

Interview

Yunke Deng* and Wei Ma

An Interview with Wei Ma on Audio Description Script Writing for Blind-Accessible Films in China

<https://doi.org/10.1515/jcfs-2022-0033>

Published online June 14, 2023

Abstract: Blind-accessible films offer blind and visually impaired individuals the opportunity of enjoying a cinematic experience alongside the rest of the audience. Wei Ma is a member of the *China Film and Television Association of Higher Education Institutions*. His book, *How to Make Blind-accessible Films in China*, provides an overview of the evolution of blind-accessible films in Europe and the United States, elaborates on the growth and development of blind-accessible films in China, and provides a comprehensive exploration of the theory behind audio description (AD) and AD script-writing methods for blind-accessible films. In this interview, Ma Wei elaborates on blind-accessible film AD script-writing skills from both practical and theoretical perspectives and discusses some creative rules, methods, and techniques in AD. This interview was conducted online in January 2022 and is based on the final interview transcript in Chinese, which Wei Ma confirmed in May 2022.

Keywords: Ma Wei, blind-accessible film, audio description, visually impaired, script writing

1 The Interview

Deng: Mr. Ma, I noticed that you mentioned in your book that the development of blind-accessible films had hit a plateau in China. What do you mean by this?

Ma: Yes, by “plateau” I mean this is a necessary stage of development of blind-accessible films in any country, not just in China. For any given stage, we must consider where it should be headed. Should it stop at basic public welfare or progress

*Corresponding author: Yunke Deng, Centre for Translation Studies, University College London, 38-50 Bidborough Street, London, WC1H 9BT, UK, E-mail: uclzyd0@ucl.ac.uk

Wei Ma, Shanghai People's Procuratorate, 648 Jianguo Rd, Xuhui District, Shanghai, China, E-mail: 2483850592@qq.com

towards more artistic forms? The correct path to sustainable development is to adhere to the imperatives of high quality and artistic growth and to maintain a tight grip on the primary objective of writing audio description (AD) scripts. Through artistic exploration and innovation, blind-accessible films should reflect the aspirations and interests of visually impaired audiences to achieve a greater sense of inclusion. We should always bear in mind that the cultural ambitions of people with disabilities should be respected. For blind-accessible filmmakers, the artistic outcomes of a film should not be disappointing. This is fundamental to the growth of blind-accessible films and the original intentions of blind-accessible filmmakers.

Four Critical Issues in AD Script Writing

Deng: This sounds like a real challenge. What do you think are the unsolved problems of blind-accessible film AD script writing nowadays in China?

Ma: I think there are four areas where AD script writing can be improved, as I mentioned in the book (*How to Make Blind-Accessible Films in China*): synchronisation, telling a good story, focussing on the climax, and being more cinematic (Ma 2020).

Deng: The synchronisation of sound and picture is the relationship between the sound and image of the film, which means that the music and the picture have the same mood and rhythm. So how should we understand “synchronisation” in the AD script writing of blind-accessible films?

Ma: Synchronising sounds and pictures is an important principle in scripting AD in blind-accessible films. The main reason for highlighting this principle is cinema’s artistic quality as an audio-visual art form (Ma 2020); it combines shots using montages and creates spatiotemporal images. This idea is based on the particular requirements of blind people because of their physical constraints.

Therefore, during the film, the AD script writer must use dialogue gaps to insert descriptions of the film’s images, characters, and plots. Hence, they fit into the film such that, when combined with dialogue and other sound effects, they create an accessible viewing experience. The visually impaired audience rely on audio descriptions when watching films. They mentally recreate the film scenes, use their interpretations to gain a sense of live experience, and appreciate the art of cinema.

Truly synchronising sound and pictures during script writing means that the scriptwriter must be able to describe the film with their eyes, hands, and heart. Specifically, they must use their eyes to identify the image, discern its details, note the key content, and choose the aspects to highlight. Additionally, they have to use their hands to control the word count and retain blank spaces. Their hearts should closely blend the script’s aesthetic and visual aspects with the film’s theme and artistry. This enables the film script’s human, spiritual, and natural beauty to penetrate the hearts of visually impaired people and create a sense of empathy and sympathy during the film’s broadcast and AD. A film is not truly accessible unless it is synchronised with sound and pictures.

Deng: A good story can make a good movie, and telling a good story is the pursuit of many, particularly directors. But for people with accessibility requirements, AD is a crucial way to grasp the content of the movie. So, an AD script which can tell a good story is naturally the place to focus on. Is that right?

Ma: Yes, I think this relies on the writer's cinematic awareness, artistic vision, and logical thinking, as well as the interconnection and integrated application of these intellectual abilities. In my view, spoken word scripts for blind-accessible films must focus on these aspects to tell a good story.

First, in my opinion, the related parts of the plot must be introduced as simply and clearly as possible. To engage the audience deeply and help them develop a connection with the plot, characters, and scenes, we should pay attention to the logic of scene construction. The AD should also help the visually impaired audience during this stage by explaining the storyline ambiguities in the film and reflecting the tempo, which is fast paced during direct action and slow paced when describing the surroundings and psychological actions (Ma 2020).

Second, it is essential to focus on the rationality of the characters' words and actions and advance the plot based on character interactions and conflicts. An AD occasionally needs to clarify the rationale and psychology of characters, which sometimes do not appear directly in the film's images and dialogues. This requires the writer to have insight and empathy that helps inspire and guide the visually impaired audience to understand the characters' experiences. After watching the accessible version of the Japanese animated film *Spirited Away* (2001), a blind child from the Chengdu Special Education School said to the organising volunteers, "I felt like I was inside the film."

This was one of the main ideas. Each AD script writer has their own interpretations and opinions. However, they ultimately cannot be separated from the narrative, characters' story arcs, or the film's symbolic metaphors.

Deng: The climax is when the conflict in the film's plot develops to its most intense point, expressing the main characters' personalities and the film's thematic ideas. It can also leave a lasting impression on the audience. If an audio describer wants to increase the interaction between visually impaired audiences and the film and improve their awareness of participation, some special skills must be involved, right? Could you explain this in more detail with some examples?

Ma: Yes, you are correct. AD writers have always focused on expressing the film's climax in their works. One of the key focuses of a blind-accessible film AD script is to find the climax, express it, and make it more compelling. The scriptwriter needs to look for and understand the film's climax before writing and to become aware of developing tension and rising action as the plot progresses towards its central climax. While writing, these writers should spend more time and effort structuring these climaxes. For example, attention should be paid to dramatic movement, camera motion, the film's transitional rhythm, sound effects or music, and the

significant interpretable gaps they create. These are designed to ensure that the visually impaired comprehend the film's main ideas based on the climax and situate the visually impaired in the designed film world.

For example, the writer captures three climaxes in the AD script written by Min Xiong for the film *Song of the Phoenix* (Wu 2016). The first climax is when the character Master Jiao Sanshu plays the *suona* (Chinese double-reed horn) in a drunken stupor, showing his love for this instrument as well as its rich history and culture. The second climax is when he plays a song, *Song of the Phoenix*, showing Master Jiao's persistence and strength: the *suona* musicians in his ensemble have accepted the decline of traditional Chinese music and want to find other careers to survive, while Master Jiao is dying of lung cancer. When writing this film's script, the AD script writers interspersed their descriptions based on camera changes and their interpretations of its songs, which powerfully set up the film's third climax, when Master Jiao's student You Tianming plays *Song of the Phoenix* in his teacher's tomb. This was the most challenging segment of the film, as it had no dialogue for three and a half minutes and was challenging for scriptwriters to control. The scriptwriter wrote 450 words describing You Tianming's journey towards fulfilling his technical and spiritual role as successor to Master Jiao by playing *Song of the Phoenix*. In addition, the description of the third climax's long dialogue-free period focuses on the characters' external details and inner world. This includes picturing both real and fantastical images and adjusting the speaking speed to match the mood at that moment, thus highlighting the film's emotions and exemplifying its theme.

Deng: I noticed that you also mentioned making movies more like "movies." This sounds a bit confusing to me. Can you expand on that?

Ma: Yes, it is slightly confusing. The concept of blind-accessible film has several specific and essential attributes. For instance, one source mentioned that AD script writing for blind-accessible films should use something other than specialist camera terms because this would make it more difficult for the visually impaired to view the film. However, I firmly believe that blind-accessible films must succeed cinematically, and this is the only way to avoid confusion with radio dramas, novels, and even audio clips of films. At the same time, one of the criteria for measuring the quality of a blind-accessible film should be whether its written expression closely reflects the essence of a film.

The founder of the Sound of Light Barrier-Free Film & TV Culture Development Centre, Ying Han, once said that a blind person complained to her about her AD, saying that they had never watched blind-accessible films because they were more like radio dramas or storytelling. Therefore, if blind-accessible films do not use cinematic language, it would be more like the audience is watching (and listening to) a novel. The artistic qualities of films enhance their inherently attractive visual and aural aspects (Ma 2020).

I always believe that what Chao calls “cinematic narrative effects” and what Han calls “camera changes” are actually the use of film techniques such as montage. These ideas constitute a major advancement in AD script artistry as they express the core idea of enhancing the realism of blind-accessible films. In practical situations, it is preferable to use visual effects and technical methods to describe film images. Although opinions are divided between audiences who do not fully understand this approach and those who consider it necessary, the overall idea tends to increase the entertainment value of these films.

Adapting to the needs of blind and visually impaired people is the basis for writing a narrative AD script for a blind-accessible film. Reflecting the principles of film as an art form and expressing the film’s camera changes (montage technique) may enhance how the viewer perceives the quality of its imagery (composition and association) and could promote aesthetic appreciation. In the final analysis, the writer’s respect for the film and visually impaired people’s artistic understanding are essential for the script’s ability to express the film’s formal beauty effectively.

For example, in 2019, I was commissioned to write an AD script for an audio description of the film (Wen 2018). The send-off scene at the end of the film that the director painstakingly designed was 3 min long, with limited dialogue, and was also one of the film’s most touching sequences. Not only is the performance of its lead actor, Zheng Xu, intense, but the director’s use of images of a group of leukemia patients and focus on the main actors is very effective in setting the tone, which brings the film to its climax and can be described as silent but audible. Furthermore, I focused on AD’s emotions and language to encourage a visually impaired audience to empathise with the film, which triggers the audience to empathise, reflect, imagine, and reminisce.

You know, when we talk about “making a film more cinematic” it is not limited to using some camera terms but also applies to the AD script writer’s description of the film’s content. It considers the storyline’s development so that visually impaired people can understand how the plot progresses. In addition, it focuses on appropriate descriptions of actors’ performances, scene changes, camerawork, and sometimes stylistic imagery. This can help visually impaired audiences feel as though they are enjoying a film and experiencing the real world of cinema while watching blind-accessible films.

Five Main Points of Writing Skills

Deng: I see. Can you elaborate on the AD script writing skills?

Ma: There are five main aspects to pay attention to, namely “the details,” the “language and text,” “the lyricism in films,” the “interlude and music,” and “the opening and ending.”

Deng: I have read them in your book. You know, the famous filmmaker Zhangke Jia mentioned in an interview that “details are essential for a film.” The writer’s

attention to detail is often an important factor in a film's quality. According to Professor Jinping Gong of Fudan University, "Film is not just about telling a story, which is the literary method, nor is it just about telling a story with light and shadow, which is the video element method, but it is about presenting details with the methods of literature and film. In other words, cinema is about the art of details" (Gong 2018). Sometimes I find that a film's plot is forgotten, but some wonderful details remain in my mind. So, my question is, in AD script-writing, how can you demonstrate the details to visually impaired audience?

Ma: Yes, some film details are shown in close-ups, others in a series of shots, additional ones in passing, and some are even hidden, which requires the AD script writer to observe and understand them meticulously and show or amplify them when writing.

AD script writing needs to consider the following aspects: First, character description which may include information such as age, appearance, and clothing; second, specifics of clothing, which can reflect a character's identity and historical period; third, description of facial expressions, which can set the character's mood and reflect their socioeconomic status; and finally, action description, which shows the character's personality traits.

Action details describe a particular character's specific actions, highlighting the character or linking them with the storyline. For example, in the film *One Step Away* (2014), when *Kuomintang* spies attack, the action of the underground Chinese communist Lin Yueying removing her earring is linked to the later actions of her taking poison and killing herself to protect her comrades. Visually impaired viewers may wonder how Lin kills herself if this action is overlooked.

Expressive detail involves content that describes a character's emotions. For example, in the film *I Am A Doctor* (2017), Mengchao Wu persuaded a brilliant surgeon, Yitao, his favorite disciple, to conduct primary research on cellular therapy for cancer. When Chao rejected this request, I wrote the AD as follows: "As Wu watched the departing back of his beloved disciple, he breathed a sigh of relief, but his expression was not relaxed." These contrasting layers of emotions express the problematic future of research into new cancer treatment technologies.

Object details can be integrated into the plot and typically help move the story along. The best directors are often the most skilled at using these details. Such as the key in the film *Mountains May Depart* (Jia 2015). In the film, the character Tao gives her son, Daole, the keys to their home before he leaves for Australia. Daole wears the keys as a necklace and despite losing the keys to his Australian residence on multiple occasions he never loses the key given to him by his mother. Throughout the film, the key is a recurring and significant symbol that represents home and a sense of belonging. Sometimes, we find a certain item that may become very important to connect the story or reflect the character's thoughts and personality.

I also noticed that many visually impaired viewers appreciated the details of blind-accessible films. Every film that the Accessible Recreation Project Team of Shanghai Interlink produces is uploaded to the visually impaired audiovisual group's WeChat group in advance so they can consider members' opinions and suggestions. On one occasion, after an episode of the TV series *Young Master Slowly Walked*, members of this group listened to the AD and discussed their viewing experience. A user named Alex (under an alias) said that sometimes they only heard the characters talking and had no idea what they were doing. He hoped that the audio description would include more detail. In addition, Lily (under an alias) thought that many parts that lacked a narrator might be inconvenient for visually impaired viewers as they would need to constantly try to infer what was happening during the film. For example, they need to imagine the characters' facial expressions, the types of hand gestures they are making, and their eye movements. Furthermore, Mary (under an alias) thought that the basic plot was accessible to the visually impaired, but the producers needed to include more information about the film.

These examples illustrate the need for detailed audio descriptions while creating blind-accessible films. The details of these descriptions help the visually impaired to "see" changes, perceive "conflicts," and "experience" the characters' emotions. Audiences' appreciation of these films also increases their overall aesthetic experience.

Deng: Yes, I understand. Language is the bridge between spoken words and narrative script, which helps a visually impaired audience to understand a film's visual aspects and meaning. So, what do you think is worth noticing regarding language when writing the script?

Ma: As you have said, words are very important and narrative scripts must be written eloquently using beautiful vocabulary.

Furthermore, the art of literature is very broadly defined. If understood in a narrow sense, it can be considered a kind of poetry that resembles the Japanese *haiku*—short and concise. Snyder (2005) further explained that sound description requires minimal words to describe something visible and then turns this into an audible version of the written text. It also involves using extremely simple, vivid, and imaginative words to convey a visual message to a visually impaired audience.

We agree with this observation. However, I think a higher priority is to find the right language to describe images and express meaning and emotion. Therefore, images and depth of expression must be considered when pursuing accuracy.

I want to elaborate on this by way of four aspects:

The first is colloquialism. Colloquialism is prioritised to ensure clarity and ease of understanding. The colloquialization of narratives can help visually impaired viewers' understanding using simple, up-to-date, and comprehensible language to reduce difficulty and increase the amount of information that the audience receives (Ma 2020).

Specific methods include using shorter sentences, fewer modifiers, limiting compound sentences, and avoiding figurative or inverted sentences. An additional focus on sentences with more active verbs fulfils the film's linguistic requirements while enhancing understanding. Moreover, other methods are to change the written language to its spoken equivalents, such as “quickly” (迅速) into “soon” (很快) or “present days” (连日) into “these days” (这些天来). Furthermore, it is important to choose readily understandable words, while avoiding regional and slang terms. Additionally, it is recommended to include popular idioms, emphasise fewer or no difficult words, and focus on syllables and rhymes. Other suggestions include adding more two-syllable and multi-syllable words to regulate rhythm and monitoring the use of elaborate and popular words while avoiding frequent instances of homophones.

In short, many methods of colloquialisation exist, and AD script writers must continually practice them and consult visually impaired friends more frequently.

Second, the AD should be concise, clear, informative, and appropriate.

There is often a limited time gap in inserting an AD; hence, it is essential to fill these gaps with the most appropriate text. The principle that should be followed is to closely integrate it with the image and maximise its usefulness; enrichment is less important. It is important to consider the ambiguity of the subsequent content. The amount of time limits the word count for each paragraph; however, the AD script writer can determine the extent of the information included. I have developed several practical methods to convey the richness of images while helping visually impaired audiences hear and understand AD. To balance the need for descriptive content with the need for clarity, I would suggest several specific methods. The first is to break down the elements of the visual content into a few coherent short sentences. The second is to identify the main idea and construct a sentence around it, followed by modifying elements. The third method is to describe the content in a logical order based on the relationships between the elements in the visual content.

Third, because the status of key characters in a movie dictates how many times they appear and how frequently they are involved in the story, flexible character names should be used. In my book *How to Make Blind-accessible Games in China*, I also made reference to this. Characters may have several titles because they have multiple identities. Have you ever noticed that sometimes in movies one character has different names? This might seem random, but there is actually a reason for this. The names for characters can change depending on what happens in the story. The director and screenwriter have to make sure that it makes sense and fits the situation. That's why when AD script writers are writing a script, they have to really do their research and get the names right for the main characters. For example, in *I Am A Doctor*, Mengchao Wu has a lot of titles: director, doctor, father, and teacher, to name but a few. In this film's narrative script, “Mengchao Wu, Lao Wu, father” are used more often. “Mengchao Wu” is the title used most often in this film. It is

primarily used in work settings and by other doctors and nurses to reflect a sense of formality and neutrality. “Lao Wu” is an honorific title for Wu, an authoritative academic or senior person. He was mostly referred to as a teacher when he was with his daughter or younger colleagues, reflecting respect and intimacy. The title of the teacher also demonstrates the role of the teacher-student relationship. Moreover, a single title should not be used multiple times in a single paragraph of the narrative script. For example, if only the title “Mengchao Wu” is used, it is acceptable to use “Lao Wu” or another title to avoid repetition.

This example shows how adaptable approaches to a character portrait can reveal a character’s significance, reflect many aspects of identity, make the role more vivid and vibrant, enable it to adapt to particular occasions and relationships, and increase the film’s popular appeal and influence.

Finally, there is scope for ambiguity. Although many movies feature violent, dishonest, and evil characters, it is important to maintain neutrality and restraint in language selection. Film narrative development should be discussed objectively (Ma 2020). Moreover, it is advisable to avoid internet vocabulary and allow essential aspects to be expressed dispassionately in the narrative script.

A few seconds of blank space is necessary when dramatic plot twists occur during scenes, or when characters are sad or happy. Silent gaps, which normally last 6–8 s, can help the viewer reflect on the film’s content (Ma 2020).

The profound meanings of Chinese expressions provide AD script writers more options. However, before saving each line of the AD, we must stop and consider whether it is possible to use more relevant or imaginative expressions. In short, the AD script writer’s comprehension and use of language are the foundations of a successful AD script and a long-term process.

Deng: To my knowledge, lyricism is an issue that writing rules or experiences have barely addressed or rejected. However, even though some colleagues are theoretically opposed to lyrical arguments, their scripts still contain lyricism.

Ma: I always believe that discussing and expressing emotions is necessary to ensure that visually impaired people understand films. Compared to sighted people, visually impaired people lose a great deal of onscreen information. Furthermore, the nuances of the film might not be accessible to them, as they might be unable to make mental associations because they struggle to connect words with images. Additionally, they may be unable to understand the film’s meaning, which transcends its words, pictures, and artistic subtleties.

Lyricism can be included in AD scripts as a powerful means of conveying the writer’s intentions. Film writers and directors have designed and incorporated aspects that engage the audience’s emotional imagination, which is also true for sighted audiences. Visually impaired audiences can be reached more effectively when the writer inserts lyricism into the AD. Conversely, during the film’s emotionally

profound scenes, the writer should express the emotions in these scenes, remain objective and calm, and not use powerful expressions such as lyricism.

Therefore, the main issue of using lyricism in audio description scripts is not its presence or absence but understanding how to master time and moment. This is necessary for the visually impaired viewers who lack onscreen information. Furthermore, it helps them connect with the onscreen images, deepen their understanding of essential scenes, and experience unique emotions.

Several types of lyricism are used in AD script writing.

The first is intended to reinforce the main character's inner conflict or psychological transformation; the second is intended to reveal the character's spirit and the theme of the film; and the third is intended to express the film's symbolism.

In a scene from *I Am A Doctor*, one night after Mengchao Wu visits his daughter who is going to undergo an operation the next day, he leaves his ward and walks down the hospital hall.

AD: "At midnight, in the dimly lit hospital hall, Mengchao Wu confidently walks alone, determined to face every challenge and failure."

Although there is only one sentence, it is meaningful. This reflects the fact that he was so busy with work that he overlooked his daughter, the only surviving family member. This quote also symbolises the moment when his teacher encouraged him to deal with the risks of surgery. A single sentence powerfully highlights the main characters' resilience and bravery. However, it should be pointed out that you may not want to add too much lyricism to the AD script because it should be concise and direct.

Deng: In modern movies, music plays many roles. For example, the music at the beginning can set the movie's tone. In addition, music can sometimes relate to the characters' personalities and sometimes lead to future events. So, is background music a more important factor for the visually impaired audience?

Ma: A film's theme music and interludes can also influence the auditory senses of visually impaired viewers while watching blind-accessible films. AD script writers should use this music to enhance the enjoyment of the visually impaired viewers.

For example, the Taiwanese-Canadian singer Sally Yeh's (Yip Sin-man/Ye Qianwen) classic Cantonese-language song "Take Care" (1990) is featured throughout *Mountains May Depart*. After watching the film, I thought that the song was worth appreciating repeatedly.

In an interview, the film's writer-director Zhangke Jia said, "Qianwen Ye's 'Take Care' was a song I loved in those days: a very melancholy parting, an unclear and even crisis-filled future, a lover's testament. It has remained in my life, and I played it repeatedly in the car while on a trip." Hearing this song means hearing an era's love. As an AD script writer, it is necessary to realise that the song appears throughout the film.

“Take Care” appears five times in this film. Each session lasts for a short period. Each scene’s unique meaning becomes part of the film’s narrative and accentuates the sorrow that the characters feel when parting. The AD script writer must interpret the song through the lens of the film’s components by carefully describing each rendition, its integration with the plot, the character’s fate, and the scene’s mood. The only way the writer can make this song haunt visually impaired audience and penetrate their hearts is by conveying these aspects while making it an entry point for understanding the film. The writer can also use “Take Care” to provide the audience with more film-related information. They could portray the emotions communicated by the choreographer by combining their AD and Ye’s songs.

Deng: I see that you also mentioned “handling the opening introduction and ending” in your book. In the AD script, the opening introduction is usually inserted at the film’s beginning, introducing the film’s historical background and story outline to the visually impaired people. In your opinion, how should the AD script handle these well?

Ma: Yes, but the introduction includes information about its writer and director, as well as those in its starring roles. This section of the film identifies the genre and aspects of its production. This blank section does not usually include dialogue and tends to provide the audience with an initial overview of the film. For example, the introduction to the opening credits of the AD script for the film series *Tiny Times* (Guo 2015) is 180 words long and contains extensive information: the writer, where the film takes place, and what the story is about.

The opening credits have a standard format and are intended to help visually impaired audiences understand a film’s core ideas easily and quickly. This section also provides additional information such as awards or nominations received for the film.

It is possible to read a summary of the film on websites, such as Baidu Encyclopedia and Douban Movie, but it is important to read other sources to collect additional and the most recent information. This can help writers to correct irrelevant or inaccurate information. Opening credits should contain accurate and helpful information that fits within spatial and temporal constraints.

However, some accessible versions of these films do not provide introductory information in their opening titles. This, on the surface, is a simple and straightforward approach, but tends to confuse the audience. It also affects their understanding and enjoyment of films with fast-paced and complex plot structures and storylines.

Deng: That is so insightful, how about the ending part?

Ma: I analysed AD scripts by various writers. There are three types of endings. A natural ending that describes the scene – this is objective, realistic, and not more than a few words in length. For example, in *Song of the Phoenix* by Xiong Min, it is

written as “the camera returns to focus on Master Jiao’s grave...” and then with the description of other information, it goes like “this is the end of the film.”

The second one is where the film ends and when the subtitles begin. These scripts often use subtitles to summarise and highlight characters and themes, provide background information on historical events, or emphasise the film’s ideological significance. Consequently, this form does not require the writer to include a statement signaling that the film has ended. If the onscreen texts are voiced, then it should remain unchanged. Otherwise, the writer should record these subtitles as a voiceover to make the content accessible to visually impaired viewers.

In the third case, AD script writers can enhance the film’s ending by including commentary to help their audience understand its context. For example, they could summarise the film, share their understanding of the plot, highlight the film’s themes, and explain its cultural value.

For example, in Zhangke Jia’s *Still Life* (Jia 2006), the main characters are named at the end and described in a commentary to echo the film’s Chinese title. Another example is found at the end of *Pegasus* (2019), written by Uriah. So it goes, “When Chi rushed to the sunset, all those who had fought for their dreams all raised their heads to look at the sun; in fact, they were also looking at their dreams.” The AD script writer in this film provides an ending that incorporates a personal touch into its emotional climax. This can help blind audiences to empathise and share the message with others.

A data sample indicated that the third form of ending was less widespread than the other forms. Additionally, some visually impaired viewers mentioned that an introduction at the beginning was necessary but a lyric ending was unnecessary.

I always believe that if these AD script endings are well-written, they can add a finishing touch to the film, but poorly written conclusions may fail to effectively end the narrative. Therefore, the best option is to include an ending similar to the first two forms. At the end of the film, the director chooses how to conclude. Therefore, it is necessary to use narrative descriptions of the film’s characters and plot them accurately and objectively, as well as trust in the visually impaired audience’s ability to comprehend and appreciate the material while leaving space for them to reminisce and imagine.

Deng: Thank you very much for sharing your experience of AD scriptwriting. I have learnt a lot. I wish you all the best with future work on AD.

Ma: My pleasure. I hope that more people will join the work of making films accessible to all in the coming years.

References

- Gong, J. 2018. "The Improvement of Narrative Writing by Film Thinking." *Chinese Learning* 12: 59–62.
- Guo, J., dir. 2015. *Tiny Times*. Heli Chengguang Culture Media. Also available at <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4814354/>.
- Jia, Z., dir. 2006. *Still Life*. Xstream Pictures. Also available at <https://www.netflix.com/tw-en/title/70055576>.
- Jia, Z., dir. 2015. *Mountains May Depart*. Xstream Pictures. Also available at <https://www.netflix.com/hk-en/title/80058641>.
- Ma, W. 2020. *How to Make Blind-Accessible Films in China*. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- Snyder, J. 2005. "Audio Description: The Visual Made Verbal." *International Congress Series* 1282: 935–9.
- Wen, M., dir. 2018. *Dying to Survive*. Dirty Monkey Films Group. Also available at <http://www.netflixmovies.com/dying-to-survive>.
- Wu, T., dir. 2016. *Song of the Phoenix*. Xi'an Qujiang Dreamgarden Pictures. Also available at <https://www.netflix.com/tw-en/title/80993613>.

Bionotes

Yunke Deng

Centre for Translation Studies, University College London, 38-50 Bidborough Street, London, WC1H 9BT, UK

uclzyd0@ucl.ac.uk

Yunke Deng is a PhD student at the Centre for Translation Studies, University College London. She is an active member of the Bristol Digital Game Lab. Yunke completed her MA degree at the University of Bristol. Her research interests lie in exploring the intersections of translation studies and game accessibility, especially for the blind.

Wei Ma

Shanghai People's Procuratorate, 648 Jianguo Rd, Xuhui District, Shanghai, China

2483850592@qq.com

Wei Ma is a member of the China Film and Television Association of Higher Education Institutions. His research interests lie in audio description and audio description script-writing methods.