also offer students the chance to make contacts with businesses when carrying out their work placements.

The second question dealt with how long AD had been taught for. The results for Spain were split between those who had a long history of teaching AD and those with more moderate experience: 59% had experience of between three and ten years, 37% less than three years, and finally 4% were novice teachers with less than one year's experience.

The third question was "Are you a user of AD services? If you are, do you use AD services because of a visual disability?". The data obtained showed the following panorama: 26% used AD services while 74% did not. Of those who used the AD services, 100% responded that they did not use AD services as a result of any sight impairment. It would be logical to deduce a personal, academic or professional interest being the reason for using the services. The fact that teachers were habitual users of AD services should constitute a positive contribution to ensuring that students' learning experiences are more real. It would therefore be interesting to know why the greater percentage did not use AD services.

According to the data obtained from the fourth question, which referred to the frequency with which teachers are involved with people with sight impairment (Figure 3), 30% of respondents stated that they are involved frequently, 7% always and 22% sometimes. On the other hand, 26% are rarely involved and 15% never involved.

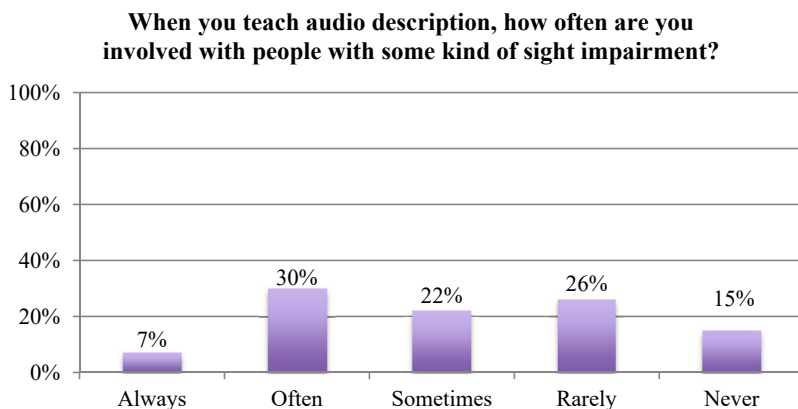


Figure 3. Profile of respondents. Involvement with persons with some kind of sight impairment (%)

Despite being Spanish teacher/trainers, we wanted to find out in which other countries the respondents taught. While 77% only taught in Spain, 15% also taught in other countries (one person in Finland, another in Belgium, a third in Italy and a fourth in the USA). The rest were distributed in 4% who taught in other Spanish-speaking countries, without specifying which, and another 4% who taught in Spain, but who had also given AD sessions in Colombia.

In terms of the language or languages that are used for AD scripts during the courses, the responses (multiple where necessary) were as expected: 96% of respondents use Spanish and 4% English. Of those who use Spanish, 36% create scripts in Spanish only, while 26% work to create scripts AD scripts in Spanish and Catalan, 15% in Spanish and English, 8% simultaneously in Spanish, Catalan and English and 15% are divided between combinations of Spanish and English and Catalan, French, English, Italian and German respectively, plus other languages in general that were not specified.

The seventh question referred to the type of AD taught by the respondents. Of them, 92% (with the opportunity to give multiple answers) teach AD for cinematographic content (Figure 4). In addition to AD for film, 44% cover AD for museum and theatrical content. Teaching of AD content for opera accounted for 15%, the same as the figure for live events, and 26% teach AD for audio visual teaching materials. Finally, historical heritage, documentaries, series, Zarzuela and dance accounted for 4% each of the destination of teaching of AD.

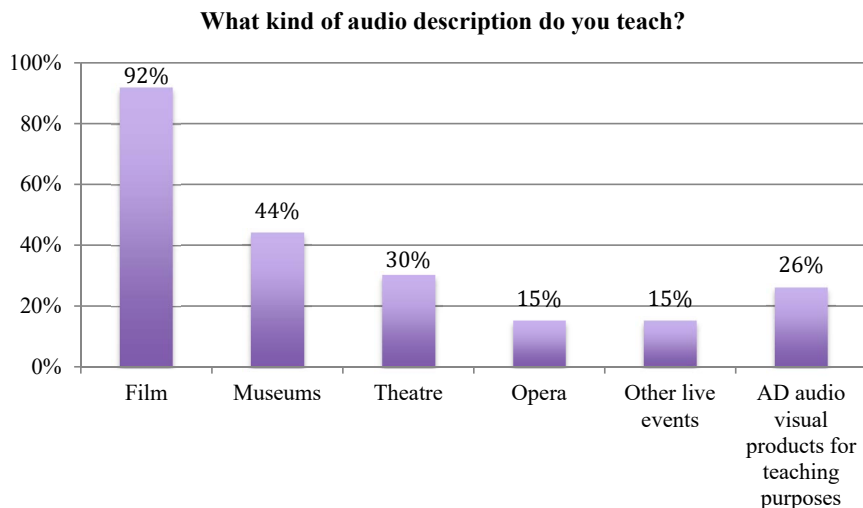


Figure 4. AD taught by audio visual product category (%)

5.2 Competences

In this section the specific and transferable competences that future audio describers would be expected to acquire during their training are presented. Those surveyed were asked to indicate the importance of both types of competences on a 5-point Likert scale (1 – not important; 2 – not very important; 3 – neither important nor not important; 4 –important; 5 – very important). The questionnaire included at least one question referring to each of the categories of competences indicated by Díaz Cintas (see section 2) and the objective was to see the importance that audio describers attributed to different competences linked to their professional profile.

In terms of specific competences, the respondents (Table 1) attached greatest importance to the ability to select the most relevant information to be described, closely followed by the ability to demonstrate perfect use of the mother tongue and to possess knowledge of the needs of blind and sight impaired persons. Other competences following these which were also situated as being “important” and “very important” were the ability to choose appropriate AD strategies, to possess both technical knowledge and knowledge of the audio-visual products and the semiotics of the image. Respondents gave relative importance (3 – neither important or not important) to the remainder of the specific competences: vocal skills, capacity for reflection on

cinematographic language when audio describing and knowledge of information technology.

Specific competences	Average score (out of 5)
Ability to select the most relevant information to be described	4.88
Perfect use of the mother tongue	4.85
Knowledge of the needs of blind and sight impaired persons	4.70
Ability to choose appropriate AD strategies (e.g. decide when a person should be named)	4.48
Technical aspects (editing, synchronisation, text condensation)	4.11
Knowledge of cinematography, theatre, art and semiotics of the image	4
Vocal skills	3.59
Reflection on cinematographic language (editing, camera angles)	3.40
Skills related to information technology (use of computer programs, etc.)	3.22

Table 1. Specific competences in order of importance

Of the four transferable competences included in Spain (Table 2), all were considered either “important” or “very important”, but the greatest importance was given to the ability for efficient organisation of the work and time management. Secondly, we observed the importance of ethical aspects, which would seem to be in line with inherent sensitivity to topics related to media access. Close behind was the competence of personal development. Without any further data on this point, we might surmise that this may be due to the importance recognised by the respondents of constant personal growth for future audio describers, which is in turn indirectly related to the continuous development of their other competences. Finally, respondents recognised the ability to work in a team. Although this is a transferable competence, and not specific to AD, it could be deduced that respondents see AD as an individual task in most cases.

Transferable competences	Average score (out of 5)
Efficient organisation of the work and time management	4.62
Ethical aspects	4.40
Personal development	4.22
Team work	4.14

Table 2. Transferable competences in order of importance

5.3 AD Courses

The next two sections aimed to obtain information about the characteristics of university and professional taught courses. In terms of the former, the aim was to identify the level (Bachelor’s degree, Master’s degree or postgraduate course) and the format of the course. In other words, whether the AD course was free-standing or formed part of another course. Additionally, respondents were asked about the modality of the courses (classroom-based, online or blended), their duration, groups size, aptitudes and skills worked on and the activities on which they were centred. Finally, information was collected about the assessment system used. The second focused on professional training courses. The questions were the same with the following exceptions: there was no question on either modality or level of the courses. The format of the courses was included as a question but inquired as to whether the training took place in the form of workshops or CPD, whether it was internal and whether it was one-on-one. The question on assessment systems was not included either, but respondents were asked whether at the end of the training any kind of diploma was awarded.

The results obtained for each of the questions in this part of the questionnaire are presented below, starting with the academic courses, followed by the professional courses and finally showing a comparison between the two.

5.3.1 University courses

The questionnaire aimed to find out the percentage of respondents who gave classes in universities and those who offered courses in a professional environment. 81% said they gave classes on academic courses, 48% of which were exclusively in academic environments and 33% of which combined their university teaching with professional training courses. In total, information was gathered on 46 academic courses taught at universities. It is estimated that 950

students have taken these courses over the last three years. In other words, 54% of respondents affirmed that more than 60 people participated in their courses in the last three years, while 23% stated that they had been 21 and 40 students, 14% between 41 and 60 students and 9% responded that they had had fewer than 20 students in the last three years.

In terms of levels taught (Figure 5), the results showed AD courses at the levels of Bachelor's degree (30%), Master's degree (48%) and postgraduate courses (22%). That AD courses are more frequently taught on Master's degrees may respond to the fact that they involve a level of specialisation which allows specific sections on AD to be included in the syllabus, in contrast to Bachelor's degree courses which require the inclusion of a much larger number of different areas meaning that it is difficult to include more specialised areas. In answer to the question of whether each AD course constituted a course in itself or whether it formed part of another, 41% responded that the courses were exclusive to AD, while 57% replied that they were mainly included in SDH courses, at both Bachelor's and Master's degree level. Of the remaining 2% we received information that they were optional courses. In terms of the teaching modality (Figure 6), the majority were classroom-based courses (65%), followed by online courses (22%) and then blended learning (13%).

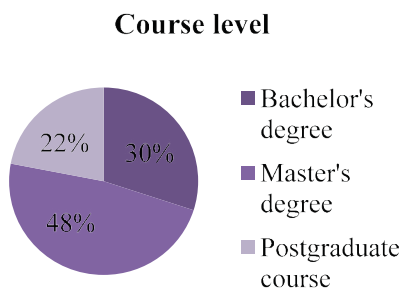


Figure 5. Level at which the academic courses were taught

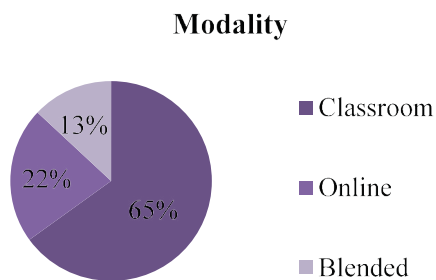


Figure 6. Modality of teaching academic courses

With regard to the data collected on the duration of courses in isolation, the results show the following scenario (Figure 7): 43% had a duration of less than 10 hours, 20% of between 10 and 20 hours, and 11% between 21 and 30% while 26% of courses lasted more than 30 hours. Comparing the duration with the modality in which the courses are taught, the most frequent tendency is that courses lasting less than 10 hours are taught in a classroom situation (31%

of academic courses). Lower percentages account for courses from 10 to 20 hours duration (18%) and courses with a duration of more than 30 teaching hours, also classroom based (13%). Following these were online courses with a duration of less than 10 hours (11%). For the other combinations, trends could not be identified beyond the fact that the lowest number of courses were taught online or in blended learning. Therefore, the greatest relationship between the duration of the courses and their modality is in line with the greater presence of classroom-based courses reported from the questionnaire.

In relation to group size, 11% of courses had fewer than 10 students per group, 52% between 10 and 20, and 37% more than 20 students in the classroom. This last figure is sufficiently high to interest us in more detail in future research in the number of students that make up groups of more than 20.

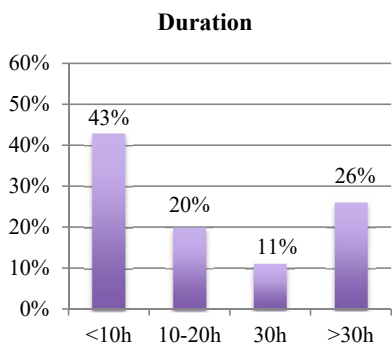


Figure 7. Duration of university AD courses

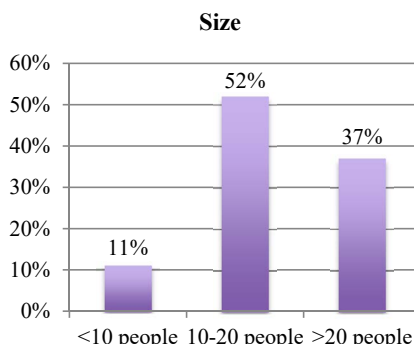


Figure 8. Size of the university AD course groups

A specific section of the questionnaire asked about the skills taught, with the option of multiple answers. There was a majority response in the creation of AD scripts, being included in 87% of courses (Table 3), and 85% state the importance of a knowledge and awareness of the needs of blind and sight-impaired persons. Proportionally, and at a much lower percentage, 24% of courses stated knowledge of specific AD software and 22% knowledge of AD recording. Finally, 17% of respondents stated that they worked on AD voicing and the translation of AD scripts into other languages.

Skills taught on university courses	Percentage
Creation of AD scripts	87%
Awareness of the needs of persons with sight impairment	85%
Use of applied AD software	24%
Recording of AD	22%
Voicing of AD	17%
Translation of AD to the mother tongue of the students	17%

Table 3. Skills taught on university courses (%)

In terms of activity types the responses, which could be multiple, indicated that the courses include: analysis of existing ADs (96%), practical exercises (93%), discussion on AD guidelines (87%) and the presentation of the theory related to AD (85%), e.g. research articles. This typology of activities would seem to be in line with current teaching methodologies in the translation classroom, as reported in in-depth studies in the area of translation studies (Király 2003/2014; González Davies 2004; Huertas Barros 2013).

With regard to course assessment systems, 91% take participation into account for the grade. 74% require students to carry out course work and 72% the creation of an AD script. A much lower number are the 15% which base assessment on exams and just 9% where students have to write an essay related to some aspect of AD.

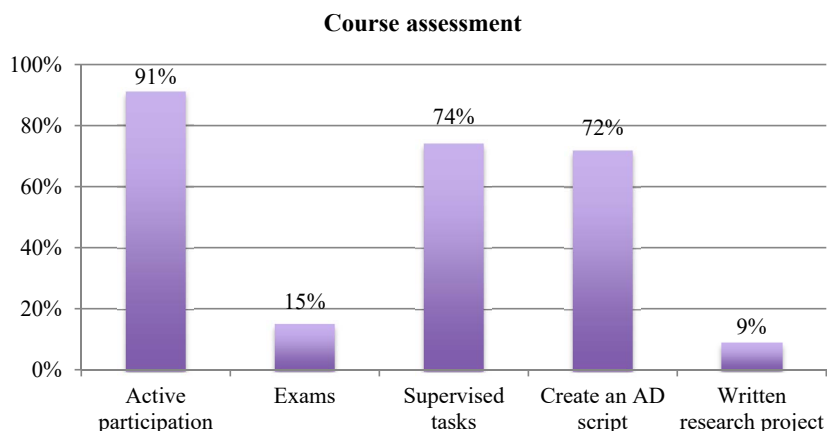


Figure 9. Course assessment systems (%)

5.3.2 Professional training courses

Professional training courses accounted for 52% of the total (14 out of 27 respondents fitted this profile). At the same time 19% of these only taught professional courses. In total, information was collected about 20 courses of this type. It can also be estimated that a minimum of 331 students took part in these courses over the last three years. In other words, 43% of respondents affirmed that fewer than 20 students took part, 21% stated that more than 60 took part in their courses and finally 14% responded that between 41 and 60 people took part in their courses over the last three years.

It was observed that 60% of professional courses took place in the form of workshops, compared with 15% which focused on CPD and another 15% which offered courses for businesses. Finally, 10% offered face-to-face training. The fact that over half the courses were workshops reflects their eminently practical nature, which would logically contribute to giving the future audio describer an experience close to the reality of the profession. Looking at the duration of the courses (Figure 10), it can be seen that 40% of courses lasted less than 10 hours, while 25% last between 21 and 30 hours. Finally, 20% of courses had a duration of more than 30 hours.

In terms of group sizes for professional courses (Figure 11) the distribution was as follows: 40% had groups of fewer than 10 people, compared with 40% with 10 to 20 people and 20% with groups of over 20 people.

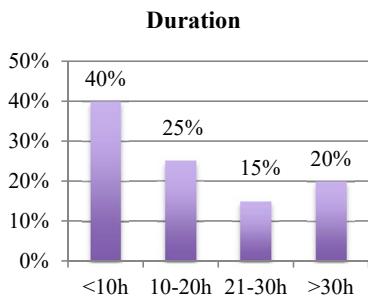


Figure 10. Duration of professional AD courses

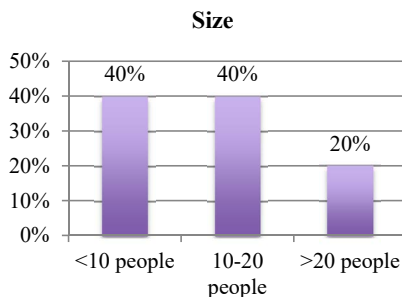


Figure 10. Duration of professional AD courses

When asked about skills (Table 4), where multiple responses were possible, the results showed that 85% of courses included creation of AD scripts, followed by 75% which taught strategies for raising awareness of the needs of persons with visual impairment. Considerably fewer, at 35%, worked with software

applied to AD, and 25% taught AD recording techniques. Finally, AD voicing was included in 20% of courses and translation of the AD into the students' mother tongue in 15%.

Skills taught on professional courses	Percentage
Creation of AD scripts	85%
Awareness-raising of the needs of persons with visual impairment	75%
Use of applied AD software	35%
Recording of AD	25%
Voicing of AD	20%
Translation of AD to the mother tongue of the students	15%

Table 4. Skills taught on professional courses (%)

According to the data obtained, most professional courses included predominantly practical activities (80%) and activities related to real AD analysis (80%). In turn, 55% included a presentation of the theoretical aspects of AD and 55% also included activities linked to discussion of AD guidelines.

To get an overview of the professional courses it was useful to know whether they gave some kind of accreditation at the end of the course. It was reported that 65% did give some kind of certificate while 35% did not. More detailed studies could offer the reasons for this in both cases as well as provide information about the type of accreditation, diploma or certificate achieved and the institutions issuing them.

5.3.3 Comparison between academic and professional courses

Despite the populations being quite different (46 academic courses and 20 professional courses) it is still possible to make comparisons between them and identify trends. In terms of the course duration (Figure 12), 43% of academic courses and 40% of professional courses lasted less than 10 hours. In the other categories there was a slight variation: the second most frequent category for academic courses was that of a duration of more than 30 hours (26%), compared with the professional courses whose second place consisted of slightly shorter courses, between 10 and 20 hours, which accounted for 25% of the total.

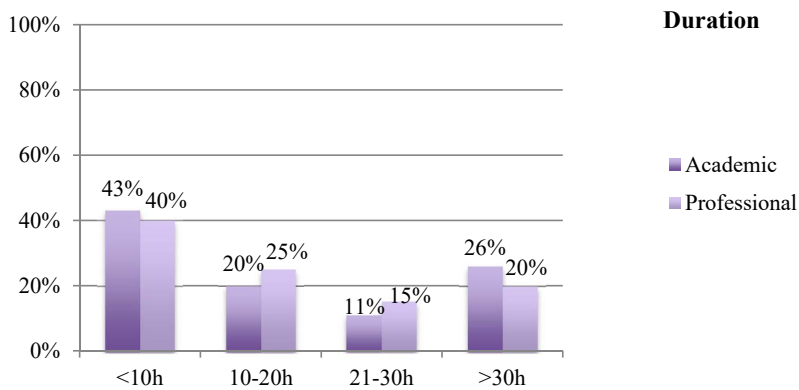


Figure 12. Duration of academic and professional courses

With reference to the numbers of students (Figure 13), academic courses were composed of higher numbers of students, with 52% between 10 and 20 people, 37% with more than 20 students and, finally, 11% with groups of fewer than 10 people. In the case of the professional courses the situation was more varied with 40% of courses composed of 10 people and between 10 and 20, respectively, and the category of groups with more than 20 people coming in last place and accounting for 20%.

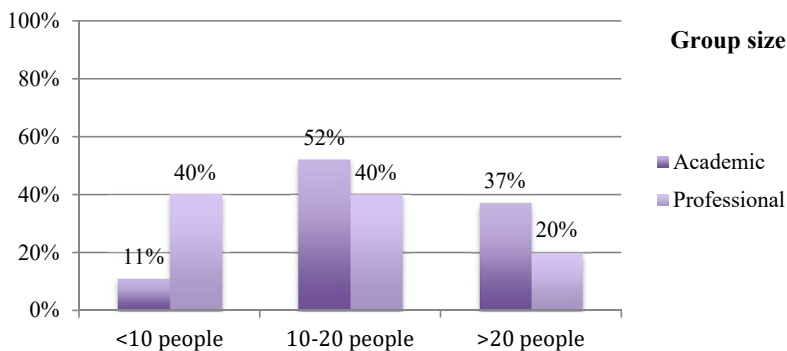


Figure 13. Size of academic and professional courses

We also wanted to compare duration and group size for the two types of course. For academic courses, in first place were the courses of the shortest duration (<10 hours) which were composed of either between 10 and 20 students (20% of all courses, taking into account their duration and size), or more than 20

students (17%). In second place were the longest courses (>30 hours) which had between 10 and 20 students (17% of all academic courses). Below these figures were the courses of between 10- and 20-hours' duration which were composed of between 10 and 20 students (11%). The other possible combinations resulted in a statistical variation of between 2% and 7% and no other trends could be identified in terms of the relation between duration and size for these types of course. In other words, as far as we had data available, both the longer courses and the shorter ones are included in the middle range of group size. This can offer useful information when planning content to teach, as well as about the level of depth to be taken into account by teachers and trainers, taking into account duration in combination with group size.

With regard to professional courses, with the information obtained it was not possible to identify trends on whether longer courses were composed of larger or smaller groups. Rather, the conclusion in this respect is that the trend seems to be a balance of all the possible combinations.

With reference to the skills included in both types of course (Figure 14), a great similarity was found in most categories, with the odd exception such as the greater percentage that professional courses dedicated to knowledge of software applied to AD in comparison with the academic courses (35% compared to 24%) respectively). It seems logical that professional courses have a more immediate need in the use of certain computer programmes and the results seem to reflect this deduction.

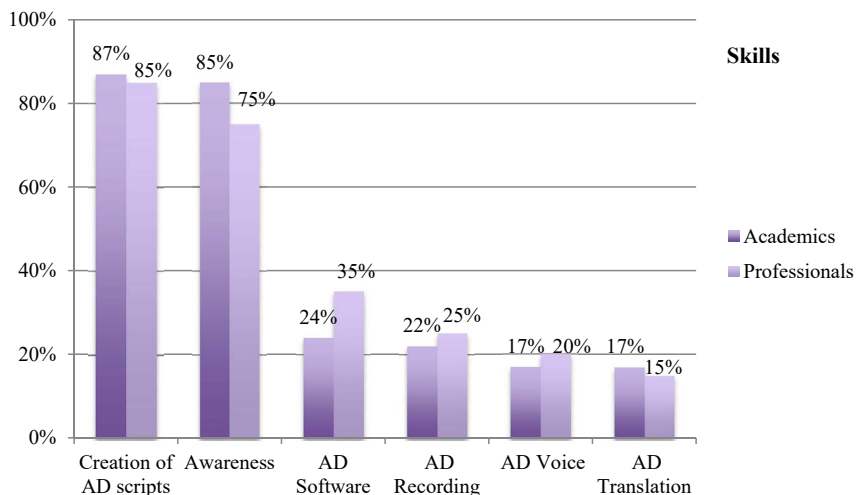


Figure 14. Skills in academic courses and professional courses

We compared the duration of the courses with the skills that were prioritised. The most visible data refers to the fact that most courses, independently of their duration, included the creation of AD scripts among the necessary skills, along with awareness of the needs of blind persons or those with some kind of sight impairment. In terms of academic courses, we concluded that among the courses with a duration of less than 10 hours, 85% were focused on raising awareness of the aforementioned needs and 80% on the creation of AD scripts. These figures are much higher than those obtained for the other categories in these kinds of course with the same duration: 0% focused on AD voicing, 10% on the translation of existing AD scripts, and another 10% on AD recording. This might explain why in Spain it is usual to create audio descriptions and not translate existing ones (which would be interlinguistic translation between B language and Spanish used as the basis for an intersemiotic translation of visual content into words). Similarly, in Spain it is usual that for most recorded products dubbing actors, and not the audio describers themselves, are used to record the AD in a recording studio.

The data obtained for courses of different duration followed the same line. Especially those of between 10- and 20-hours' duration, where 90% focused on the creation of AD scripts and awareness respectively. 93% of courses lasting more than 30 hours focused on the creation of AD scripts and 71% on awareness. Finally, with reference to the courses lasting between 21 and 30 hours, the percentage was lower: 60% considered script creating and awareness skills necessary, respectively. Professional courses did show some trends that were similar to the academic courses. For 100% of courses with a duration of less than 10 hours, between 21 and 30 hours and more than 30 hours the focus was on the creation of AD scripts and awareness. Another significant piece of data is that the duration of the courses may have influenced the use of software: for academic courses, 57% of those with a duration of more than 30 hours used software programs compared with 40% of courses with a duration of between 21 and 30 hours, 12% of courses lasting between 10 and 20 hours and 10% of courses with a duration of less than 10 hours. For professional courses, 100% of those with a duration of more than 30 hours focused on the skill of using software. It is interesting, then, to point out that despite the existence of specific AD software, it is not surprising that some professionals work with a text processor and a video player or even with subtitling programs. The inclusion of specific programs in training may be the result of availability and associated costs, prior knowledge on the part of the trainers or on the part of

students of similar courses (e.g. subtitling) or the relative importance given to computer software.

The final comparison was the type of activities included in both types of course (Figure 15). It should be highlighted that for professional courses the greater focus was on practical and functional aspects, rather than conceptual aspects. For this type of training course, 80% included practical exercises, with the other categories reflecting lower percentages, such as analysis of real ADs (60%), the discussion of AD guidelines (55%) and the theory related to AD (55%). It seems logical to deduce that for academic courses it is also important to include practical exercises at high percentage, but that they also include high levels of discussion and theory activities. Similarly, it is understandable that professional environments are centred mainly on practical rather than theoretical activities.

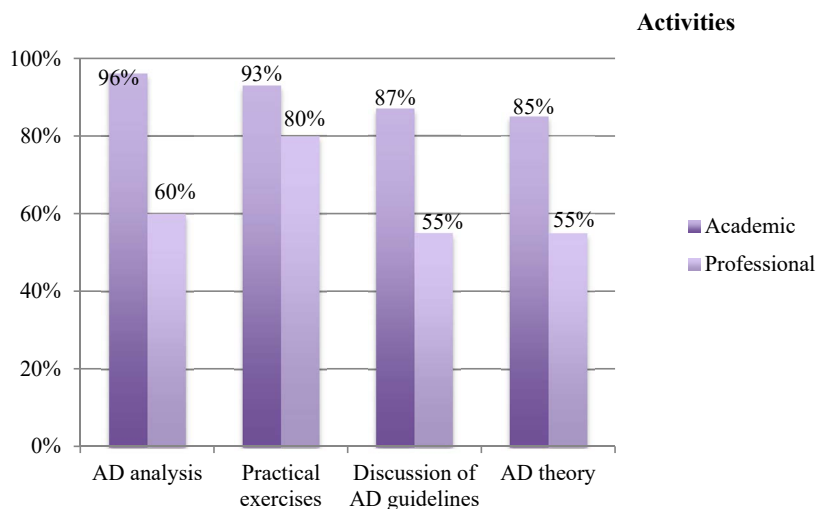


Figure 15. Types of activity on academic and professional courses

Conclusions

The objective of this article was to gain a panoramic view of the profile of teachers of AD in Spain, identify the characteristic of the courses they teach and the skills that they consider to be most important in the training of audio describers.

In terms of the profiles of the teachers and trainers, more than half were teachers as well as researchers, but only just over a tenth were teachers and also audio describers, and approximately a tenth were teachers, researchers and audio describers. This led us to conclude that wherever possible an interrelationship between the universities and the professional world is desirable. The European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and the adaptation of the education system in Europe to it, has redefined the relationship between teaching and learning and therefore also between the teachers and the students. One of the recommendations is that innovative methodological alternatives are implemented, based on joint actions which allow for the discovery, construction and transformation of knowledge between teachers and students (Huertas Barros 2013: 29). These actions, alongside many others, are defined in the existing multiple focuses of teaching and learning of translators. With the EHEA these focuses have also experienced great changes: the move from traditional, transmissionist and reductionist learning theories, to more integrating theories. While both academic and professional profiles are represented in this survey, it is also beneficial to work increasingly with the so-called “practisearcher”, who combines academic knowledge with real professional practice. However, the university system in Spain has demanded a minimum percentage of teaching staff with PhDs for certain academic programmes, and this may make access more difficult for professionals who are not PhD holders.

In terms of their experience in teaching AD, we observed that more than half of respondents have experience of between 3 and 10 years, and less than half of less than 3 years. We suggest that some questions for future study might include finding out the percentage of respondents who have had continuity in the teaching of their courses. This could help us to compile information about possible methodological evolution processes for teaching staff.

We also saw that three-quarters of all respondents do not use AD, while one quarter do. Almost one third work frequently with persons with sight impairment while over a quarter almost never do. Some possible causes might be identified to explain why the percentage of respondents who use AD and those who work with persons with sight impairment is not greater. One of the reasons may be a lack of time for respondents who combine teaching with professional tasks. If added to time constraints is the possible difficulty in gaining access to work with blind or sight-impaired persons, the challenge could be seen as too ambitious. Another piece of data that should be highlighted is that the respondents, whether teaching academic or professional courses, do not have any degree of sight impairment themselves. In other words, they do

not need to consume AD products in their daily lives, although some do out of personal, academic or professional interest. In contrast to this, the case of subtitling teachers (excluding subtitling for deaf persons), or dubbing teachers, for example, may differ somewhat in terms of the presentation and frequency of use of subtitled or dubbed products in their daily lives. In any case, the fact that AD teachers and trainers use AD services and work with users of those services is in line with the postulates of the socioconstructivist teaching approach for translators, which proposes a sociopersonal and interactive process in the classroom (Kiraly 2003: 29). Therefore, future studies could look further into the reasons why the percentage of respondents who use AD and work with users is not greater.

In terms of the most important specific competences, we observed that choosing relevant information was first, followed by mother tongue competence and knowledge of the needs of users of the service. Least important were considered the use of cinematographic language and the use of computer programs applied to AD. As far as the level of use of software is concerned, the duration of the course could be a contributing factor. In terms of transferable competences, the most important were the efficient organisation of the workload and time management, ethical aspects, capacity for personal development and teamwork. It is significant that none of the proposed competences were considered to be of little or no importance. The respondents gave more importance to linguistic and thematic competences than technical skills.

Regarding the educational level at which the courses are offered, we observed that most courses are included on Bachelor's degree and Master's degree courses which are mainly taught in the classroom. For professional training courses, more than half took the format of a workshop and they were aimed at CPD and targeted at companies. In terms of duration and group size the courses were slightly shorter than their academic counterparts and group sizes slightly smaller. It should be highlighted that classrooms made up of large groups can cause problems for student-centred learning approaches, and indirectly favour more traditional teaching methods (Kiraly 2003: 27). In that sense, there is a certain level of consensus that learning requires a union of intellectual effort on the part of the students and the teaching staff together (Leigh Smith & MacGregor 1992) in smaller working groups (Johnson & Johnson 2017; Johnson et al. 1994).

With regard to the skills taught, there were similarities for both types of course. The professional courses placed more importance to the use of software applied to AD compared with the academic courses. With reference to the types

of activities carried out, they were different and varied for both types of course and displayed considerable difference in the lower importance that was given to theoretical and conceptual activities on the professional training courses.

Finally, considering assessment of academic courses, we were able to deduce that it is for the most part formative. Summative assessment is present but at a considerably lower level. This is the tendency of socioconstructivist approaches, for example, of a collaborative and cooperative nature which allow assessment of two aspects: first, the final result in relation to the content taught and second, the active participation of the student in the group working process (Huertas Barros 2013: 141). More detailed study would allow us to obtain more detailed information not only about the specific aspects of formative and summative assessment, but also self-evaluation which was not contemplated in this survey.

All the data obtained have contributed to offering a first snapshot of the profile of teachers and trainers in the field of AD in Spain and of the characteristics of the courses they teach. While offering new information in an area which has been the subject of little research to date, the data have also pointed to the need for a more detailed study. This will be the objective of future phases in this research, which may be centred on a more specific analysis of existing curricular design for AD in Spain and its evolution, competences, skills and learning outcomes, teaching activities and assessment activities.

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BIONOTES / BIONOTAS

NURIA MENDOZA is currently a PhD student at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Since 2004 she has been working at the Universidad Nebrija, where she has been coordinating the Language Centre since 2009. She has also taught Audiovisual Translation there for the Modern Languages and Translation students. She holds a BA in German Studies from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, a MA in Audiovisual Translation, Localization, Subtitling and Dubbing from the Universidad de Cádiz/ISTRAD and a European MA in Audiovisual Translation from the Parma University (Italy).

NURIA MENDOZA es actualmente estudiante del programa de doctorado de Traducción y Estudios Interculturales en la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. Ha trabajado desde 2004 en la Universidad Nebrija, donde coordina su centro de lenguas. Allí es profesora de Traducción Audiovisual y Accesibilidad para los estudiantes de Traducción y Lenguas Modernas, así como de inglés como lengua extranjera para los estudiantes de grado. Licenciada en Filología Alemana por la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, posee el Máster de Traducción Audiovisual, Localización, Subtitulación y Doblaje por la Universidad de Cádiz/ISTRAD, y el Máster Europeo de Traducción Audiovisual por la Universidad de Parma.

ANNA MATAMALA, BA in Translation (UAB) and PhD in Applied Linguistics (UPF), is an associate professor at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Barcelona). Currently leading TransMedia Catalonia, she has participated and led projects on audiovisual translation and media accessibility. She has taken an active role in the organisation of scientific events (M4ALL, ARSAD), and has published in journals such as *Meta*, *Translator*, *Perspectives*, *Babel*,

Translation Studies. She is currently involved in standardisation work. More information: gent.uab.cat/amatamala.

ANNA MATAMALA, licenciada en Traducción e Interpretación (UAB) y doctora en Lingüística Aplicada (UPF), es profesora titular de universidad en la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona e investigadora principal del grupo TransMedia Catalonia. Ha participado en múltiples proyectos de investigación sobre traducción audiovisual y accesibilidad, así como en la organización de congresos internacionales (M4ALL, ARSAD). Ha publicado en revistas como *Meta*, *Translator*, *Perspectives*, *Babel* y *Translation Studies*. Actualmente desarrolla también trabajos de estandarización. Más información: gent.uab.cat/amatamala.